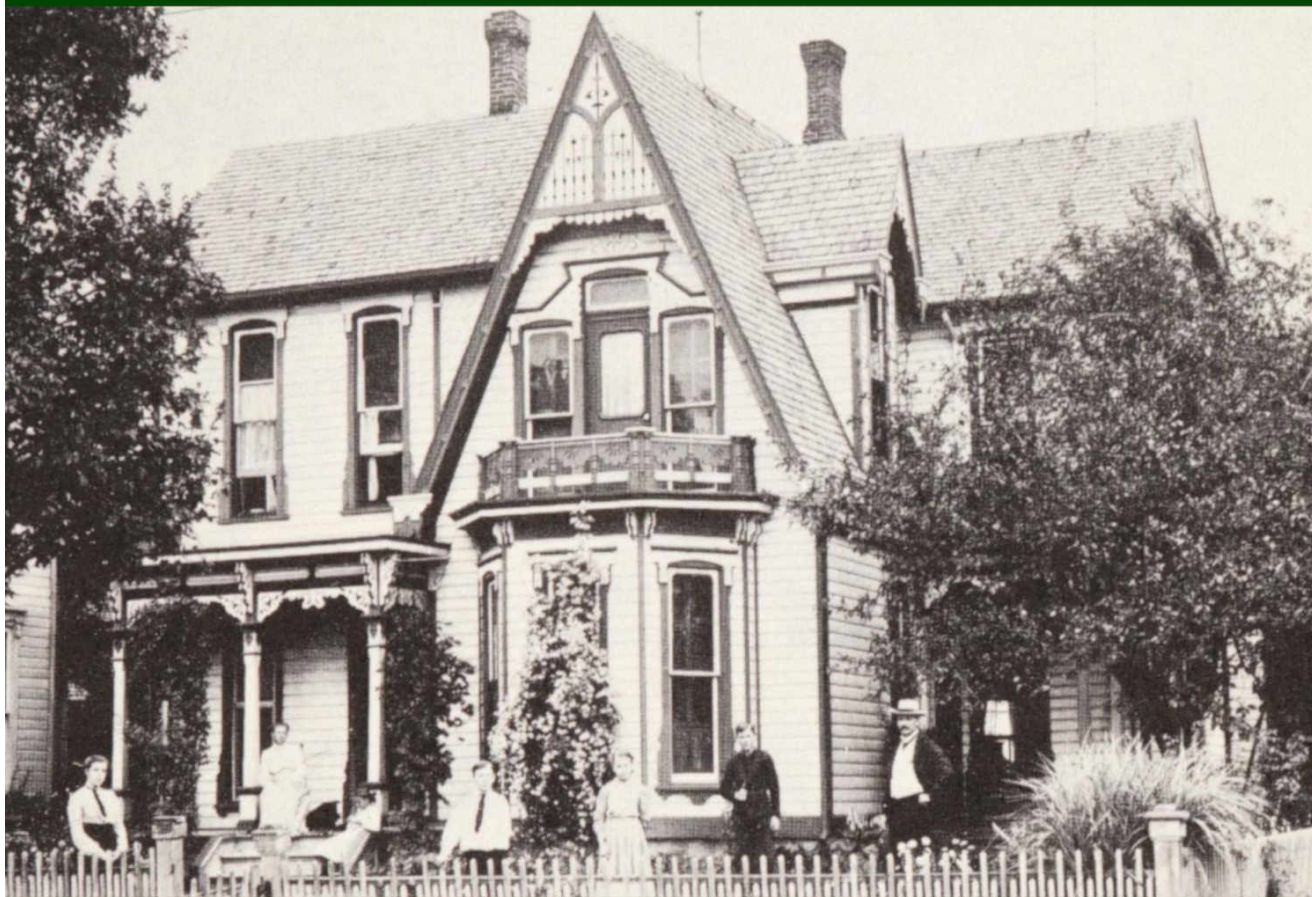


**Richard C.H. Lenski**

**The Epistle Selections of  
the Ancient Church**



**An Exegetical-Homiletical Treatment**

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# The Epistle Selections of the Ancient Church

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# The Epistle Selections of the Ancient Church: An Exegetical Homiletical Treatment

*A Series of Epistle Texts for the Entire  
Church Year*

By Richard C.H. Lenski

COLUMBUS, OHIO  
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Dr. Lenski's explanations of the following passages are found in these books:

- **Anc. Gospel.** Lenski. *Gospel Selections of the Ancient Church*
- **Anc. Epistle.** Lenski. *Epistle Selections of the Ancient Church*
- **Eis. Gospel.** Lenski. *The Eisenach Gospel Selections*
- **Eis. Epistle.** Lenski. *The Eisenach Epistle Selections*
- **Eis. O.T.** Lenski. *The Eisenach Old Testament Selections*
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How Can You Find Peace With God?

# Preface by Lutheran Librarian

In republishing this book, we seek to introduce this author to a new generation of those seeking authentic spirituality.

**Richard C. H. Lenski** (1864-1936) is best known for his insightful and still invaluable series of New Testament Commentaries. He served as Professor of Theology at Capital University and President of the Western District of Joint Synod of Ohio and Editor *Die Lutherische Kirchenzeitung*.

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## **A Note about Typos** [Typographical Errors]:

Over time we are revising the books to make them better and better. If you would like to send the errors you come across to us, we'll make sure they are corrected.



# Introduction

A discussion of the origin of the Church Year with its pericope selections for lectern and pulpit will be found in the volume on the gospel selections of the ancient Church. There we treat the advantages of pericope preaching as compared with the history of preaching in the Calvinistic denominations.

For each festival and each Sunday service the gospel text is primary, governing the liturgical accessories. The epistle text is secondary and dependent. This observation will prove helpful to the preacher, as also to the liturgist. The idea that prompted the selection of the epistle text was not to have in this text a kind of extension of the gospel for the day, but to have the epistle match the significance of the gospel. The epistle has its own native and independent contents, which the preacher is to use accordingly in his sermon, yet his epistle text for any festival or any Sunday has been selected to support the main idea of the day as represented in the gospel text for the day.

All the epistolary writings are themselves already sermons, and not historical records of saving events like the gospels. Underlying all the epistles is the gospel history with its array of objective facts. In the epistles we touch this rock basis again and again, and may thus at times present the history somewhat as it is contained in the gospels. Yet the epistles never become gospels. An epistle text may have an objective cast, yet all epistle texts are selections from letters directed to certain definite persons for a certain important spiritual purpose. What the preacher of today does is to place himself and his hearers in the light of some part of one of these imperishable letters, that now once more the original purpose of this part of the letter may be attained. When this fact is well understood, it will be easier to preach on epistle texts.

The opinion that it is much harder to preach on the epistles of the Church Year than on the gospels is really not justified. We have already said that the

epistolary writings have the nature of sermons. All that needs to be done with a text from the epistles is to expand it in a natural manner. What is sermonic in the text itself thus flowers out into a full and complete sermon appropriate to the day for which the text is selected. Of course, the preacher must be conversant with homiletical method, must be able to use analysis, and for the epistle texts especially also the various types of synthesis (comp. my work, *The Sermon*, pp. 90-117). Preachers whose idea of a sermon is an essay on a subject derived in some way from the text will find no satisfaction in using the ancient epistle texts; they will prefer texts composed of a single verse. just long enough to supply the subject they desire. It is to this stage that the Calvinistic *lectio continua* has degenerated in modern times.

Many epistle texts are exceedingly rich in great biblical concepts and thoughts. The difficulty will be that the preacher is embarrassed by his riches; yet again it will not be difficult to make a desirable selection. This, of course, must be acknowledged, all the epistle texts require exegetical study, and that a study not only of the verses comprising the text, but of the entire context, practically of the entire letter from which the text is taken. Such study would greatly enrich the preacher himself and in time would make him a sound New Testament scholar; yet it seems that the ambition of only a few runs in this line.

My purpose in furnishing an independent translation of the Greek is only to aid those who need it for understanding the original. Every translation interprets. The grammatical references are omitted; all those necessary appear in my Interpretation of the epistles of the New Testament. The homiletical aid aims only to be suggestive. When I see another man's outline for a sermon I am stimulated to try to produce a better one. The present day fault of the preaching in our Lutheran circles is what Lowell condemned, namely, "not failure, but low aim." Let us do our part to raise our pulpit ideals.

# **The Festival Half Of The Church Year**

**From The First Sunday In Advent To The Festival Of The Trinity**

**The Christian**

*For Whom Salvation Has Been Wrought By The Lord*

# The Christmas Cycle

## **The Christian in the Midst of Grace**

### **The First Sunday In Advent**

*High Time to Be Aroused from Sleep*

### **The Second Sunday In Advent**

*Oneness of Mind and Confession for the Glory of God*

### **The Third Sunday In Advent**

*The Faithful Christian Minister Our Blessing*

### **The Fourth Sunday In Advent**

*The Joy Born at Christmas*

### **Christmas**

*The Grace of God That Brings Salvation*

### **The Sunday After Christmas**

*The Fulness of Time and Its Significance for Us*

### **The Circumcision Of Christ**

*All Alike the Children of God*

### **The Sunday After New Year**

Omitted. Used too seldom. When the calendar offers this Sunday the preacher usually uses the text for the Epiphany Festival.

# The First Sunday In Advent.

## Rom. 13:11-14

### High Time to Be Aroused from Sleep

When preaching on pericopes it is essential to discover the purpose for which the text has been selected for its particular place in the series. For determining the intent of any particular epistle text the gospel text for the day helps us. The ancient gospel lection for the First Sunday in Advent, Matt. 21:1-9, presents the Savior's Gracious Coming. Evidently the epistle for the day ties into this central Advent idea: the Savior has long ago come with all his saving grace, it certainly is High Time for every one of us without exception to Be Aroused from Spiritual Sleep. This is the burden of our Advent text. Let us walk in the Advent light!

Rom. 12 starts with the fundamental transformation of the Christian and depicts the Christian in his conduct among Christians, a member of the spiritual body. Chapter 13 presents the Christian in the Secular World, under a secular government (13:1-7), amid a secular population (13:8-10), in the wonderful season or period into which his life in this world has been placed (13:11-14, our text). What Paul once wrote to the Romans about the time-period into which their lives had been placed applies equally and even more to us who live now almost two millennia later. Every added year takes us a step farther in the working of the Savior's grace begun at the first Advent, and a step nearer to the consummation in the second Advent, Christ's return in glory to judgment.

**[13:11] And this too, knowing the time-period, that it is already time for us to be aroused from sleep, for now the salvation is nearer to us than when we came to believe. (12) The night has advanced, and the day is near.** Paul uses so many terms expressing time that no one can miss

his meaning: the very time in which we are living at this moment must rouse us to fullest activity in heeding Paul's admonitions.

Καὶ τοῦτο, like the more frequent καὶ ταῦτα, is complete in itself and may be called idiomatic: "And this too" (an absolute nominative combined with καί). Τοῦτο, "this," refers back to 13:8-10, our Christian conduct in our secular environment in the world. "And this too" means that the injunctions just recorded in 5:8-10 will also be heeded when we regard the period of time in which we are living.

Καῖρός is a period or a season of time marked in some way to distinguish it from other stretches of time. The epexegetical ὅτι clause at once states what marks this present period: "that it is already time for us to be aroused from sleep." Ὡρα is often used in a broad sense; our versions aptly translate: "that it is high time." The hour is already here; the alarm clock is ringing. "Sleep" is figurative for anything like delay, carelessness, indifference. The imagery is that of a sleeper who puts off jumping out of his comfortable bed. We are far past the time when drowsy indifference could possibly be excused. It is indeed "high time for us to be aroused from sleep." We prefer to regard ἐγερθῆναι as a real passive, "to be aroused," and not merely as an intransitive "to awake." God sends us his Word with its trumpet call to rouse us from sleep. So also we read "us," and not "you." Paul often varies between the two. But he does well here to include himself, even as he ever heeds his own admonitions. As one who is himself aroused, he calls out in the next breath: "Let us cast off the works of darkness!"

With γάρ Paul explains what he means by saying that it is time to be aroused from spiritual sleep: "for now the salvation is nearer to us than when we (first) came to believe." Here we have "we" and "us" beyond all doubt. Note the article in the expression ἡ σωτηρία. This is not "salvation" in general, but "the salvation," namely the great and final deliverance, the transfer of our souls into heaven. Every day, every month, and every year since we first came to faith (ingressive aorist) has brought us a step nearer. Here we are right now entering Advent and a new Christian Year. May it not be the last for you and for me? It will be the last for not a few. The Lord may return to judgment at any moment; or, if we should die before he does, this will mean the same thing for us, for at his return we shall be in the condition in which our death finds us. We dare not construe ἡμῶν with ἡ

σωτηρία, “our salvation” (A.V.), for in the Greek this would throw an unaccountable emphasis on “our”; construe ἐγγύτερον ἡμῶν, “nearer to us” (R.V.).

Amid our secular surroundings we constantly need Paul’s Advent trumpet blast. Living among thousands of men wholly indifferent to their souls, it is easy to drop into the sleep of indifference. All pastors know how hard it is to break this sleep and to get these sleepers fully awake.

Advent comes once more today with the Savior’s boundless grace. How few men realize the blessedness of the season in which they are living! Secular matters occupy their hearts altogether. Christians are liable to slip into this condition. Your life will be just so long and no longer. It is like a line along which a pointer moves. Over so much of the line the pointer has already passed, only so much of the line is still left. You ought to reach the eternal Salvation of heaven when you come to the end. What if that end suddenly arrives and you are not ready?

[12] Tersely Paul repeats and shows at what point we are living: “The night has advanced, and the day is near.” The Greek aorist: “did cut forward,” i.e. “did advance,” states the fact; in English we use the perfect “has advanced.” The Greek has the perfect: “has come near,” with the present implication: “and now is near.” The night is the present world age; the day the heavenly age to come. With Christ’s return the night ends, the everlasting day of blessedness and glory begins. We are living in a period of time when this breaking of the eternal day may be expected at any moment.

Since the first Advent of grace has arrived, there is but one thing more to come, namely the second Advent with its judgment. Just when that shall come is not for us to know, Acts 1:7. Christ warns us that his return will be like a thief’s coming in the night, suddenly and unexpectedly, in the very hour when many are sure that he will not come. The Flood and Sodom and Gomorrah are examples. Paul speaks accordingly, at times as though Christ may delay a long while, at times as though he may come tomorrow. This he does because he does not know and because of the sharp warnings in regard to the unexpectedness of Christ’s return. The point we should note is that when Paul thinks of his own person and life he reckons not with the possibility of delay on Christ’s part, but always only with the possibility of Christ’s return at any time. Almost 2,000 years have passed since Paul

thought and wrote thus. So long has the time of grace been extended. Yes, so much more ought we to live as if “the day” may break at any moment. Be not like the scoffers in 2 Pet. 3:4-14.

Aroused from sleep, what are we Christians to do in our constant expectation of the day? In literal language: rid of all indifference and carelessness and looking at the time in which we live as God looks at it. what are we to do, just how are we to live? **Let us put away therefore from ourselves the works of the darkness, and let us draw on the equipment of the light!** Commentators only make themselves ridiculous when they conceive “the works of the darkness” as night-clothes (say a night-shirt or pajamas). The first clause is entirely literal: Let us rid ourselves of all the works of the darkness! The notion of sleep is dropped. From the idea of “the night” and “the day” the allied ideas of “the darkness” and “the light” are retained. These terms are used in the general biblical sense, not as denoting darkness and light in general. They are articulated and thus almost personified, exactly as Paul uses “the sin” and “the death” from 5:12 onward. “The darkness” = the darkness-power, a hideous monster; and “the works of the darkness” = the works of the devil who is the embodiment of this power. As long as we Christians live in the night of the present world-age we shall be tempted to yield to this darkness-power. Nor does Paul here exempt himself. “The sin”=the sin-power; “the death”: the death-power, both horrible beyond description.

The aorist of the hortative subjunctive means: “let us decisively put away from ourselves (middle voice) the works of the darkness,” the whole category of them. Paul is not intimating that he and the Romans are still contaminated with the works of the darkness. He is pointing to the danger that we may become careless and negligent, and instead of abiding by our decision yield here and there. The temptation is strong, because so many about us think it strange that we run not with them to the same excess of riot, they speaking evil of us, 1 Pet. 4:4.

The plural ὄπλα signifies equipment, which in the case of a soldier means defensive and offensive armor. We have Paul’s own picture of the Christian hoplite (heavy-armed soldier) and a list of the ὄπλα which constitute his panoply for standing victorious in battle, Eph. 6:13 etc.: girdle of truth, breastplate of righteousness, Gospel shoes, shield of faith, helmet



of salvation, sword of the Word. These are the ὄπλα of the light, i.e. of the heavenly light-power, ever victorious over the devil and the darkness.

This armor of the light is not intended for “the day,” the glorious world-age about to come. The moment that day arrives all fighting will be over and crowns shall be ours. We are to fight the good fight here, here in the night, in this dark world-age, against the darkness-power. We are not merely to stand in shining armor, but to do battle, to stand victorious, until either the Lord arrives or calls us away before his return. The hortative subjunctive is again a decisive aorist: “let us once for all put on,” let us do so with finality. The answer to Paul’s two aorists should be: “We have already done so!” These aorists should rouse any who are slack and slow: “We will at once do so completely!” Yet all of us ever need aorists like this to keep us staunch and true and fully armed. We gladly hear Paul’s great aorists sounding forth in the entire Church every First Sunday in Advent.

[13] When preaching we may expand some of Paul’s terse figures. He himself does not do so in this text. The point to remember is that the figures are not a unified picture and they should never be forced to form such a picture. Paul does not elaborate the imagery of sleep, nor that of armor and weapons in a war or battle. He merely allows one figurative term to suggest another, and thus makes his admonitions striking and memorable. Here at the end of this text his language is almost entirely literal. **As in daytime let us walk decorously, not with carousings and drunkennesses, not with harlotries and excesses, not with strife and jealousy. (14) But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be making no provision for the flesh for lusts.** Here is outlined our Advent conduct, which is to be unchanged during the entire year.

The two aorists of V. 12 present actions which in their nature are single acts, putting away one thing, putting on the opposite. Walking takes time, and when this word is used figuratively with regard to conduct the action extends through a life-time. When this is expressed by an aorist the tense is constative; it takes into consideration our whole conduct and speaks of it as a single grand action: “let us walk decorously,” i.e. not merely now and then, but as a definite, settled thing. “As in daytime” has no article and does not refer to “the day.” In the night of this world-age we are to walk as if we were in the sun of noon-day, with a large number of eyes watching us. Comp. John 3:19-20: wickedness seeks the cover of darkness, good actions

gladly come out into full day-light. The Greek word εὐσχημόνως means “in good form,” thus “decorously.” “Honestly” in our versions is to be taken in the older sense of “honorably.” Let us add that this decorous conduct of the Christians is to be utterly sincere, and not like that of some preachers who act respectably where they are known and seen, but damnably where they think they shall not be found out.

Three pairs of negative datives of manner throw the positive adverb “decorously” into bold relief. The darker the background, the more distinct the white image set against it. Pious folks sometimes ask: Can it be possible that the Christians in Rome needed warning against such obvious forms of wickedness? They should really ask, how could Paul possibly include himself, for he writes: “Let us walk... not in carousings” etc. One answer is 1 Cor. 10:12. Another is Christ’s own warning Luke 21:34 in which he too names the same sins. There are two more reasons. One is that the worst excess is named in order to have it included, but so as to embrace also all in the same line that is less wicked. Thus murder is forbidden, but this includes anger, hatred, etc., as Jesus expounds, Matt. 5:21 etc. Likewise adultery, but including every lustful look of the eyes, Matt. 5:27 etc. In the next place, when the devil succeeds in bringing a Christian to fall, especially one that has had the odor of sanctity, he often drags him into the most shameful sins. Paul’s psychology is real, he operates with no illusions and no assumptions. How many “excellent” church members have been caught in vice and even in crime, stained with utter disgrace.

The world loves “carousings” and “drunkennesses” to this day, counting them great pleasure, especially when they can be kept secret.

We have no exact English counterpart for κοίτη, “couch” or “bed,” a euphemism for sexual intercourse, the plural used in the sense of whoring and harlotries. In the old days of paganism these abominations accompanied many celebrations at temples; Paul wrote 1 Cor. 6:15-20. Those who have visited the excavated ruins of Pompeii will know what is to be seen there in the way of public brothels. The pagan world stank with vice, and does the modern world stink less? Read General Pershing’s account of the late war and especially its sections on the effects of venereal disease upon the army in France. Ἀσέλγεια = excesses, *Zuegellosigkeiten*, *Ausschweifungen*, unbridled acts, whether sexual or of some other kinds.

Finally “strife” or quarreling, and “jealousy,” of which the world is full, and of which the Church has always had too much.

Regard these three pairs as samples of “the works of the darkness,” of which our conduct must be ever rid. Not only must the fully developed growth be absent, but equally the little poisonous sprouts which the devil’s seed tries to start everywhere.

[14] From the hortative subjunctives “let us” Paul finally turns to the peremptory aorist imperative, incisive and strong. It would be a mistake to think that with this turn from “let us” to “do ye” Paul now excludes himself. For now he mentions the positive and basic acts by which the preceding hortations are carried into effect, and in these basic acts Paul is involved as much as any Christian.

“Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” He is put on in two ways: once in justification, next in sanctification. The one is done in the instant when faith appropriates his death and merit (Is. 61:10; Matt. 22:12, the wedding garment); the other is done in the act of faith by which we grasp Christ as the power of sanctification, as our armor of defense and of offense against the foe (Eph. 6:13). Here Paul speaks of sanctification. Lutheran preachers should not need to be told how dangerous is the old Romish error, perpetuated by many Protestants, which mixes the putting on of Christ in justification with the putting on of him in sanctification. Besser tries to draw in justification by referring to our sins which need daily pardon and justification, but Paul is here not dealing with this subject.

Zahn is one of those commentators who try to find a unified figure in all that Paul here says, and thus he becomes guilty of the ridiculous incongruity, “that they who have’ arisen from their night couch allow themselves to be seen not unclothed or in incomplete clothing in the daylight in public.” The verb ἐνδύω is not restricted to garments. To put on the Lord Jesus Christ does not mean to put him on as a garment. In 5:12 the verb is used with ὄπλα, and in Eph. 6:13 Paul has ἀναλάβετε, “take up” the πανοπλίαν. Luther is right when he says that by “the Lord Jesus Christ” is meant the embodiment of our weapons, our full panoply. Paul uses this verb in the sense that we may so draw the Lord Jesus Christ to ourselves that all his power against the darkness may be ours for protection and for victory.

The fact is that Christians are caught in sin, when they forget their Savior and try to fight with their unaided strength.

Paul's last admonition must necessarily lose much in translation, for we cannot place the genitive first and the phrase last as the Greek does, throwing emphasis on both; nor can we get the same effect as the Greek with its use of the article and its absence of the article. "And for the flesh (the body We all have, through which so much sin tries to invade us, — objective genitive) any forethought (you may take, — no article), do not be making it for yourselves (durative and middle) for (anything in the way of) lusts (sis, for the purpose of lusts of any kind, and for lusts as the result)." Any forethought we may take for our bodies and their needs in this secular life is never to be of such a nature that any lusts are stirred up or satisfied.

Paul does not say in this sentence that we are to exercise forethought for our bodies; that is a natural instinct. All excessive asceticism is foreign to the Scriptures. We are never to despise the body, as though the sooner we are rid of it the better. The body too is redeemed and is to be glorified. But in this secular life the body is so responsive to sin that we must ever be on our guard; read 6:12 etc.; also 7:23 etc., regarding the bodily members. Even clothing, food and drink, house and home may stir up lusts, and the bodily senses so easily inflame lusts. When "the day" comes, ushering in Christ's return, our vile body shall be made like his glorious body, no more contamination by way of the body possible. "Flesh" is used as in Gal. 2:20: "what I now live in flesh," i.e. in body and bodily existence, and not in the ethical sense of our corrupt nature. Yet "flesh" in the sense of "body" is our "mortal body" (6:12) with its weakness since the fall and with its proneness to sin.

## Homiletical Aid

The text naturally divides into two parts: 1) "And that, knowing the time" etc.; 2) "Let us therefore" etc. The second rests on the first, which makes a unit of the two. Many preachers will build the sermon accordingly. The only problem will be the formulation. Loy inclines to abstract divisions and thus offers:

## **It is High Time to Awake out of Sleep.**

We propose to consider

- I. The reason for this admonition;
- II. The import of it.

In my opinion this text calls for something more stimulating. Consider the following:

A stirring text — get the spirit of it! Black shadows of night mingled with the dangerous shadows of foes. The nearness of the everlasting day with victory and triumph. Thus St. Paul heralds the Advent for us.

### **St. Paul's Advent Trumpet Call.**

- I. Rouse up!
  1. We do not want to be caught in the spiritual sleep of carelessness and indifference, just living our secular lives until it is too late. Rouse up!
  2. We certainly know the time into which our earthly lives are placed, with Christ's return and the eternal day of blessedness and our own eternal salvation drawing nearer with every new Advent day. Rouse up!
- II. Arm!
  1. Off with every work of the darkness! Paul names six samples. In particular, what we do for the body must not stir up its lusts.
  2. On with the armor of light! To live an honorable life, shining bright in the power of our Lord Jesus Christ right in the midst of this dark world-age.

Aroused and armed let us pass through the short remainder of our earthly lives in this wicked world, our eyes ever toward the salvation that awaits us so close at hand!

By means of synthesis one may make a number of parts and may derive the theme from the last verse of the text. The order of the parts may be according to whatever, logical scheme the preacher desires.

### **The Advent Call: Put on the Lord Jesus Christ!**

- I. Use all the armor of light!
- II. Conquer the works of the darkness!
- III. Keep the body from lusts!
- IV. Know the times!
- V. Yield not to sleep!
- VI. Ever consider your salvation!

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An Advent Christian is one who is ever ready for his Savior's return. Paul pictures him this Advent morning.

### **The Advent Christian.**

I. Awake; II. Clean; III. Strong.

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The text starts with a number of terms expressing time; Paul also speaks about our knowing the time and makes that the reason for our conduct. A great many men know the time in a secular way; few heed the time in a spiritual way. The papers keep us posted on the latest in politics, in business, in amusement, in crime, and in many other things. But they say nothing about the night, that is far spent, about the day, that is near at hand. They know nothing about our salvation, our spiritual danger and spiritual foes. The press does record the daily record of vices, but only as a matter of news, and when it comes to eradicating these damnable works it knows nothing about the cleansing power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Christian is to know the times in a clear spiritual way. He is to see that

## **The Night is Far Spent, the Day is at Hand.**

Hence he will give closest heed to what St. Paul here says to him about

- I. The carelessness of sleep, which disregards the greatest fact about our time, the nearness of the day.
- II. The works of the darkness, which fill the night of this world-age and would like to sweep us too away.
- III. The armor of the light, by which we are able to stand against all the foes that lurk in the darkness.
- IV. The putting on of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. 1:30, and keeps us safe in this wicked world.
- V. The lusts of the earthly body, through the members of which in this sinful world many temptations assail us.

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Instead of so many main parts we may make two groups. Thus: Since Jesus finished his work of grace here on earth, there is only one more great event awaiting the world, namely his return in glory for the judgment. As this was the case in the first century when St. Paul lived and wrote the words of our text to the Christians in Rome, so it is true for all of us Christians today. It is of vital importance for us ever to know that

## **The Night is Far Spent, the Day is at Hand.**

- I. What this means in the way of danger.
  1. From sleep;
  2. From the works of the darkness;
  3. From the lusts that would invade the body.
- II. What this means in the way of meeting the danger.
  1. Wielding the weapons of the light;
  2. Using the power of the Lord Jesus Christ;

3. Never losing sight of the salvation now nearer than ever for us.

Since we expect to interpret the entire text to our people, it makes little difference how we arrange the outline, whether with a few parts or with a number.

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People love to be up with the times. They like to know, to have, and to show off with the latest. St. Paul calls upon us to be spiritually

### **Up with the Times.**

- I. Aware of the dangers in the night of this world age.
  - II. Prepared for the salvation of the day that is so near at hand.
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By means of synthesis we may obtain a theme from the words: "For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

Advent means coming: because of the first coming of Christ in grace for redemption his second coming in glory for judgment brings us the salvation of blessedness in heaven. St. Paul says that this salvation is now nearer to us than when we first came to believe. Yes,

### **The Heavenly Salvation is Coming for you.**

- I. Nevertheless, it is easy to lose;
  - II. Though, on the other hand, it is not difficult to obtain.
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### **The Christians are Keen Observers of the Time.**

- I. They know that it is high time to awake.
- II. They know that they should lay aside the garments of darkness.
- III. They know that they should put on the armor of light.



J. W. Behnken, *Concordia Pulpit* 1933.

**Note:** Through the good offices of Dr. Walter A. Maier, theological professor of the Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, and the helpfulness of Rev. O. F. Stolzenburg, pastor in Columbus, O., the homiletical literature of the Missouri Ev. Luth. Synod was made available to me. It came to my hands when the printer was already at work, hence the material is added at the end of the section concerned, and credit is given. I sincerely thank Dr. Maier and Rev. Stolzenburg for their assistance.

THE AUTHOR.

# **The Second Sunday In Advent.**

## **Rom. 15:4-13**

### **“With One Mind and One Mouth Glorify God”**

The preacher who faces this text for the first time in order on the basis of it to work out a good sermon for the Second Sunday in Advent cannot be blamed if he call it difficult. Other epistle texts are similar, hence the common judgment that preaching on the ancient epistle texts is a difficult task. Let it be! Such difficulty is only a challenge. The Lord did not intend that all our tasks and texts should be easy. Ever and again we are to gird up our loins and use our abilities to the fullest extent. Our ability as able preachers of the Word is made to grow and develop by mastering hard texts.

Nebe finds the burden of the text in its statements about Jews and Gentiles. “The reception of the Gentiles, the conversion of the nations to the Lord is to be brought before our souls by means of this pericope.” Nebe would make this a missionary Sunday. He brings in the antibiblical notion of the final conversion of the Jewish nation. The preacher will find no help in Nebe.

Sommer makes the text pivot on hope: “The Second Sunday in Advent is devoted to the joyful hope for the return of the Lord.” “Hope” is indeed mentioned three times in this text. Hope also matches the subject of the gospel for the day, the prophecy of the Lord’s return, Luke 21:25-36. Yet we are compelled to say that this is not a text devoted to the Christian hope, and if hope is to be the subject a text should have been chosen which truly treats mainly of hope.

These two expositors, with both of whom we disagree, are evidence that our text is not so easily made the basis of a sermon. It is essential, in my opinion, to be clear as regards the place which our text occupies in Paul’s

Epistle. Rom. 14:1-15:13 deals with the adiaphora as affecting the conduct of the strong and the weak Christians towards each other, so that the true unity of the congregation may be preserved undamaged. The last part of this section in Romans constitutes our text. We see at once that the central thought cannot be either mission work or the great hope of Christ's return. In this final part of the section on the adiaphora Paul broadens his discussion. He is done with the details regarding the adiaphora as affecting the strong, well informed Christian and his weaker, over-scrupulous brother. His last direct word on this subject is contained in 15:1-3. Yet Paul is not entirely done. Underlying all that he has said is the great purpose of God: "that you be like minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

*Oneness of mind and confession for the glory of God is the burden of this text.* All else falls into its proper place around this center. In this way the matter of Jews and Gentiles is once more touched upon, although it has already been treated so adequately in 4:9 — 18. It is but an adiaphoron whether a Christian at one time was a Jew or a Gentile; he is neither now, he is a Christian. The Old Testament passages quoted are not adduced as proof; they rather show that God has always so conceived his people.

If this oneness of mind and of confession is the true subject of the text, how does that harmonize with the gospel text and its subject, the return of Christ at the last day? Only oneness of mind and no contradiction of thought regarding the Word glorifies God; only oneness in the true confession and not contradictory false creeds, again glorifies God. Note how both in v. 6 and v. 7 the glory of God is made the ultimate aim of our lives. Here is the bridge between gospel and epistle. When Christ returns only they "are accounted worthy... to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:26) who have glorified God with one mind and one mouth. He gave us his Word, "in order that through the perseverance and through the admonition of the Scripture we may be having the hope," the hope that culminates at the return of Christ (v. 4). Thus too he deserves the title "the God of the hope." Ever and ever the Scriptures urge us to true oneness in the Word, for they who separate themselves by deviating from the Word will have more than they can answer for when the Lord of that Word returns

in glory. Indeed, we may make our theme: True Christian Oneness Fills us with Sure Hope.

In v. 3 Paul has a Scripture quotation. He intends to use several other Scripture passages in the following (v. 9-12). He thus tells his readers why the Scriptures were written. **For whatever things were written before, for our instruction were they written, in order that through the perseverance and through the admonition of the Scriptures we may be having the hope.** Here is stated God's own purpose in all that was written long before we lived. Here is indicated how we should regard and read the Scriptures which have now come into our hands. They are meant by God for our διδασκαλία or "instruction." While Paul speaks of the Old Testament Scriptures, what is true regarding them is no less true regarding the New Testament Scriptures.

Προεγράφη — ἔγγραφη — τῶν γραφῶν all emphasize the writing, the last expression denoting the product: "the Scriptures," and the two verbs are in the passive voice, since the agent, the great Writer, is God. When a compound verb (προεγράφη) is repeated, the preposition is regularly omitted (ἔγγραφη). God thought of us and of our needs long centuries ago (1 Cor. 10:11) and stored up for us in permanent form, so as never to be lost, all this rich Scripture instruction.

Paul adds the purpose of this divine instruction: "in order that through the perseverance and through the admonition of the Scriptures we may be having hope." "Instruction" conveys information. The purpose of the Scripture information is the continuation of "the hope," that we may ever have it. Paul's View is comprehensive. He sees the complete divine purpose which extends to the last day. "The hope" with its article is not subjective, not the feeling of hope in our hearts, but objective, the thing hoped for as promised by the Lord. "The hope" is eternal salvation bestowed upon us at the last day. The subjective element is in the verb: "that we may be having," may continue to have in our hearts. Many men hope subjectively, only to be disappointed in the end. They have no divinely assured objective hope. That for which we hope is signed and sealed for us in the Scriptures. Ever and ever the preacher should bring out the great difference: the baseless, empty hoping of worldly men, and the sure certain hoping of the Christian which God has promised to fulfill.

Two *διὰ* phrases state the two means by which God intends that we shall ever have and enjoy this hope: “through (by means of) the perseverance and through (by means of) the admonition of the Scriptures.” The last genitive belongs to both phrases; it denotes source: the Scriptures provide this perseverance and this admonition. In v.5 we have “the God of this perseverance and of this admonition.” He and his Scriptures are the source. Both nouns have the article, for this is not some perseverance and some admonition in general; both are specific as furnished only by the Scriptures (God).

“The perseverance” is subjective, — for we persevere; “the admonition” is objective, — for the Scriptures admonish. Sometimes the subjective is placed first as here, sometimes it is placed second. The relation of the two is always the same: the subjective is produced by the objective, for it could not be otherwise. Ὑπομονή is more than “patience” (our versions). It is that brave, steady “remaining under,” which we call “perseverance.” It bravely, uncomplainingly holds out under all adverse circumstances. “The one that persevered (ὁ ὑπομείνας) to the end, he shall be saved,” Matt. 24:13.

C.-K. 573 well defines *παράκλησις*: *eine ermahnende, ormunternde und troestende Zuredede zur Staerkung und Befestigung des glaeubigen Heilsbesitzes*, an admonishing, encouraging, comforting address to us, to strengthen and confirm us in our believing possession of salvation. One may translate “admonition” or “comforting” (activity, because —σις is the suffix), not “comfort” (result, our versions). The Scriptures offer us their abundant “admonishing,” mixed with encouraging and comforting, to keep us in perseverance, steady, steadfast, and true. God knew how much all of us would need it in all phases of our Christian life, and so he provided it for us long in advance in the great storehouse of the Scriptures.

[5] In 14:1-15:3 Paul has dealt with the *adiaphora*. They are not to disrupt the congregation. It is this basic point which he now brings forward and elaborates. Of course, it involves much more than dissension and division due to the *adiaphora*.

Let us not go astray on the matter of unity. The strong and the weak, the able and the unable (v. 1) are one in the *Una Sancta*, by virtue of the justifying faith which makes them all one body in Christ. This oneness is a simple fact. It is not this oneness about which Paul is concerned; nor is it

this oneness for which Jesus prays in John 17. Only confused thinking supposes so. Paul's concern is the oneness in apprehending the διδασκαλία or instruction of the Scriptures (v. 4 with its three references to the Scriptures). All believers are to be fully clear in regard to what this instruction is. Then the adiaphora will not cause an outward split; nor will any mistaken teachings or convictions divide the hearts and minds. This was Christ's concern in his High Priestly prayer: "Sanctify them in the truth. Thy Word is truth." This oneness in the Word is to impress the world (John 17:17:21:23). Here is much room for searching our hearts and for prayer. So much error, far beyond the adiaphora, divides the visible Church. Unity in the one unchanging and unchangeable Word is the one great need for which God has made such elaborate provision.

**Now the God of this perseverance and of this admonition** (the two articles of previous reference) **give to you to be minding the same thing among each other in accord with Christ Jesus! (6) in order that in one accord with one mouth you may continue glorifying the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.** Paul has reached the closing part of his discussion and thus naturally turns to prayer. The aorist optative expresses wish, which is equal to a prayer. This, however, is not merely "to be minding the same thing," all holding the same convictions and thoughts on every important matter; for some convictions may be wrong, despite the unanimity with which they are held. The final phrase excludes all wrong unanimity. Paul's prayer is: "to be minding the same thing in accord with Christ Jesus."

To call Christ our example is to entertain a confused idea; no one person exemplifies unanimity. Κατά expresses norm. Every mind is to be normated by Christ Jesus. "Christ Jesus" is the soteriological title, like "Lord Jesus," formed like King David, etc., office and person combined in this order. Some think of the character of Christ Jesus, but this only makes him an example in another way. Christ Jesus is our norm as Christ Jesus, as all that he was and is in his office and person, as all that he and his work and Word comprise. "Christ Jesus is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30), in every respect our norm. Paul has already told us that the Scriptures are the one source from which our minds are to draw "the same thing" in accord with this norm.

[6] Τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν ἐν ἀλλήλοις == to think the identical thing in connection with each other. The natural purpose of this inner oneness is: “in order that in one accord with one mouth you may keep glorifying God”. etc. Oneness of mind in oneness of month. Paul prays that through the one the other may be obtained. Note that not already by minding the identical thing do we glorify God; for what is in the mind is hidden and secret, and glorifying means to let something shine forth. Luke has ὁμοθυμαδόν, “in one accord” (ὁμός, same, identical, plus θυμός, *anima*, that which animates) eleven times, evidently loving this word, Paul has it only here. “With one mouth” == in one united confession, — not merely all joining in the same psalm, hymn, creed, prayer, confession of sin, doxology, in public worship, but that every member everywhere and every time confesses the same Gospel truth, whatever part of it may be broached, thereby glorifying God before men.

That the whole of Christendom should be absolutely one in its confession and thus glorify God, is due to his glory which is one and unchangeable. For when some say one thing regarding God and his Gospel and others contradictory things this does not glorify him, it does the opposite. The Word likewise is one and unchangeable. Thus our apprehending it must be one, our voicing that apprehension in confession. This oneness of conviction and confession, like our mystical oneness in the *Una Sancta*, is far deeper and more essential than many suppose, for its ultimate basis, source, and substance is the oneness of God and his glory.

Here perish all such notions as that each man may have his own “views” and the right to such “views,” that there may be “different tendencies in the Lutheran Church,” that we may agree to disagree, that creeds and confessions hinder the Church and keep men out of it, that creedlessness is the ideal. Where oneness of mind and of mouth is lost, somebody is wrong, somebody is not glorifying God but himself, darkening the glory of God, forsaking the Word, injuring the Church, putting in jeopardy his connection with the *Una Sancta*, perhaps tearing himself away from its spiritual bond. The clearer our view of the ultimate ground of our confessional oneness, the more serious and dangerous the divisions and rents in confession will appear.

“The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” is a standard designation in the apostolic Church (2 Cor. 1:3; 11:31; Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3). It names

God in connection with Christ in the fullest soteriological way: the God with whom our whole salvation in Christ is bound up. This name for God is really a concentrated Christian confession. It packs into this glorious Name all that the Scriptures reveal concerning our Savior-God.

The question is raised whether God is here said to be only the Father of our Lord Jesus, or also his God. The A.V. translates the passages incorrectly; the R.V. has translated them rightly. Jesus himself calls God his God in Matt. 27:46; John 20:17. In Eph. 1:17 Paul writes: “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.” For Jesus in his human nature God is his God; for Jesus in his deity God is his Father, — his God since the Incarnation, his Father from all eternity. Fail not to note “our Lord,” a confession connecting us with Jesus Christ and his God and Father. “Lord” == he who has bought us (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23), to whom we belong, from whom we derive everything, whom alone we obey.

[7] In the apostolic Church there was great danger of division because the membership was composed of former Jews and former Gentiles. Yet there were not to be two Churches, one Jewish, the other Gentile. The Church was to be one. Rom. 16:3 etc., permits us to see the entire congregation at Rome, its Jewish and its Gentile members. We thus understand why Paul instructs and admonishes the Romans on this subject. It is but an immaterial adiaphoron whether a Christian came from the Jews or from the Gentiles. Now all were one as Christians. At the present time this difference needs no attention. Jews are still converted to Christianity, but we hear of only a few such cases in our congregations. Nearly all of us are of Gentile origin. What Paul here writes applies to us. Let us glorify God, rejoice with God’s ancient people, and so attain the great hope of salvation. If in ancient times Jews and Gentiles could live in peace and unanimity as Christians, we today who are of Gentile blood ought never to clash and to divide.

**Therefore**, that the divine purpose (v. 6) may be attained as far as you are concerned, **be receiving each other to yourselves, even as also Christ received you to himself for God’s glory! (8) For I mean that Christ has become a minister of circumcision for the sake of God’s truth, so as to confirm the promises of the fathers, (9) and so that the Gentiles for the sake of mercy glorify God; as it has been written, etc.** Paul is done with the question of meat and drink. It is a mistake to suppose that Paul is still



treating this question and that in Rome the Gentile members were the strong ones, while the Jewish members were weak and had scruples regarding meat, wine, etc. The correct exegesis of 14:1 etc., shows that this supposition is not true.

Paul bids all the Romans to receive each other to themselves just as Christ also received them all to himself for the glory of God. The one receiving calls for the other. The Romans are to proceed as if no difference at all existed, just as Christ made no difference. Receive to yourselves means in loving, fraternal kindness.

The peculiar blindness of unionism finds support for its unionism here: receive everybody into the church, just so he calls himself a Christian. In v. 4-6 true unity is made the basis of this fellowship of receiving each other. Without that basis the fellowship would be spurious, and certainly not “for God’s glory.”

[8] Δέγω γάρ == “I mean” and tells the Romans that Paul is referring to the constituency of their congregation, former Jews and former Gentiles. Christ received both unto himself, and his reception of the one was as much “for God’s glory” as the reception of the other. How, is now set forth in a masterly manner, just as in 4:11-12, which should be studied.

How was it as regards the Jews? “Christ has become a minister of circumcision for the sake of God’s truth, so as to confirm the promises of the fathers.” A “minister” is one who serves others freely for their benefit. So Christ served “circumcision,” the abstract term for the concrete idea: “those circumcised,” without the article because quality is in mind, not number. Christ ministered to Jews “for the sake of God’s truth.” In v. 7 we have “for God’s glory.” His glory == the display of his attributes. One of these is God’s truth, another is God’s mercy (v. 9). Both shine forth in what Christ did. There are, of course, still other attributes in the glory.

Εἰς τό states result. The result of what Christ did for Jews was that he confirmed the promises of the fathers. God had promised redemption to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These promises Jesus confirmed by fulfilling them. No such promises had been made to Gentiles, hence the Gentiles come in in a different way for God’s glory. Christ’s confirmation of the promises to Jews refers not only to the objective part, that Christ came and wrought redemption as promised, but to the subjective part as well, that,

despite the self-hardening and then the punitive hardening of so many Jews, many others were actually being saved (11:7 and 26). This glorification of God's truth all Jewish believers were ever to keep in mind.

[9] Εἰς τό governs both βεβαιῶσαι and δοξάσαι. There were two results, one pertaining to the Jews, glorifying God's truth, the other pertaining to the Gentiles, glorifying God's mercy. Δέ with the second infinitive == "moreover." The two phrases stand out: ὑπὲρ ἀληθείας Θεοῦ — ὑπὲρ ἔλεους, "for the sake of God's truth" — "for the sake of mercy." As regards the Gentiles, to whom no promises had been made, God's "mercy" stands out most gloriously; God pitied and commiserated them. ἔλεος sees the sinner in his misery, under the dread consequences of his sins, and reaches out to relieve him; while κάρις sees him in his damnable guilt and frees him by undeserved pardon. That salvation is also a matter of pure mercy also for the Jews has already been said in 9:14 etc., after showing in 9:4-13 that it was all promise. While both infinitives are constative and follow εἰς τό, their subjects differ: Christ confirmed; the Gentiles are to glorify God. Perhaps περιτομῆς ; lacks the article because it is abstract, while τὰ ἔθνη has the article because it is concrete.

"As it has been written" (perfect tense: and ever since stands on record) is often supposed to introduce "proof for Paul's thesis." It would be rather late in the day to prove to the Romans that they might have Gentile members as well as Jewish. This is something much finer than proof. The passages state that already the Old Testament saw Jews and Gentiles joining in praise to the Lord. This joint praise is the subject of the quotations, coming from one heart and one mouth, in one unanimous, harmonious chorus. That is the point for us today: this confessional oneness we must maintain. As once Jews and Gentiles ceased to be Jews and Gentiles and equally became Christians glorifying God in fullest unanimity, so must we wipe out every difference and all equally praise God.

The passages are carefully selected and are arranged in order: 1) David brings Jehovah to the Gentiles; 2) They are told to praise God with his people (v. 10); 3. All nations and peoples, Jews and Gentiles, are to join together in praise of their own accord (v. 11); 4. And the cause of all this praise is "the shoot of Jesse," the Jew's own, yet also the Gentiles' ruler and hope (v. 12). This is the Old Testament prophetic picture of the unity and

oneness of the Christian Church, merging the most diverse national elements into perfect homogeneity in Christ.

It is no effort at all for Paul to select from the Old Testament the thoughts and the expressions he wants.

**“For this will I confess thee among Gentiles, And will sing and play psalms to thy name.” [10] And again he declares: “Be happy, Gentiles, together with his people!” [11] And again: “Be praising the Lord, all the nations! And let all the peoples heap praise on him!” [12] And again Isaiah declares: “There shall be the root-sprout of Jesse, And the One rising up to rule Gentiles. On him Gentiles shall hope.”**

David was the conqueror of the heathen nations surrounding Israel. He was a type of Christ, and built up the kingdom over which Solomon reigned in peace. Yet in Ps. 18:49 David says that his victories mean that he is able to confess *Yahveh* among all these Gentiles, to sing and play his psalms glorifying Yahweh’s Name in their midst. David brings the Name with its salvation to these Gentiles that they may join in confession with him. To be sure, the Gentiles obtain the faith from the Jews. As the source is one, so the confession can only be one.

Ἐξομολογέομαι means “to confess,” although some insist on “to praise”; φάλλω == to twang a musical string, to play on a stringed instrument as accompaniment to singing. Here too the ὄνομα, the Name, == that by which God makes himself known to men, by which they are able to know and to trust him, i.e. his revelation.

[10] First, God is made known to the Gentiles; next they are invited to join God’s people, Deut. 32:43: “Jubilate, nations, over his people!” (Hebrew), “Be happy, Gentiles, with his people!” (LXX). By God’s λαός are meant not all Jews, but all the true and faithful ones. The idea is that these Gentiles are to see what Jehovah has done for his faithful people, that they are to rejoice over Israel on this account, and join Israel in magnifying God’s name.

[11] “And again” means that Jehovah again speaks in Ps. 117:1 (the shortest of the Psalms). The advance in thought is that now the Gentiles are not called upon to confess and praise with Israel, or for what God has done for Israel, but without reference to Israel, on their own account. The other

verse of this Psalm names the mercy and the truth of Jehovah, the same two great attributes which Paul mentions in v. 8-9. Note the universality in “all the nations,” — recalling “all nations” in Matt. 28:19. First the durative present imperative ἀνεῖτε, “ever keep praising”; next the punctiliar aorist imperative with ἐπί, in one grand act “heap up praise on him.”

[12] Paul reaches the climax and thus names the prophet Isaiah, whose utterance is found in 11:10 LXX. Here Christ is named from his Jewish descent, who is thus everything for the Jews: “the root-sprout of Jesse,” and yet he is described as the ruler of the Gentiles, on whom the Gentiles hope. Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled in Rome at the time, Jews and Gentiles under the one banner of Jesus Christ, Paul calling on them unitedly to glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 6).

Paul omits “in that day,” because that day had now come. By ἡ ῥίζα is meant a live stump sending up a sprout, hence “the root-sprout,” the article to designate the one person meant. Jesse was David’s father; in Rev. v. 5 and 22:16 the expression is “root sprout of David.” The royal house that descended from Jesse was cut down like a tree; from the root Jesse (appositional genitive) only a tender young sprout would grow up, tiny and apparently weak compared with the old royal tree. But wonder of wonders, this would be the ruler not only of Jews but also of Gentiles, infinitely greater than any king of Jesse’s line. The Hebrew reads: “he shall stand for an ensign (*nem*, a high flag-pole or lofty standard) of the nations,” around which they rally. The LXX sacrifice this grand figure and translate more literally, Paul consenting: “the one rising up to rule Gentiles.” The kind of ruler he is the last line states: “on him Gentiles shall hope” (ἐλπιοῦσιν, Attic future).

Here is the hand of God: a mere root-sprout, small, lowly, from a defunct royal Jewish house, is made the Lord and the hope of all the nations. How the Jewish believers should praise God when they looked at their Gentile fellow believers; and how these Gentile believers should praise God when they looked at their Jewish fellow believers, whose Messiah-King was also their hope. Isaiah’s word “shall hope” is the very word Paul wants. He has it in v. 4 and he dwells on it in v. 13. Hope centers in Christ’s return at the last day.

The greatest division in the world, even to this day, is that between Jews and Gentiles. It seemed impossible to bridge the chasm. The great wonder of grace is that God joined the two in Christ. The whole Old Testament foretells the oneness of the Christian Church, with one mouth praising and confessing the Gospel doctrine. All differences are gone, they cease any longer to divide. The question of Jew and Gentile has lost most of its meaning in our time. Most Jews are hardened beyond hope (11:7 and 25, πῶρως and the verb == hardening not blindness); few men of Jewish extraction are found in our congregations. Other causes seek to divide and to spoil our unanimous praise and confession. Apply the text: all these causes must be removed by the true oneness in Christ, our Ruler and our Hope.

[13] Paul closes with a wish, which amounts to a prayer. **Now may the God of this hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you abound in this hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit.** Πληρῶσαι is the first aorist optative, here used as a wish: “may fill you”; verbs of filling rule the genitive. With abstract nouns ads may or may not be followed by the article, the distinction between “all” and “every” (joy, peace, etc.) being lost.

Beautifully Paul twines together in this last sentence: hope — joy — peace — believing, making hope prominent by repetition, each time with the article of previous reference: “this hope” of which Isaiah spoke. On “hope” see v. 4. “The God of this hope” names him as its source; comp. “the God of the perseverance” etc., in v. 5. By thus naming God we are made to think of the climax and the consummation which God will bring about at the last day. So also Paul wants us to abound in this hope, to have our hearts full of this true hope. Hope is the crowning effect. It is thus lifted on high. Paul does not say: May God fill you with all joy and peace and hope and faith. He carefully correlates these four. As hope is the crowning effect, so faith is the basic effect of God’s work. Paul notes that by ἐν τῷ πιστεύειν, “in connection with the believing” (durative present). In between “this hope” and “the believing” Paul places “all joy and peace,” the intermediate effects of God’s grace. He who trusts in the true Savior, he who has heaven before him in hope, how can he be without the highest and truest joy and the real peace that knows all is well between God and him? “In connection with (ἐν) the power of the Holy Spirit” names the Third

Person of the Godhead as the one who in the divine economy, by the gracious, saving power of Word and Sacrament, works all these effects in us.

Paul's prayerful wish is written in the interest of our confessional oneness and unanimity. "This hope" means there is no other; this is also true with regard to "the believing," and the resultant joy and peace. Their source is one, the God of this hope and the power of the Holy Spirit. Shall we ever let anything inward-or outward separate us from this oneness in our Lord?

## **Homiletical Aid**

Last Sunday: Be aroused! Arm! This Sunday: Hold together! We are one in Christ Jesus, with one hope set before us on the great day of Christ's return. God grant you to be like minded according to Jesus Christ!

### **Our Advent Unity.**

True Christian unity may be studied from various vantage points. Our text leads us to place this unity in the light of the Second Advent, our great hope which God will fulfill at the last day.

#### **I. One Savior**

1. The world endlessly split up. Jews and Gentiles hopelessly antagonistic and yet made one by God as Christians in this one Savior.
2. So the one Savior unites us and removes all disturbing differences, — unless you mean to separate yourself from this oneness.

#### **II. One Scripture-Word**

1. One instruction (doctrine) written aforetime for us.
2. One admonition and hope derived from this one instruction, — unless you want to pervert the Scriptures and rob yourself of their hope.

### III. One Mind

1. One conviction, for One produces it, God.
2. By one means: perseverance and admonition of the Scriptures.
3. According to one norm, Jesus Christ, — unless you mean to go your own way and take the consequences.

### IV. One confession

1. The heart must speak out through the mouth, confessing the one truth of Scripture.
2. To praise and glorify God and Christ, — unless you are filled with evil discord and separate yourself from God's true people.

### V. One Fellowship

1. Receive ye one another!
2. As Christ also received us to the glory of God, — unless you make yourself one whom we must avoid, Rom. 16:17, whose fellowship contaminates.

### VI. One goal

1. In one faith, one joy and one peace in our hearts for the present.
2. In one faith one sure and certain hope for the future, — unless you disregard this hope and manufacture your own.

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The gospel for today speaks of the end of the world and wants us to see to it that we are accounted worthy to stand before the Son of man. Our epistle speaks of the oneness and unity which should bind us together in this worthiness.

### **Our Great Advent Need, Like Mindedness.**

- I. All alike stand on the Scriptures.
- II. All alike receive each other.

- III. All alike hold fast our eternal hope.
- IV. All alike glorify God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus at last shall we be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of man.

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Occasionally the parts may be formulated so as to form a running sentence. In the delivery care must be taken so to state each part, with proper pause and emphasis, that it may stand out and that the hearer may note just what is being stated.

### **True Christian Oneness Fills us with Sure Hope.**

- I. Only by our believing (ἐν τῷ πιστεύειν, v. 13) the one teaching (διδασκαλία, v. 4) of the Scriptures
- II. Will Jews, Gentiles, and men of all nations be one in accord with Christ Jesus
- III. And will in one accord with one mouth glorify God
- IV. And will thus attain the fulfillment of our hope at the last day.

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All negative texts involve the corresponding positive truths, and all positive texts imply the corresponding negatives. When Paul wants us to glorify God with one mouth he opposes two or more mouths. The divine way is union, not unionism. Our Lutheran Church as such has always been opposed to unionism and has always held to true union. The other Protestant churches have advocated and practiced unionism with the fearful result that now they have been corrupted by modernism. Some Lutherans follow this evil example. They cease to be true to the unity expressed in our Lutheran Confessions, believe and confess contrary doctrines, and yet want us to treat them as true confessors. Usually they act as though it is almost impossible to define unionism.



Yet the definition lies on the surface in our text. True union is that “with one accord with one mouth we glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 6). Therefore, unionism is the act that without one accord and without one mouth we pretend to glorify God. True union is “like mindedness in accord with Christ Jesus” (v. 5). Therefore, unionism consists in being of different minds, some at least in discord with Christ Jesus, yet pretending they are one. In other words, unionism is fellowship practiced by those who do not believe and do not confess the same doctrine. Whoever believes and confesses the true doctrine of the Scriptures must not fellowship those who believe and confess contrary doctrines. The dangers involved in unionism are always great, as the history of the Church shows.

Why does our Unity in Christ Jesus Exclude all Unionism?

- I. Because of the Scriptures.
  1. On them alone rest our faith (v. 13) and our hope.
  2. We must reject all other teaching.
- II. Because of our obligation to glorify God.
  1. We glorify him only when in one accord with one mouth we confess his Scripture teaching. This unity described in v. 8-12.
  2. They rob God of his glory who come with other teaching, and we must turn from them.
- III. Because of our hope of salvation.
  1. Only when at the last day we face God with the Scriptures by which we have glorified him here on earth can we hope for the salvation he has promised us.
  2. We dare not stand with those who depart from the Scriptures in any way and thus refuse to glorify God.

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### **How Important the Writings of the Old Testament are for the Christians in the Time of the New Testament.**

They are so important for two reasons:

I. Because everything that has been written in them is for our instruction.

II. Because by the patience and comfort of these writings we have a firm basis for our hope.

C. F. W. Walther, *Epistle Postille*.

# The Third Sunday In Advent. 1

## Cor. 4:1-5

### Faithful Ministers and Stewards of Christ

The Third Sunday in Advent is the Sunday of John the Baptist. The gospel text is Matt. 11:2-10 and its subject: Christ's Testimony Regarding the Baptist and His Commission to Prepare the Way. It is easy to see how the epistle for this Sunday matches the gospel. As the Baptist is a minister of God, so also are Paul, Apollos, Peter (1 Cor. 1:12), and their assistants. As the Baptist is faithful, so are these others, and this is the chief requirement. The Lord who calls them is the one who judges whether they are faithful or not. The Corinthians are not to arrogate this judgment to themselves and pronounce verdicts according to their own human ideas. Paul does not judge himself. The Baptist was judged by men. They had wrong ideas about him; Herod imprisoned and decapitated him. The Baptist paid with his life for his faithfulness. Paul died in the same way. We may say the subject of this text is: *The Christian Minister's Faithfulness*.

This text is written to a Christian congregation and it tells the members of this congregation how to regard the Christian ministry and its ministers. Yet Paul speaks also about himself. This is a text also for the minister. It preaches to him. It has often been used for installation sermons. A few preachers have tried to refer what is here said about the faithfulness of ministers and stewards to all the church members in general. They call all the members "ministers of God and stewards" (generally omitting "of the mysteries of God"). We refuse to do this. This is not the sense of the text, nor is it in harmony with the significance of the Sunday. We also have plenty of texts which deal with the membership-of a congregation; we need this one which deals directly with the ministers in their relation to the Lord and the membership.

Paul had founded the congregation in Corinth; Apollos had followed Paul and had worked in Corinth; converts of Peter had moved to Corinth and had joined the congregation. Instead of praising God for such great teachers and profiting by their labors, the Corinthians made party heads of them, and one party even made Christ its head. There were factions and these wrangled with each other (1:11-12). Paul is correcting this condition. Christian teachers are not to be treated as party heads. Cries like: “I am a Paul man!” “I am an Apollos man!” are not to be heard in the Church. The gifts of one preacher are not to be played up over against those of another. Thus Paul comes to tell the Corinthians just how they are to account of ministers who serve them. **Thus let a man consider us as Christ’s attendants and stewards of God’s mysteries.**

Οὕτως, “thus,” connects with 3:23: “Ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” “Thus” the apostles and the pastors are Christ’s attendants and God’s stewards, and are to be so considered. It is a mistake to correlate οὕτως ... ὥς, “so... as” (Robertson). The verb λογίζεσθω requires a predicate object; here there are two: consider us “as attendants and as stewards.” The verb “to consider” means to make a careful estimate of the reality, and not merely to follow feeling, liking, minor considerations, even prejudices and the like. In 3:5 the statement “ministers through Whom you believed” brings out the relation of these ministers (διάκονοι) to the Corinthians. Now in his usual fashion Paul adds the other side, the relation of the apostles and the pastors to Christ and to God.

Apostles, preachers, pastors are, and should always be considered as ὑπηρέται Χριστοῦ. Etymologically the word means *Ruderknecht*, a rower in a galley, but this meaning passed into that of an “underling,” an attendant or a helper under a master who promptly and without question attended to his wishes and orders. Thus the Levite Temple police are ὑπηρέται (Acts 5:22); this too was Mark’s position when he accompanied Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:5).

“Attendants of Christ” affords much room for thought. As ministers we have just one function, to take Christ’s orders as he has uttered them in his Word and to carry them out without quibble or question. The one important matter is that we must make fully sure what our Lord’s will is. Our independence must be surrendered. The responsibility is our Master’s. His will is perfect. We are happy to be attending upon it. Do all ministers

consider themselves such lowly, obedient, willing attendants of Christ? Some are the slaves of men (7:23). Some alter the orders of the Master to suit themselves, to suit their congregations, etc. They become their own masters. The same is true with regard to congregations. They at times assume the role of masters and set Christ and his orders aside. They pay the pastor, hence they presume to tell him what he is and is not to preach or to do. Some pastors and some congregations are facing a terrible reckoning.

To be underlings of Christ is one side of the holy office, the other is “stewards of God’s mysteries.” The attendant is at his master’s side and does his bidding as uttered; the steward is entrusted with the administration of property or an estate and thus operates by himself, away from his master, but he returns to him to render due account. Thus “attendant” points somewhat toward lowliness, “steward” more toward dignity. Yet when we consider the exaltation of Christ and the glory of God, to be either an attendant of the one or a steward of the other is the highest position obtainable for a human being here on earth.

In ancient times when the world was full of slaves of all kinds an οἰκονόμος was frequently an able slave, whom his owner and master trusted to administer some piece of property. Compare Matt. 25:14 etc., and Luke 19:13; the *oikonomos* in Luke 16:1 etc., was not a slave. Note also Joseph in Gen. 39:4. No special difference is intended by making the attendants belong to Christ and the stewards to God. To imagine a subordination of Christ is empty imagination. This paralleling of Christ and God expresses their equality. All that can be said is that a propriety accords to Christ these attendants and to God these stewards. The word “stewards” needs a genitive, for stewards must administer some property to deserve this title, thus here: “stewards of the mysteries of God.” These “mysteries” are God’s gifts for our salvation embodied in the Word and the Sacraments. They are truly “mysteries,” for man’s natural wisdom knows nothing about them. When the Scriptures thus speak of a mystery the idea is not that it shall for ever remain hidden, but that it shall be revealed in due order. So the work of these stewards is to make known God’s mysteries to men for their salvation.

A steward is an individual to whom goods of great value are entrusted. It was no small honor when in ancient days a slave was elevated by his master to the high position of an *oikonomos*. When God so elevates a human being to the position of highest trust in his Kingdom on earth the honor, the

responsibility and accountability is correspondingly great. Something of this is expressed in 1. Tim. 3:1. He who receives such a high trust from God has the strongest motive for proving worthy of the honor. The same implication as to honor and as to motive lies in the term “God’s mysteries.” There is nothing greater and more blessed here on earth that God can entrust to any man. “God’s mysteries,” moreover, are holy and sacred. Holy are all his saving truths. Holy is every part of his saving Word entrusted to his stewards. Holy is all of the mystery revealed regarding the person and the work of the Incarnate Son and regarding the Holy Spirit’s office and work. What manner of men, then, must “the stewards of God’s mysteries” be! “Who is sufficient for these things?” 2 Cor. 2:16. “But our sufficiency is of God.” 2 Cor. 3:5.

Are all ministers and are all congregations aware of what “stewards of God’s mysteries” signifies? Some of these stewards act as though they were owners and masters. They handle these divine mysteries as they please, and their congregations pay them extra well for doing so. See what is so often done with the Holy Supper. We need not multiply details. The steward’s trust demands an accounting. Better be a common laborer than a presumptuous steward in the ministry.

[2] Take the best attested reading: ὧδε λοιπὸν ζητεῖται ἐν τοῖς οἰκονόμοις, ἵνα πιστός τις εὐρεθῆ. **In this case then it is required in the stewards that one be found trustworthy.** The adverb ὧδε means “here,” namely “in this case” of the stewards just mentioned; λοιπὸν is a mere particle equivalent to “then,” or a little stronger, the German *uebrigens*. Paul now speaks only about the higher one of the two terms which he has used, “stewards,” and thus inserts the phrase “in the stewards,” with the article of previous reference: the stewards just referred to in v. 1. We may paraphrase Paul’s thought: You Corinthians are to consider us apostles and pastors as the Lord’s attendants and as God’s stewards. Very well, yet especially as far as these stewards are concerned, you must note the general rule which naturally applies also to them as stewards. Then Paul states the rule: the thing sought in such stewards is “that one be found faithful or reliable.” It is characteristic of Paul that he combines the plural “in these stewards” with the singular “that one be found faithful,” anyone of them. The singular suggests that each one of them should ask himself: “Am I a reliable steward?”

The subfinal ἵνα clause is the subject of ζητεῖται: “that one be found faithful is sought.” One may, of course, say that an attendant ought also to be found faithful. Yet this type of servant works under the eye of his master. The steward is placed over some estate or property at a distance from his master’s presence and makes periodic reports. Hence the aorist εὔρεθῆναι “be found” when his report is examined. Πιστός is “faithful,” so that his master may trust him completely. The word is to be regarded wholly from his master’s standpoint: “faithful” in the judgment and according to the verdict of his master. Many stewards in the Church easily and quickly pronounce themselves faithful, like the Pharisees in Luke 16:15 who serenely usurped the Judge’s throne and justified themselves. That is folly. Our heavenly Master makes no mistakes in judging the faithfulness of the ministers to whom He has entrusted the Gospel and the Church.

Paul combines the general principle regarding stewards with the specific application to the case of the stewards regarding whom he speaks. This answers the charge of discrepancy that Paul seems to speak once in one way and then in another way. Faithfulness is essential for all stewards and as a consequence also for God’s. Other things, of course, are also sought, ability, diligence, promptness, and the like, but untrustworthiness is utterly fatal.

[3] Since ministers are Christ’s underlings and God’s stewards, to whom they must be faithful, it is the Lord to whom they are answerable and to no one else, who may have other ideas about the ministry and who may try to usurp the Lord’s judicial authority. Paul makes this plain by using himself as an example. The emphatic pronoun ἐμοί, “to me,” and all that follows can be uttered by Apollos, by Peter, by any other faithful minister, as well as by Paul. Exemplification in one’s own person makes any statement concrete and thus strong and effective.

**Now to me it is a very small matter that I be subjected to judicial examination by you, or by any human court; yea, I do not judicially examine even mine own self. (4) For I am conscious of nothing against myself; yet hereby I have not been justified. Moreover he that judicially examines me is the Lord.** When the Corinthians made party heads of Paul, Apollos, and Peter they assumed the position of judges and subjected these men to an ἀνάκρισις, a juridical examination. The result was factions and contentions, one party shouting for Paul, another for Apollos, a third for Peter, and there was even a fourth party. “To me,” Paul says, “it is a very

small matter that I be subjected to judicial examination by you, or by any human court.” Εἰς ἔλαχιστον takes the place of a predicate nominative and accords with the old Greek idiom; the superlative is illative; it amounts to “a very small thing,” *mich beruehrt es sehr wenig*. Ἡμέρα is used in the technical sense of *Gerichtstag*, like our “day in court.” The emphasis is on “human” court, the opposite of divine court. Here lies the point: a human court would use mere human principles and arrive at mere human findings in its juridical investigation. What does that amount to? Mighty little.

We have an example of juridical examination in John 18:19. Annas, who lacked proper authority, tried to put Jesus through a preliminary examination, but Jesus did not submit to his probing. The case was different with regard to Pilate in John 18:33; he had proper authority and Jesus gave him due answers to his probing questions. The procedure in ἀνακρίνειν is preliminary, and eventually it leads to κρίνειν, the pronouncement of a verdict, which is either: “Guilty!” or: “Not Guilty!”

Ἀλλά is copulative, not adversative, translate with “yea.” “Yea, I do not judicially examine even mine own self.” Note the emphasis. It is not on “I do not examine” etc.; but on “mine own self I do not examine as a judge.” The idea of this statement is not that Paul with his examination of himself would only be another negligible human court. It might very well be nothing more, even also as many most unfaithful ministers examine themselves and find themselves more excellent than the most faithful men.

[4] Paul states the reason why he does not judicially examine his own self: “for I am conscious of nothing against myself.” Judicial investigations are usually not instituted unless some evidence of guilt appears. No proper court arrests and puts to judicial inquiry a perfectly innocent man. Paul here declares that in regard to his apostolic administration of the mysteries of God he is conscious of no dereliction. While he refers particularly to his faithfulness in the office of preaching, teaching, and administering the Gospel entrusted to him, this of necessity involves also his Christian life and conduct. Paul lived pure in heart and life. He was not sinless, but he conducted himself in such a way that his conscience, guided by the light of the Word and of the Spirit, could find no cause for rebuking him. Paul is rightly proud and happy to be able to say what he does. Remember too that he is merely exemplifying when he here speaks about himself. So also



Apollos and Peter could and would speak; so every faithful minister should speak.

Yet note what Paul at once adds: “but hereby I am not justified,” acquitted and pronounced innocent and guiltless. The passive δεδικαίωμαι refers to Christ as the one proper Judge to whom Paul is answerable. The perfect tense implies that once having been acquitted Paul remains so, even as the verdict of any judge stands indefinitely. No, Paul’s consciousness cannot be the court or the judge that settles his standing. Paul turns from all human courts to the true one: “He that judicially examines me is the Lord.” This turn in Paul’s thought is most important. He is not saying that all congregations are to give their ministers a free hand to do what they think is right until the Lord at last judges them. There are ministers who act in this way. Paul is not saying that a congregation never dares to judge its pastor. What he says is that no one dares to usurp the Lord’s judgment seat and judge the Lord’s ministers according to his own ideas and his own wisdom. When a minister is unfaithful, the congregation has the fullest right to apply the Lord’s Word to him and to oust him from office. In Corinth there was no question regarding unfaithfulness in Paul, or in Apollos, or in Peter; yet see what the Corinthians had done with these faithful men, by judging them according to their sham wisdom!

When Paul says that although knowing nothing against himself he is not thereby acquitted by the Lord, he does not mean that he is still in uncertainty in regard to his final acquittal by the Lord, or that he does not trust his own conscience regarding this acquittal, since conscience may indeed err. What Paul means is that the final verdict which the Lord will pronounce is a matter of the future. Paul is not speaking of the δικαίωσις; or acquittal at the moment faith is kindled in the heart, for every Christian is so sure of this that with divine assurance he can exclaim: Δεδικαίωμαι! I have been and am acquitted! Paul is speaking about the final divine acquittal at the last day, which, coming after all his apostolic work is done, shall render the Lord’s public sentence upon this work before the whole world of men and of angels. This verdict, Paul writes, is still outstanding. It will be rendered by the real judge in the case: “He that judicially examines me is the Lord.” The tense of ὁ ἀνακρίνων says nothing as to the time when this judge will act in this capacity. At the right time and in the right way this judge makes his investigation, from him nothing remains hidden.

When Paul says that he is conscious of nothing against himself he implies that he has seriously thought about himself and his work. Paul has the Word, which will also judge him at the last day, John 12:48. It is thus that Paul finds no dereliction in himself. Yet this is not usurping the Lord's throne and judging himself improperly. Because Paul conducted his entire office with an eye to the Word and to the Lord's all-decisive verdict, he does not dream of appealing to his own consciousness and to his own conscience in contrast to the judgments which the Corinthians were pronouncing concerning him. Something needs to be said in regard to conscience. So many consciences are asleep, ignorant, misled in some way. So many fail to understand that conscience is not the supreme court. Some of the most terrible crimes have been committed in the name of conscience. The man who appeals to his conscience when confronted by the Word, swearing that he is "acting just as conscientious as you are," is only condemning himself, by rating his conscience above the Lord and his Word. We dare follow only the conscience enlightened by the Word. And that means the Word as it really is, as it "goeth forth out of my mouth," Is. 55:11.

Luther's appeal at Worms was: "My conscience is bound in the Word of God!" So too must our conscience be bound by the Word, by every part of it, not by some man's false interpretation or twisting of the Word, not by some manipulations of the Word which I myself may contrive. The conscience bound in the Word retains the Lord in the seat as supreme judge. If we do that, we can smile at the human courts which try to preempt the Lord's throne. But even this appeal to a conscience so bound in the Word is proper only when dealing with men. No true minister would think of making it when dealing with the Lord, for he and his Word are one. Like Paul he acknowledges: "Hereby I am not yet justified." Not, however, as though his acquittal is thereby still in doubt. No; this acknowledgment is merely a confession that my own consciousness of complete faithfulness to the Word is not yet my acquittal. It is my blessed assurance that I will most surely be acquitted at that day. The acquittal itself is granted, and can be granted only by the Lord: "then shall each one have his due praise from God" (v. 5).

[5] Ὡστε, "therefore," introduces the practical conclusion that follows from what has been said; this is in the form of an admonition to the

**Corinthians. Therefore judge nothing before the (proper) time, until the Lord come, who also will light up the hidden things of the darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then his due praise shall come to each one from God.**

Because an ἀνακρίνειν naturally leads up to a κρίνειν Paul now speaks of the latter. There would be no sense in subjecting a person to a judicial examination if this is to lead to no verdict, either favorable or unfavorable. Therefore by forbidding the judging Paul forbids also the preliminaries to judging. He means the judging indicated in 5:4, which assumes that ministers are subject to the congregation as constituting the highest judicial authority. Only when a teacher teaches and practices contrary to the Word has the congregation the right both ἀνακρίνειν and κρίνειν, and even then not as an independent or supreme authority, usurping that of Christ, but only as vindicating his supreme authority against a man Who violates the Word. In Corinth no such violation on the part of any teacher had occurred. Paul thus omits this side of the subject.

Πρὸ καιροῦ τι == “something out of season,” “something untimely.” Paul judges mildly when he characterizes the verdicts of the Corinthians as “something untimely.” However, this matches the addition: “until the Lord come,” who etc. This is a kind of zeugma, for when the Lord comes and judges, the Corinthians will have no judging to do. When the Lord comes, he will render the mature verdict when the time for it is due. In Corinth one faction lauded Paul, the other factions who admired others blamed Paul. Paul’s admonition is directed against both proceedings. Personally he paid no attention either to this kind of praise, which set him above Apollos and Peter, or to this kind of blame, which set him below these two men. The worst feature about such conduct was the fact that the Corinthians were acting in a manner highly derogatory to the Lord, who gives his differing gifts and opportunities to his “stewards,” who knows what is in their minds and hearts as they do their work, who alone is able in due time to apportion their reward to them.

All such verdicts as the Corinthians pronounced before the time were both illegal and invalid. Such verdicts could emanate only from foolish persons who had no right to act the part of the judge, although they usurped this right. The Lord is the Judge, who will act at the proper time. His verdicts will be legal indeed. So also they will be truly competent. For he

will do what none of the Corinthians and what no human court can possibly do: “who also will light up the hidden things of the darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts.” When used with a relative καί == “also,” and it presents a point pertinent to what has just been said.

This relative clause is intended to warn the Corinthians. Up to this point Paul has been using only *voces mediae*, neutral terms: ἀνακρίνειν and κρίνειν, and he has referred only to himself when exemplifying his thought. Now he goes a step farther, he speaks of “the darkness,” τὸ σκότος. This is not darkness in general which merely hides from sight, but “the darkness,” a term frequently used, always in the sense of a dreadful, devilish power (viz. John 3:19; Luke 22:53). Its opposite is “the light,” i.e. the divine light-power. Thus “the hidden things of the darkness” are not merely the things hidden by darkness, but the hidden things produced by the darkness-power and thus naturally also kept in the dark. They are the products of sin, the devil, and hell. They keep under cover now, but on judgment day they will be flooded with light by Christ and all their damnableness will then appear. When Paul adds: “and will make manifest or public the counsels of the hearts,” this is again neutral, for “counsels” may be either good or evil. Being in the hearts they are hidden now, and it is this feature that makes us think especially of evil counsels or plans, although we cannot exclude the good intents and purposes. In Greek “heart” is conceived as the central organ of the entire conscious personality determining its thinking, feeling, and willing, especially the latter.

We note that the relative clause is general in both of its members, without a pronoun referring to the Corinthians. The formulation of the warning is thus comparatively mild. Kindly each of the Corinthians is asked to examine the counsels of his own heart, whether they contain any hidden thing of the darkness that must be removed ere it be too late. The man who writes this warning has certainly complied with it himself, and surely the same is true of the stewards Apollos and Peter. The double relative clause indicates how the Lord will execute his ἀνάκρισις, competently in a way utterly impossible to any human court.

“And then his due praise shall come (occur) to each one from God.” But what about the due blame? This negative side Paul omits. In the first place, the teachers about whom the Corinthians were wrangling were all faithful men to whom the Lord would certainly accord praise. The only trouble lay

with the Corinthians, and Paul hopes to correct that by means of his letter, so that they, treating their former and their present teachers in the proper way, would also receive due praise. The articulated ὁ ἔπαινος, “the praise,” == the due praise. The praise will differ. We see this from Matt. 25:14 etc.; Luke 19:22 etc. All the praise will be a gift of grace (Luke 17:10); but he who receives the least praise will be overwhelmed by its greatness. Elsewhere Paul treats the blame, namely in 3:12-17. While the statement about the due praise is also general, the context makes it apply mainly to the stewards of God’s mysteries.

## Homiletical Aid

The gospel for this Sunday speaks of John the Baptist and his faithfulness in his holy office. The epistle speaks of St. Paul, Apollos, and St. Peter and of their faithfulness in the office assigned to them. The members of the congregation in the city of Corinth in Greece, which St. Paul had founded and in which Apollos had labored, had wrong ideas about this office and the men who filled it. They imagined that they could judge those men and deal with them as they pleased. St. Paul corrects these people. He briefly states how they and we too should account of the men in the ministry who are true to their calling.

### **Consider the Men who are True to the Gospel Ministry!**

- I. Their relation to Christ and to God.
  1. Christ’s helpers in the Gospel work, working directly under his eyes (“Lo, I am with you always,” Matt. 28:20).
  2. Also God’s stewards entrusted with the sacred mysteries of God in the congregation.
  3. Men bound to be faithful to Christ and to God in every way, carrying out the divine will and this will alone.
- II. Their relation to you.
  1. You are to desire and to tolerate only such men in your ministry.

2. You are not to disturb them and their faithful work by praising or by blaming them according to your supposed wisdom and false ideas.
3. You are to remember the Lord who will judge them and you at the last day.

As pertinent to II, 1) permit me to quote from Loy's sermon on this text: "The fact that the minister has a public office among brethren in the faith and that they share with him the responsibility of his ministry renders it necessary that they should have a profound interest in the work and its faithful performance. You cannot be true to your Lord and his Christ if you are indifferent to what your minister preaches and how he lives. If instead of the truth in Jesus, which has the power of God in it to save souls, he preaches his own opinions, which at best have only human force in them and can in no case save a soul, — how could you endure it, seeing he is your minister, whom you have called in Christ's name to do his work, which is also his and yours? Are you not responsible for it if precious souls for whom Christ died are thus left to perish, while you profess to have a minister whom you have called to be a steward of the mysteries of God through whose faithful use they might be saved? And if your minister leads a scandalous life, driving good people away with shame from his ministrations and making your church a stench instead of a power for good in the community, is it possible that any among you should suppose that that is nothing to you and none of your concern? He is your minister, and if he teaches and lives otherwise than the Word of God teaches, hindering instead of doing the work which our Lord has given you and him to do, it is your concern, and you know it and feel it that it is a shabby excuse to pretend that it is his business, not yours. Of course, this implies that in matters which are public and open before your eyes you must see and judge. The doctrine is publicly proclaimed, and the Scriptures are in your hands. 'I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say.' 'Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them.' Rom. 16:17."

Loy Speaks on **The Office of the Gospel Minister**: The work — the requirement — the Judge.

From the time of John the Baptist onward there have been many wrong and dangerous conceptions of the Christian Ministry. St. Paul offers us

### **The Proper Conception of the Christian Ministry.**

- I. Its exalted position (v. 1).
  - II. Its serious accountability (v. 2).
  - III. Its incompetent judges (v. 3).
  - IV. Its praise at the last day (v. 4-5).
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John the Baptist, St. Paul, Apollos, St. Peter, all the apostles and their assistants, and thousands of preachers and pastors like these men, have been the Lord's faithful ministers. On the other hand, there has been a multitude of faithless and unfaithful ministers, errorists, heretics, self-seekers, hirelings, menpleasers, idlers, worldly-minded, and congregations who not only tolerated but actually demanded and liberally paid such men. In our own midst congregations have searched for preachers who would be willing not to preach the whole counsel of God to salvation, not to testify against the antichristian, secret, oathbound slavery of members, not to abolish worldly practices; and to say such preachers have been found.

On this Sunday, devoted since ancient times to faithful John the Baptist, it will be beneficial for us to hear what St. Paul has written regarding

### **The Requirement of Faithfulness in the Christian Minister.**

Faithfulness must be required of him

- I. Because of the high and holy trust imposed on him by the Lord.
  - II. Because of his own conscience facing the Lord.
  - III. Because of the foolish and false judgments of men.
  - IV. Because of the coming exposure at the last day.
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That I am a minister of the Gospel is due to your call. Both you and I are responsible to the Lord as regards my faithfulness in my ministry. Our text leads me to preach today about myself, and to ask you a number of questions in regard to myself. Let me frankly tell you who have called me to be your pastor,

**I Want to be Accounted a Faithful Steward of the Lord.**

- I. That is why I do not tamper with the mysteries of God. Do you want me to?
- II. That is why I keep my conscience clear. Do you object to this?
- III. That is why I disregard the presumptuous judgments of men. Would you have me do otherwise?
- IV. That is why I keep in mind the exposure of the last day, so that each of us may receive praise from God. I know you want this praise, even as I do.



# The Fourth Sunday In Advent.

## Phil. 4:4-7

### The Joy Born of Christmas

The preacher must understand that according to the ancient conception of the Church Year the Fourth Sunday in Advent differs entirely from the three preceding Sundays in Advent. It is already part of the festival of the Nativity, the first stage of the Christmas celebration. The gospel text thus presents the Son in his deity, whose birth as man is being celebrated, John 1:19-28. The epistle describes the great joy that is ours in consequence. It is true, the epistle text contains no direct reference to the Nativity, yet this causes no difficulty. All of the Christian joy is one, and all of it has as its one source Christ Jesus who came into the world to save us sinners. Besides, we have more than the bare text, we have the significance of the festive Sunday for which it has been selected. On this Sunday our hearts are full of Christmas joy. The joy of which the text speaks so fervently will thus naturally present itself as the Christian joy for this holy and happy season, namely as Christmas joy.

Paul summarizes the whole Christian spirit and life in these closing verses of his letter (v. 4-9), before he speaks of the gift which the Philippians sent him. He sketches a lovely picture of the temper, the quality, and the motivation of all true Christian hearts. The first part of this sketch the ancient church asks us to read in the light of Christmas.

**[4] Rejoice in the Lord alway! Again I will any: Rejoice!** Like sunshine the purest, highest, truest joy is to fill the Christian life. The imperatives are durative presents. This means that Paul's readers are not conceived as people who have stopped rejoicing and have become gloomy and downhearted. Quite the contrary. We may translate: "Keep on rejoicing alway! Again let me say: Keep on rejoicing!" Paul is only encouraging

them in their joy; he is only “a helper of their joy” (2 Cor. 1:24). This joy is so blessed that his readers cannot have too much of it. To be sure, this is joy “in the Lord.” This phrase, so frequently used by Paul, is often poorly understood. It does not mean “on the Lord’s authority”; it is not woodenly mystic, as though we are to be “in” the Lord, like a bird in the air, a fish in the water, etc. The preposition ἐν is to be taken in its first and unmodified sense: “in union or in connection with the Lord.” We need no forcing of thought whatever. What this connection with the Lord is every child should soon learn to know, namely the connection of faith, love, and obedience. The question is, how can any person become truly connected with the Lord without being filled with joy?

Ἐν Κυρίῳ does not name the source or the author of our joy, for ἐν is not the preposition that indicates these relations. Yet, apart from the wording, the Lord (in Greek no article is needed) is the eternal fount of our joy, and it is thus that connection with him (ἐν) is so vital as regards true joy. When Paul writes: “Keep on rejoicing!” he does not mean that we are to put forth a constant strenuous effort to rejoice, as the world does when at great expense and with much effort it has what it calls a good time. No, this joy in the Lord comes without such effort, it flows normally, naturally, without strain or undue exertion; you need do no more than to remain “in connection with the Lord,” not leave him with your heart. You can reach him at any time in his Word, also in his Sacrament, and can carry him by means of his Word in your memory and thinking. So will you be able to taste the sweet joy of heaven “always,” i.e. at all times and in all circumstances.

Paul was a prisoner when he wrote this injunction in joy, he had been a prisoner for about four years. The last man, you may say, to rejoice and to tell others to rejoice. Yet you would be mistaken. The quality of this joy in connection with the Lord is such that my pain, no loss, or no misfortune to our earthly condition can dim its luster. It will be strong and bright right through the hour of death. Unlike our common earthly joys and pleasures this joy in the Lord is not dependent on transient causes, as when money comes in you and you rejoice, and yet losing it again, where will be your joy? — and you leave it behind at death. Whatever is connected with the Lord is eternal, incorruptible and it fadeth not away. The joy you have in him is genuine, is pure gold.

Strong emphasis is produced by the repetition. It is the imperative alone that Paul repeats, for the whole impact is on the activity of rejoicing. The future “I will say” is volitive: “Decidedly I mean to my: Rejoice!” Was Paul never sad? Did he never weep? Was he never weighed down heavily? We know that he was all this. And yet his rejoicing in the Lord never left him. Such is the quality of this joy that it will maintain itself and will lift us above all our earthly sorrows.

[5] How is our rejoicing to manifest itself? What is its proper outlet? **Your yieldingness, let it get to be known to all men!** In Eph. 5:19-20 Paul calls for the vocal expression of our joy in songs, hymns, and utterances of thanks to God. Paul now speaks of the great virtue that should display itself to all our fellow men as the fruit of our rejoicing. Where joy abounds, anything like rigorousness must disappear; sweet gentleness, considerateness, *Lindigkeit* (Luther’s beautiful rendering) must blossom forth and flourish, even as Paul says “to all men,” making no exception.

The neuter τὸ ἔπιεκές == the abstract ἔπείκεια. Such neuters are used by Paul and by the writer of Hebrews in classic fashion. Would that we had a good English equivalent for this noble Greek word. We see how our versions wrestle with it: “your moderation” (A.V.); “your forbearance” (R.V.), margin “gentleness.” Matthew Arnold offers “your sweet reasonableness.” The preacher must know the Greek term well enough to describe its meaning in English. Trench is a good teacher: the derivation is from εἶκω, ἔοικα, Latin *cedo*, hence the meaning “yieldingness,” not insisting on one’s legal rights, as these are often pushed into moral wrongs, making the *summum jus* the *summa injuria*. As here, so the word always refers to the treatment of others, while “meekness” is an inner quality. Many angles converge in “yieldingness,” such as *clementia*, *aequitas*, *modestia*, — even the Latin lacking a real equivalent. Examples are found in God and Christ. God deals so leniently with men, he remembers that we are dust, he withholds justice so long. Christ is so gentle, kind, patient, more than only fair.

Only our perverted reason would think of this “yieldingness” as also yielding the truth to error, right to wrong, virtue to vice. Formal categories of reasoning have derailed many a proud logician. The very connotation of the word, and Paul’s expression matching that connotation: “let it get to be known to all men,” indicate that this is not the yieldingness of a slave or of

an inferior, but of a superior in a noble and generous spirit. The Christian keeps his high nobility, he condescends. He considers the weak and needy, also the pitiful condition of the worldly haughty and tyrannical. He has that purest and noblest grace which few are able to resist. All of this lies in this term *epieikeia*, this grand, rich virtue which springs from our constant joy in connection with the Lord.

Like a revealing flash, the one word: **The Lord (is) near!** shows what produces this “yieldingness.” Paul is not speaking of the constant invisible nearness of Christ but of the nearness of his return in glory at the last day. The question is constantly asked, how Paul could say, without being mistaken, that the Lord’s return is near, when even now it has not yet occurred. 2 Pet. 3:3-10. Paul is not speaking of the nearness of a day or two or of a year or two. After Christ’s first coming there remains only one more comparable event, his second coming. In this sense it is “near.” Also in the sense that it may come at any day or any hour, with no man knowing in advance when it will arrive. Skeptics, of course, brand Paul as a false prophet, although Peter spoke in the Identical way. We Christians live day by day as though the return of Christ were about to occur. They who ignore Christ and his Parousia, who mind only earthly things (3:19), they will snatch at the transient and false gaiety of the world, and will thus act meanly, selfishly, rigorously. We must not think that the reference to Christ’s Parousia is a discordant note in the text. Without the Nativity and Incarnation there would be no Parousia; and all that the Incarnation ushered in culminates in the glory of the Parousia. Do not separate what belongs together.

[6] But does Paul mean to dismiss the troubles of our daily life with a mere grandiose gesture? Look at, Paul now, a prisoner, who after four long years has finally had his first hearing before the imperial court in Rome, with the ultimate outcome still hanging in the balance. Paul is the last man to indulge in empty gestures. **Worry about nothing**, he writes, **but in everything by means of your prayer and your petition together with thanksgiving let your askings be made known to God!** Martha “was bothered about many things” (Luke 10:41). The verb means “to be of a divided mind,” to be anxious, to worry, — whether to seek this way out or that, to use this means or that. Worry keeps us in this condition. The Christian is never thus to worry about a single thing. He possesses the cure

for all worry: 1 Pet. 5:7: “All your worry cast on him, seeing that he is taking care of you.”

Certainly, unless we can constantly get rid of our worries before they worry us, the wondrous joy of which Paul speaks would soon cease, and that noble, gracious yieldingness as of men supremely blessed would disappear. But we need do no more than to let God know. Not that we tell him and then go on worrying. In this way some people pray. But that by telling him in prayer we turn all worrisome matters over to God’s hands that he may attend to them, as also he certainly will. Nor do we snatch these bothersome things back again out of God’s hands, as though after all God cannot or will not attend to them and we must do it ourselves. Such an attitude can only be the death of our joy. The scoffer will say: “Do you first have to inform God?” Certainly God knows even before we ask (Matt. 6:8); but God bids us ask and promised to give us what we ask. They who like the skeptic refuse to ask, simply do not have (James 4:2). To pray is actually to turn our worries over to God.

Paul’s exhortation is elaborate. He uses three terms: “in every thing,” or “in every case” (ἐν παντί) that may occur to worry you, “by means of your prayer and your petition (the articles with the force of the possessive) let your askings (the things asked, αἰτήματα) be made known unto God.” He will attend to everything. The datives indicate means: “by means of prayer and petition,” προσευχή, the wider and more general term for prayer, and δέησις, the word for a want or a need of some kind. Τὰ αἰτήματα are the actual things requested. If God will attend to all our requests, how can we ever worry? Do you know of any better hands into which you can place your affairs? He either gives us what we ask, and always at the most beneficial time, or he gives us something far superior. Our prayers and our petitions will thus naturally be accompanied by (μετά) “thanksgiving,” and will thus be offered with constant joy. We thank God not only for his past benefactions, but equally for all that which We still ask, knowing that he will hear us. The heartthrob of all true prayer is thanksgiving. The secret of the happy, joyful life is thanksgiving. There are so many unhappy, joyless people, because there are so many who are ungrateful and thankless.

[7] The force of καί is consecutive: “And so” etc.; it introduces the blessed result of leaving everything in God’s hands by means of prayer with thanksgiving. **And the peace of God, which exceeds all understanding,**

**will guard your hearts and your thoughts. in Christ Jesus.** “The peace of God” is to be taken objectively, the condition of *shalom* when by God’s act all is well with us. “Of God” is the genitive of source: God creates and bestows this peace. The objective nature of this well-being appears from the verb: this peace “will guard” (voluntative, not merely futuristic). Like a guard or sentry it will stand over our hearts and thoughts, lest anything disturb them.

The greatness of this peace gives assurance of its ability so to guard us, for it is the peace “exceeding all understanding.” The point of this attributive modifier is so often either indistinctly apprehended or entirely misconceived. Paul is not telling us that the peace of God, either objectively or subjectively conceived, is incomprehensible. The Scriptures tell us at length how God has wrought peace in Christ Jesus, and all of us upon whom this peace has been bestowed know its sweetness from our own experience. Here are no incomprehensible mysteries. What Paul says is that this is the peace “exceeding all mind” in what it is able to do for us as regards our hearts and thoughts. The Christian does not depend upon his νοῦς, his mind, to fend off worry from his heart and his νοήματα or thoughts. That is the best that worldly men are able to do. We read much in the way of advice as to how to manage the mind (νοῦς) so that it shall keep the heart and thoughts clear of worry. Paul points the Christian to something that “exceeds all mind” and all that mind can do in this regard. It is “the peace of God” bestowed upon us as a gift in Christ Jesus.

We must know the elements of biblical psychology. The heart is the center of the personality. Here dwells the νοῦς; which produces the νοήματα. The mind produces thoughts, theoretical and practical reasonings, with their purposes, plans of action and personal decisions. Heart, mind, and thoughts are constantly subject to assaults, which distress, harass, and worry us. The νοῦς or mind bravely tries to hold the fort, but it is ever a poor guard and protector. The peace of God exceeds all mind in this function.

Turn to the 73rd Psalm. Here is the mind trying to guard and protect itself. “Why does God allow me to suffer so? Why does he allow the ungodly to flourish and thrive?” In verses 16 and 22 the Psalmist confesses the inability of his own mind to protect itself from the assaults of such

thoughts; in verses 23-24 he makes his refuge the peace of God, where all his harassing thoughts are answered and brought to rest.

“In Christ Jesus” is to be construed with the verb, and thus also with the two objects, just as in Eph. 1:4; for if the action is “in connection with Christ Jesus,” the objects of that action cannot be in some other connection. As far as the feeling of peace (subjective) is concerned, we need scarcely say a word. Where the actual state of peace exists, with its great guarding effects, how can the feeling and the enjoyment of peace be long absent? If ever the feeling declines, this divine guard will revive it. All we need is prayer, petition, asking, i.e. getting back under the protection of our guard, then we shall feel safe and happy again, and shall joyfully offer thanksgiving. So the Psalmist at first worried. “So foolish was I and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee” (73:22). But he quickly came back to God and his peace: “Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand” (V. 23, read also the rest).

## Homiletical Aid

A natural homiletical procedure is to follow the main thoughts of this lovely text in their given order, supplying a theme that matches these thoughts and thus elaborating the sermon. If the theme is not made to govern the parts in strict logical fashion, and if the main parts are not placed into strict logical connection, the result will be a homily, with the theme descriptive, the parts likewise. Study *The Sermon* by the author, the chapter on the homily, p. 112 etc. If the theme exerts logical control and the parts are formulated accordingly the preacher will find himself with a serviceable analytical outline. The latter is a common type of sermon among preachers who have studied homiletics; the homily should be cultivated more by our abler men.

Sketch of a homily — descriptive:

### **The True Christmas Happiness.**

1. Rejoice in the Lord always;
2. Let your moderation go out to all men;
3. Remember, the Lord is at hand;

4. Worry about nothing;
5. Place everything in God's hands;
6. Let God's peace guard your heart and mind.

Sketch of a simple analytical outline — analytical, hence logical in form:

### **The Christmas Joy that Endures Always.**

Why does it endure always?

- I. It is “in the Lord,” i.e. connected with him.
- II. Full of moderation toward all men, a fountain always flowing.
- III. Ever looking to the Lord's coming and the eternal joys so near.
- IV. Free of all worries, which ruin so much joy.
- V. Fortified by prayer and thanksgiving, which ever keep joy bright.
- VI. Guarded by the peace of God, incomparable in its joy-producing effect.

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Have all your preparations for Christmas been made? You have not perchance forgotten the Christmas heart? This you ought always to have in perfect readiness, to say nothing of the actual Christmas season. How would a Christian look without a Christmas heart? or with a poorly prepared Christmas heart?

### **The Christmas Heart.**

- I. Full of joy.
  1. Common Christmas joy — outward features of the festival — joys often utterly worldly. Our Christmas joy may have none of the common joys at all, and yet be great and wonderful.
  2. The true Christmas joy possesses the Lord and all his treasures of grace, and thus makes merry because it is so infinitely rich,



happy, and grateful. This joy goes on “always,” in a Christmas that never really ceases, no matter what our earthly circumstances.

II. Full of moderation.

1. Generous mildness. Copy of the mildness of God toward us in sending us his Son. Copy of the mildness of Christ who came to pardon us; whom also we shall soon see. This is the mildness due to Christ’s filling our heart.
2. To all men. The arms of this heart are full of Christmas presents. For our enemies forgiveness, kindness; for the weak and erring patience, forbearance; for the needy charity; for any and all lovingkindness. In business fairness; to those beneath us graciousness; to those above us generous obedience. All this because of our \_Lord Jesus Christ whom also we shall soon see.

III. Full of prayer and thanksgiving.

1. By prayer and petition this heart places all worries into God’s hands and leaves them there. He gave us his own Son.
2. It adds thanksgiving, for we have so much already, and for all that yet shall be ours we cannot but thank God in advance. The Christmas heart is a thankful heart.

IV. Full of peace.

1. This is the peace that is like a fortress and an army to guard and to protect the Christmas heart, so that nothing may hurt it. This peace protects us, beyond anything that our own mind can devise.
2. Thus we enjoy sweet peace, the feeling of safety, rest in Christ Jesus, till he calls us home to himself.

Conclusion: Is the Christmas heart yours as we enter the Christmas celebration? God wants to give all that you need to have this heart.

In “The Christmas Heart” we have what in *The Sermon* 184 etc., I call an auxiliary concept. Another such concept is that of Christmas presents.

### **The Great Christmas Gifts God Has for You.**

- I. Joy that lasts alway. In the Lord — flowing out to all men — unhurt by worry — jubilant with thanksgiving.
- II. Peace that forever keeps safe. The peace of God that delivers from sin and guilt through Christ Jesus — the peace that does what no earthly mind can do, for it can only think of peace where there is no peace — the peace that protects our hearts and thoughts from all fear and gives us true rest and happiness in all our life.

These are Christmas gifts indeed!

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### **Every Day of our Lives is to be a Glorious Christmas Eve,**

just as if the candles were lit and the Christmas gifts distributed, only these are presents that are never consumed.

- I. Here is the Lord with all his spiritual grace to make us rejoice alway. So enriching us that we can show our moderation to all men, also coming soon to crown his grace with glory.
  - II. Here is thanksgiving for its to keep away all earthly worries, because our gracious God more than hears our prayers.
  - III. Here is God’s mighty peace protecting us against all danger and fear.
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### **St. Paul’s Call: “The Lord is at Hand!” Should Move the Believing Christians**

- I. To rejoice in the Lord alway.
- II. To show moderation to all men.

III. Not to worry, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to make their requests known to God.

C. F. W. Walther, *Epistle Postille*.

# Christmas. Titus 2:11-14

## “The Grace of God that Bringeth Salvation”

A better epistle text for Christmas could hardly have been chosen. The first verse refers to the Incarnation although it reaches beyond this beginning of the appearance of God’s wondrous grace, as also the following verses show. In the gospel, Luke 2:1-14, we have the historic fact presented historically. That is the proper duty of the gospel. The duty of the epistle is to take this some historical fact, show the inwardness of it as the greatest manifestation of God’s grace, and, placing this manifestation in connection with all Christ’s saving work, apply all this grace to us that we may so live as to be prepared for Christ’s manifestation at the end of the world. The epistle centers on *the great effect of the fact*.

In v. 10 Paul speaks of “the doctrine (or teaching) of God our Savior” which Titus is to teach all the different classes of church members to adorn with a holy life. Γάρ means: Let me explain about this doctrine and why I call God our Savior. **For there has appeared** (2nd aorist passive, the aorist stating the historical fact, for which the English uses the perfect) **the grace of God, saving for all men, [12] educating us, that after denying** (once for all) **the ungodliness and the worldly lusts we** (definitely) **live sober mindedly and righteously and godly in this present eon, [13]** (ever) **expecting the blessed hope and epiphany of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, [14] he who gave himself for us, so as to ransom us from all lawlessness, and to cleanse for himself a people select, zealous for excellent works.**

The text is just one beautiful sentence, the thought of which reaches from the Incarnation to the Parousia, showing the sweep of the apostle’s mind and the concentrating power of his presentation. This summary of “the doctrine (teaching) of God our Savior” presents the salvation purchased and won for all men, but as changing their entire lives from

ungodliness to godliness and good works in preparation for the great saving act yet to come in the Savior's Parousia. Note well the correspondence of ἔπεφάνη. "there did appear," and ἔπιφάνειαν, "appearance," in v. 13. Two appearances, or if we use the Greek word two epiphanies, one in the past at Christ's time, on Calvary, etc., the other in the future, at the end of the world. If we ask when this aorist is to be dated, the Church has long ago given the answer, when it chose this text for Christmas Day, and found this 11th verse an echo of Luke 2:10: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people"; note also Luke 2:14.

"There did appear" implies a manifestation that men could see. The babe Jesus was born, his life and his death followed. The nativity occurred in an obscure village in the little country of Judea, and in its capital Jesus died. Yet the manifestation was "saving for all men." The great saving facts pertained to all men and were brought to them by means of the Gospel. "Educating us" means by the Gospel. "The grace of God, saving for all men" appeared in Jesus. This states What happened at Christmas. Χάρις is God's undeserved favor, wholly and completely undeserved by men. The great connotation is the guilt of fallen, sinful man, deserving justice, eternal punishment as the guilty, convicted criminal deserves death at the hands of a just judge.

The idea that grace is "sovereign," i.e. that it can do as it pleases, like an arbitrary oriental potentate, is an utterly false image, contradicted by our text and by every provision that God made in his grace to save us. How God's grace operates we see in Rom. 3:24 etc., where God's grace is shown in perfect harmony with his righteousness, for **God's grace as here in v. 14 provides Christ's ransoming, the propitiation by means of his blood.** Σωτήριος πᾶσιν ἄθρώποις should be construed together and the adjective is predicative to ἡ χάρις: "the grace... saving for all human beings." This is one of the numerous statements of universality against which all Calvinists vainly contend. Calvin himself writes in his Commentary, published in Geneva in 1600, p. 542: *Interea non intelligit singulos homines, sed ordines potius notat, aut diversa vitae genera*: "yet he (Paul) does not understand individual men, but rather notes orders or diverse genera of life," i.e. "classes in life" — this on the plea that slaves have just been mentioned as one such class (v. 9-10). For Calvin "all men" == "some slaves, some young men, some old men" (v. 2-10) etc., no class wholly barred out. This

is his exegesis of all the passages that speak in universal terms. On John 3:16 he remarks: “God so loved the world” mentions the world only because in the whole world there was nothing to call forth God’s love. Hodge of Princeton has faithfully repeated Calvin, so do his followers everywhere. Christmas is not joy for all human beings. Not all little children may sing while gathered around the Christmas-tree, for many there is no grace of God, only for *some* children.

Σωτήριος reverts to 5:10 “God our Savior.” The word always contains two ideas: the one is rescue from mortal danger; the other is safety continuing after the rescue. The very word “Jesus” means “Savior,” Matt. 1:21 and 25.

[12] God’s grace does not only appear and then wait for us to come to it, no, it is itself active in effecting our salvation, in fact, all this saving is due wholly to the power and the activity of God’s all-sufficient grace. Man is able to contribute nothing. What he is able to do is to hinder and to frustrate grace. So Paul says that this grace is ever busy “educating us, that having denied the ungodliness... we live sobermindedly” etc. The grace does this educating by means of the Gospel. The verb παιδεύω has παῖς, “boy”, in it and means to train as one educates and trains a boy; the verb is also found in 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:25. ἵνα introduces an object clause, equal to an infinitive clause. Our constant education (durative present participle) by saving grace is to this effect, that after our saying a decisive “no” to all ungodliness we live in true godliness.

Paul here stresses the moral effect of God’s saving grace because of the admonitions he is writing, 5:1-10. He does so again in v. 14: “zealous of good works.” But all this moral effect on our life is altogether the fruit of the faith which embraces “the Word of God” (v. 5), “the teaching of the Savior God” (v. 11), “the ransoming” effected by Christ (v. 14). But already to deny decisively (aorist) the ungodliness and the worldly lusts signifies true contrition and repentance, true conversion, and thus faith. To live in godly fashion and to do good works is only the fruit meet for repentance (Luke 3:8).

What this educative process produces is expressed in effective aorists, for these products are actual, definite. The negative effect is expressed by a participle, because it is subordinate to the positive effect: “having denied

the ungodliness and the worldly lusts.” This means a decisive “no,” a radical break, a positive disowning, an ousting of the ungodliness and the worldly lusts as wholly abominable. When this denial first takes place it denotes conversion. Whenever we thus deny we are contrite, and this contrition is to continue. Without contrition no faith and no salvation.

The object is doubled for emphasis: “the ungodliness and the worldly lusts.” It is typical of Paul thus to use a comprehensive singular and an unfolding plural. “The ungodliness, the worldly lusts” are well known and need no further designation than the article. As far as God is concerned, the ungodliness disregards him, does not heed his Word and command or his calls of grace. It resents God, wants to be its own master, wants to sin when, where, and how it pleases, without interference by God. All around us we see men in this frightful condition. Thus they love the worldly lusts (ἐπιθυμίας in the New Testament is used in the evil sense), the worldly, sinful desires that demand and receive satisfaction. “Worldly” means that these lusts are connected only with the life in this cosmos and seek their satisfaction in the base and sinful field of this cosmos. The two terms sum up the entire condition of the unregenerate, unconverted man. God’s grace brings the power to make a radical, decisive break with this condition, which otherwise would destroy us. It is by this break that we are saved, rescued.

The positive side is the fact that from the instant of that break onward “we live (effective aorist) sobermindedly and righteously and godly in the present eon.” Rescued, we remain so. Freed from the tyranny of the ungodliness with its horde of worldly lusts, we live in liberty as God’s beloved children. To express the positive side Paul uses three adverbs. “Sobermindedly” we meet in the preceding part of this letter: 1:8; 2:2, 4:5, 6. The mind has become balanced by grace, freed from the former senseless follies. We are no longer blind fools, turning from God and running after the world. “Righteously” is in accord with God’s norm of right, deserving his verdict of approval. The word is always forensic. Like the Pharisees many justify themselves (Luke 16:15), but what folly, for after that they are condemned by God. Finally, the highest term: “godly,” in communion with and worship of God. “Godly” means reflecting God, his will and Word in our character and our lives.

“Godly” is the direct opposite of “the ungodliness.” “Sobermindedly” is the opposite of “the worldly lusts,” for these lusts blind the judgment, sweep away good sense, and plunge into follies which then the sinners themselves see. “Righteously” is placed between the other two adverbs to recall the judgment and verdict of our final Judge. “In the present eon” is in the present course of time as this is marked by so much sin and ungodliness. “Eon” is a long era marked in some way. The eon “now” is in this sad state of sin, and contrasts with the eon “about to come,” the one following the Parousia.

[13] All this work of grace is connected also with the second epiphany of Jesus. We Christians have come to live in the way stated as ever “expecting the blessed hope and epiphany of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Our expectation is constant. Jesus may return at any moment. We ever look for him. He who lay in the manger, who hung on the cross, he shall return in glory to judge the whole world.

Instead of the unadorned statement: “expecting the epiphany of Jesus Christ” — which is the heart of what Paul says, — he expands both the object (“the epiphany”) and the genitive (“of Jesus Christ”). It helps greatly to clarify the meaning when this is noted. We have an expansion of just two points: epiphany — Jesus Christ. When Paul thinks about what we expect, the wonderfulness of the contemplation makes his words rise and expand in order to convey to us what he sees and feels.

So as the object he writes: “the blessed hope and epiphany of the glory.” At first (v. 11) it was an appearance or epiphany of the grace of 'God; now it is the epiphany of the glory of Christ. Grace leads to glory, and both come as an epiphany to us. Here “hope” is objective, the thing for which we hope, and καί is epexegetic: our hope is the epiphany of the glory. Note how for this reason one article marks both “hope” and “epiphany.” The genitive τῆς δόξης is not adjectival: “the glorious appearance” (A.V.); having the article it could not be. This is “the glory” consisting of the divine attributes as they shine forth in effulgence. When Jesus was born and worked out our salvation he laid aside the use of his attributes save when he performed miracles, but when he returns he will appear in all his glory.

We briefly summarize what we treat at length in our *Interpretation* of Titus. Τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν is one concept, made one by the one



article τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is in apposition. The R.V. is correct beyond all question: “our great God and Savior Jesus Christ”; the A.V. is wrong: “the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” Only one person is mentioned, not two. The matter is decided by grammar alone. When dogmatical considerations are introduced they decide nothing. When some halt between two Opinions and wonder whether only one or whether two persons are mentioned, they are Gamaliels and are to be pitied. When arguments for two persons harp on the character of the words “God” and “Savior” they only try in turn us away from the main point, the grammar. An exegete must be able to recognize the decisive point and abide by it, and he must not trail off after indecisive matters. We have the parallel in 2 Pet. 1:1. Whether in one passage more or less Jesus is called “God” is of no moment to us who see his deity proclaimed in so many passages. Thus our interest here and in 2 Pet. is purely exegetical, as also it should be. One person is here mentioned, and the point is not in any way in doubt linguistically. The adjective “great” is added to “God” to magnify the expression as much as possible.

As our God and Savior we shall greet Jesus at the last day. Looking forward to that day while now we kneel at his humble manger, we walk in godly fashion.

[14] Ὁς is a demonstrative relative: “he who,” or “he the One who.” The appearance of God’s grace saving for all men culminated in Jesus, “he who gave himself for us, so as to ransom us from all lawlessness, and to cleanse for himself a people select, zealous for good works.” Here is Christ’s work as a Savior. Regarding Christ’s ransom examine 1 Tim. 2:6; Eph. 5:2; Gal. 1:4. “He gave himself for us,” when in Gethsemane he delivered himself into the hands of his enemies to die as he had foretold. His sacrifice was voluntary. He laid down his life, no one could take it from him; even so also he took it again, John 10:18. Here is revealed all the nobility of his sacrifice. This settles the slander of injustice, God making the innocent suffer in place of the guilty. Jesus voluntarily brought his self-sacrifice, “a most sweet-smelling savor” unto God (Eph. 5:2).

Ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν == “in our stead.” Robertson has settled this meaning linguistically to such an extent that all denials are out of date, and are due either to ignorance of the Greek or to obstinate preconception. Christ’s gift of himself was substitutionary. He died in our stead. The same idea of

substitution is expressed by the ἵνα clause: “so as to ransom us from all lawlessness.” Let us break away from the old inhibition that ἵνα must always denote purpose. The grammarians should know that often enough ἵνα denotes result, and this is the case here. The actual result of Christ’s giving himself in our stead was that he ransomed us, ἵνα λυτρώσῃται ἡμεῖς. Christ paid the ἀντίλυτρον (Matt. 20:28); the λύτρον effected the ἀπολύτρωσις, “the ransoming,” — this English term better than the term “redemption,” which by constant use has lost much of its distinctive force. The true meaning of all these expressions is really beyond question. Christ paid the ransom for us, thereby to buy us free “from all lawlessness,” to make us his own, to take us away from the control of all lawlessness (all hostility to God’s law), and to have us live under him in his Kingdom in everlasting innocence and blessedness.

This already names the positive counterpart: “and to cleanse for himself a people select, zealous for good works.” The verb “ransom” is the reflexive middle: “ransom for himself.” The second verb “cleanse” has the reflexive pronoun; “cleanse for himself.” Christ wants us for his own, and not merely as individuals but as a λαός, “a people,” the term used regularly to designate the Old Testament people Israel. But he cannot take us as we are by nature since Adam’s fall. He must first “cleanse us for himself.” This is done by justification which removes the foul guilt of our sins, and by sanctification which removes the foul hold and control of sin. The kind of people our Savior wants us to be is περιούσιος, *auserlesen*, *erlesen*, *abuserwählt*, “select,” choice. So many want to be “like other people.” “Others do it” is decisive for many Christians. Nobility even in secular relations is always select, above the common herd. We are to be kings and priests, 1 Pet. 2:9. We are to be our Shepherd’s sheep, not dogs and wolves, John 10:14-16.

“Zealous for excellent works” brings out the visible and open point of difference from worldly men. Ransomed, set free, cleansed, our joy is to be to do works that are καλά, “excellent” in God’s sight. This adjective has a note of nobility in it. As noblemen we should delight in doing noble works. This is the Christmas present we should be for the Christchild.

## Homiletical Aid

Was there ever a festival like this, starting the whole world to giving! Stores full of gifts, trains carrying trainloads of gifts, head and hands everywhere selecting and providing gifts, arms full of them, hearts happy to give and to receive them.

### **The Great Christmas Mystery, Which is: Giving.**

#### I. God began the giving.

His grace has appeared bringing salvation to all men.

1. God gave his Son in Bethlehem.
2. The ransom on Golgotha.
3. The Gift Supreme: divine grace as great as God — saving for all human beings — a new life for all. Wondrous giving!

#### II. God has continued it ever since.

1. The gift of repentance to turn from ungodliness, worldly lusts, and lawlessness.
2. The gift of faith, Christ's peculiar people.
3. The gift of a new life, sober-minded, righteous, godly, zealous of noble works.
4. The gift of high position, select people.
5. The coming gift of glory at the Parousia. Such is God's giving, — this blessed day sing praises, all ye that have these heavenly Christmas gifts!

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What happened in Bethlehem is so blessed because it involved so much that happened after Bethlehem. Let St. Paul open our eyes to

### **Our Blessed Christmas Vision.**

“There has appeared the grace of God saving for all human beings.”

I. We look at the Child in Bethlehem, “our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” — God born man — that we might be brought to God. All the loveliness of this grace.

From the Child in Bethlehem

II. We look to the Ransom on the cross, where Jesus voluntarily — vicariously — paid the price to buy us free from all lawlessness and make us his own. All the joy because of the divine Child sleeping in the manger Centers in this Child as the Ransomer of mankind.

From the Ransom on the cross

III. We look to the Select People, ourselves, cleansed by justification and sanctification, heeding the teaching of grace, denying ungodliness, etc., living sober-mindedly etc., no longer in the worldly crowd, but “select,” devoted to noble works.

From the Select People

IV. We look to the Glorious Appearing. So far extends our blessed Christmas vision. The Babe in Bethlehem shall appear in glory. All his deity in all its attributes shall shine forth when he is seated on his great white throne to judge the world. This is our hope. Then we shall see him as he is and shall celebrate for ever.

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This day there occurred the miracle at Bethlehem, which the Church in all the world still celebrates with holiest joy:

### **The Miracle at Bethlehem.**

I. The Son of God born as man to be our Savior.

Impossible — yet a fact.

Incredible — yet this is God’s infinite grace.

Incomprehensible — most certainly, the angels delight to look into the mystery of this miracle, yet all the salvation of it we are to experience.

II. The Son of God born man to be our ransom from sin and death.  
He died in our stead and bought us free.  
Cleansed by repentance and faith we are his select people.  
Taught by his Word we live to his honor in this wicked world.  
This is what the miracle in Bethlehem has wrought in us.

III. The Son of God born man shall return in glory.  
His appearing in grace followed at last by his appearing in all the  
glory of his divine attributes at the last day.  
This is our expectation and hope.  
We ever make ready for his coming. Our joy in the miracle at  
Bethlehem climaxed in the joy of our expectation of Christ's return.

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Hackneyed are the themes which ask on any festival day: How do we  
celebrate Christmas (Easter, Pentecost, this jubilee, this anniversary, etc.)  
aright? or, When is our Christmas celebration (or any other celebration)  
truly blessed? Though Nebe and others print such themes and append a few  
answers to the question, they should certainly know better, and we should  
know better than ever to stoop to such a theme, which certainly does not  
deserve the name.

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All the world celebrates Christmas. In our country even the Jews who killed  
Christ decorate their stores. But ours is not a worldly celebration, which  
would be a desecration. We celebrate as God's people.

**“Come Hither, Ye Faithful!”**

To contemplate God's grace in the Incarnation of his Son, our Savior.

I. Look down into the manger!  
God born man. None else could save. Here the awaited Savior is.

II. Look up to the cross!

God died as our ransom. No less a price would save. It was fully paid.

III. Look away to the last day!

God's Son in his glory. Our salvation can end in nothing less than heavenly glory. For this reason we are Christ's select people, cleansed and separate from the world.

As such people we come hither to the manger and celebrate the wondrous birth of "our great God and Savior Jesus Christ."

# The Sunday After Christmas.

## Gal. 4:1-7

**“When the Fulness of the Time was Come, God Sent forth his Son”**

It would be difficult to find a more appropriate epistle text for this Sunday after Christmas which at the same time is the last Sunday in the secular year. Until the fulness of time God’s children were only minors and had to be treated accordingly (v. 1-3), but then God sent his Son born of a woman, and that Son advanced us to our majority and placed us in possession of the inheritance. How well this continues the great Christmas thought! Moreover, we leave the old year with the consciousness of the mature sonship to which Christ has advanced us. How well this thought fits the last Sunday of the old year! The gospel text for the day (Luke 2:33-40) is historical and presents the same line of thought as the epistle, — Jesus set for the rising of many; a sword piercing Mary’s heart at the time of the crucifixion by which the great redemption should be accomplished.

The subject of our text is simple: The Law Marked the Heir as Still being a Minor, Christ Brought him to Majority. Yes, the Old Testament believers were Abraham’s seed and heirs according to promise (3:29). Can we now be more? Those Old Testament believers lived under the legal regulations of Moses. Should we not continue to live under them? These questions are most adequately and lucidly answered. **Now I say** (or my meaning is), **for such a time as the heir is a minor, he differs in nothing from a slave, although he is lord of everything; [2] but is under guardians and stewards till the time fixed in advance by the father.** Paul uses an illustration from ordinary life, just as he did in 3:15, where he referred to a probated human testament. Here is a little boy whose father has died and has bequeathed a great estate to this his young son. The

illustration, should not be converted into an allegory that has various points of resemblance to the reality which the apostle has in mind. The whole illustration turns only on the point that the heir is still a νήπιος, “infant,” “child,” a minor heir. “The heir” has the generic article.

The remarkable truth is, that although such a minor heir actually owns the entire property, he for the time being is in a position no better than that of a slave on the place. He has no more control over the estate than if he actually were a slave. Strange in a way, but certainly true.

[2] The imagery is that of a large estate, as befits the great spiritual inheritance which the apostle is illustrating. Hence the two classes of supervisors for the minor heir, ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι which some superficially treat as being identical. The former are placed in charge of the young heir’s person, and we may call them guardians; the latter are men who manage his estates, call them stewards. These stewards were often slaves, but educated and experienced managers of property, estates, etc. The guardians would attend to the boy’s education by securing the proper teachers. The point of the description is that the young heir is completely under others, and that of necessity, because of his minority.

The other point of note is the length of time. In v. 1: “for such a time as the heir is a minor,” and now: “till the time fixed in advance by the father.” With προθεσμίας supply ἡμέρας; “of the father” is the subjective genitive. We need not puzzle about the date of majority. Where this was fixed by law, the father specified accordingly; where not so fixed, the father set a date. But the important thought occasioned by this mention of the father is that it brings to mind the facts that he made the testament, he designated the heir, from him came the inheritance, and that thus he fixed the date of the majority. This heir is no more an heir after that date than he was before; but after this date he is free from all the supervisors he had before. The *tertium comparationis* is: once under, then no longer under, according to the testamentary provisions of the heir’s own father.

[3] Now the counterpart: **So also we, when we were minors, we had been put in slavery under the elementary things of the world; [4] but when the fulness of the time came, God commissioned his Son, come to be from a woman, come to be under law, [5] that he should buy free those under law, that we should receive the sonship.** Οὕτω draws the



parallel: “So also we, when we were minors,” νήπιοι. By “we” Paul must mean only Jews, for God suffered the Gentiles to walk in their own way, Acts 14:16. This one nation he “put in slavery under the elementary things of the world.” These στοιχεῖα were the “guardians and stewards” of the Jews who were as the heir during his minority, restricted much like a slave. The expression refers to the restraints and regulations of the Mosaic law which began at Sinai and extended to Christ, in whom the minority ended. Ἦμεν δεδουλωμένοι is a periphrastic past perfect, “had been put in slavery.”

There is much debate about these στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου. We summarily reject the pretentious newer learning which sees in the expression “the great angel powers, which are said to preside over nature happenings and to rule over stars, winds, rain, hail, thunder, and lightning,” “the spirits of the elements,” “astral spirits.” The word never meant anything of the sort. In v. 9-10 Paul calls these *stoicheia* “weak and beggarly,” observing days, months, times and years. In Col. 2:20 he adds the Judaistic prohibitions: “Handle not, nor taste, nor touch!” namely certain *stoicheia*. We see that elementary instruction cannot be meant, and that Luther’s *Buchstaben* cannot be correct. These *stoicheia*, are the elementary physical things of this cosmos with which the entire legal system of Moses had to do. The Jews had many regulations about food and drink, washings and purifications, sacrifices and offerings, rules about places, times, and bodily actions of all kinds. Perishable, transient, physical things played a very great part in their religion. They were under these things. In the case of the Jews God himself imposed all these legal prescriptions and prohibitions. Pagan religions had similar arrangements, but all of theirs were self-imposed.

[4] This whole matter of *stoicheia* ceased “when the fulness of time came,” i.e. the full time. The Expositor’s Greek New Testament has this remark: “Until generations of mankind had learnt through years of social training to control some of the animal instincts of their lower nature, to rebel against its brutal passions, and desire to live in obedience to their higher nature,” etc. Some think of the ripeness and maturity of the Jewish nation. But this nation was rotten and ripe for the judgment which wiped it out as a nation a few years later. Judaism was bankrupt as paganism always had been.

What God saw and counted as the fulness of time in the spiritual condition of the world, barbarian as well as Greek, is beyond our minds, because his thoughts and judgments are unsearchable. Paul too gives no details. We recognize only certain providences which helped the Gospel on its way: the vast extent of the Roman empire, the spread of the Greek language, the facility for safe travel throughout the empire, the extensive diaspora of the Jews, the many proselytes from Gentilism, etc. God had all such things ready when the time came.

Then “God commissioned forth his Son,” ἐξάπεστειλεν ὁ Θεός which means more than that God “sent forth” (our versions), for he sent him to fulfill the mission indicated by the ἵνα clause. The Holy Trinity (ὁ Θεός) commissioned one of its Three Persons for this mighty and wondrous task. Usually the preexistence of Jesus is found referred to in this statement, but it signifies his eternal deity.

The two γενόμενον are modal aorist participles, indicating a time simultaneous with “commissioned,” yet a subsidiary action. Two items were involved in this commission: 1) “come to be (get to be) from a woman”; 2) “come to be (get to be) under law,” under such a thing as νόμος, anarthrous, qualitative. The second is the consequence of the first. The aorists are historical statements of facts. The passive “was made” (A.V.), and the intransitive “was born” (R.V.) are poor translations.

We meet two groups of antagonists: 1) those who\_ a priori\_ reject the deity of Jesus and his Virgin birth, and who shrink from no violence in maintaining their denial. They simply reject the accounts of Matthew and of Luke, and no maltreatment of the sacred words is too severe to apply to all the other passages that speak about these matters. 2) Men who are more or less affected by this radical group. Against all of them in past ages as well as in the present age the Church stands with her confession and testimony on the impregnable Rock of Ages.

God’s Son became man, the God-man. He took his human nature from a woman, no human father was involved. This was the Incarnation, the Virgin birth which we celebrated at Christmas and still celebrate on the basis of this text. The Son did not cease to be the Son when he became man. He did not relinquish his deity, — an impossible thought. He remained the Son that he was from all eternity, and added what he had not been, namely man. He

assumed our human nature; he took it from a human mother. He is thus the one absolutely unique person in the universe, a person possessed of two natures. No other being or person is like him in this respect. Both natures were needed for his mission, hence in addition to his deity he assumed the human nature. Incomprehensible? Absolutely so! A miracle in the highest degree? Beyond question! Shall we deny its reality? Only when God himself is a liar and is no longer God!

The need that the Son be man in order to carry out his mission is added by the participle: “come to be under law, that he should buy free those under law.” It is in vain for Robertson to tell us that in Greek “law” and “the law” both refer to the Mosaic law, that the absence or the presence of the article makes no difference. Even in English the difference is material. Paul does not here refer to the circumcision of Jesus, which was the act that placed him under the Mosaic law, but to the Incarnation, by which Jesus came to be under law in general, under law as such. Then, of course, Jesus was also under the law of Moses as a circumcised Jew. As no human being by virtue of being a human being is free from law, so also Jesus because he was human was not free but “under law.”

We need only ask, how many did Jesus buy free from law? Only the Jews, only those under the code of Moses? No, all men, even as all were “under law.” Again, under what law did Jesus die? Under the Jewish law of the Sanhedrin alone, or also under the Roman law of Pontius Pilate? Both condemned him to death, — illegally and wrongfully, it is true, but none the less they both condemned him. In Rom. 3:19 when the Mosaic law speaks it condemns every man, stops every mouth, and makes all the world guilty before God. The Mosaic code was the one perfect code of law. If it condemned the Jews who had it and tried to carry out this code, it could do no less in the case of the Gentiles who, not having it, never even made an effort to live up to its requirements.

Paul has treated the sacrificial death of Jesus, what we often call his passive obedience, in 3, 10, and 13-14: “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us,” etc. Here Paul adds the so-called active obedience of Jesus evidenced in fulfilling all the requirements of law, including the perfect Jewish code of Moses. To be “under law” is to be required to fulfill such law. But Jesus rendered this obedience not for himself, as some claim, to show himself spotless in his own person and thus

at last to offer himself as the lamb without blemish to die for our sins. This view makes the fulfillment of the law on the part of Jesus only indirectly applicable to us. The active obedience was as necessary for us as the passive. For Jesus himself neither obedience was needed, for he is the eternal Son of God. The active obedience is as substitutionary and vicarious as is the passive. In fact, the two can be separated only in thought. Even in his death the Son gave himself (active), and so was slain (passive). During all of his life there was more or less suffering, and all of it was borne for our sake. The commentator Meyer vainly objects to the expressions “complete obedience” and “the obedience” in the *Concordia Triglotta*, 919, 9 and 927, 32. We mention Meyer because others agree with him and interpret our passage incorrectly.

[5] When Paul says “that he should buy free those under law,” the statement is objective and applies in all men. The verb ἐξαγαράζειν is the same as that found in 3:13. The aorist implies that all those under law (Jew and Gentile) were thus bought free by Jesus. It is the context that determines the sense of the clause: “that we should receive the sonship.” This “we” in the verb suffix is the same as in 5:3 and it signifies Jews. The υἱοθεσία they should receive is not “the adoption of sons” (our versions), for a babe may be adopted. This term refers to the status of a son in his majority, who is no longer, as were the Old Testament Jews, under guardians and stewards, watched by his *paidagogos* (3:25), and kept under constant restriction. All this had ended as far as the Jews were concerned. All of them could enter their majority. That so many refused to do so, does not change God’s purpose (ἴνα).

So we must not ask whether this “sonship” (υἱοθεσία) == regeneration as well as justification. For all minor heirs possessed both, although because minors they were still under supervision. When Christ finished his mission, these minor heirs attained their majority and were free from all this legal supervision.

[6] Here is another case like that in Rom. 3:19: what pertains to the Jews by that very fact pertains still more to the Gentiles. When the minority of the Jews was ended by the work of Christ, when the guardians and the stewards of the Jews were dismissed, this whole system came to an end. In 3:19 (see 13th Sunday after Trinity) we see that it came into being centuries after the covenant with Abraham had been made, and that it was to end

when Jesus should come. It ended indeed. Now no Gentile Christian has to pass through a period of minority; all Gentile believers at once enter upon their spiritual majority. **And because you are sons, God commissioned the Spirit of his Son for our hearts as crying: “Abba Father!” [7] Wherefore no longer art thou a slave, but a son. And if a son, also an heir through God.**

The “we” in the verb now becomes “you.” “And because you are sons,” all of you Galatians, whether of Jewish or of Gentile extraction. There is no question about your being “sons” in the full sense of the word, not sons in their minority but sons in their majority. Christ abolished the arrangement of minor children. Since now all the children of God are sons in their majority, “God commissioned the Spirit of his Son for our hearts as crying: ‘Abba Father!’” God did this at Pentecost. Note the identical verb: ἐξάπεστειλεν for the commissioning of God’s Son, and again for the commissioning of the Spirit of his Son.

Sometimes it is assumed that the Holy Spirit did not work during the Old Testament period. Then how came into being the Old Testament itself? for this is it work of the Spirit. How came into being the saints and believers of that period? The Spirit produced them. We need say no more. But a new field and a wider range was opened to the Spirit after Jesus bought free the whole world, all men “under law.” Now the Spirit could lead all the sons of God to exercise to the full their majority by coming directly through Christ to the throne of God and there crying to him for help in need, “Abba Father.” On this form of address see Rom. 8:15 (8th Sunday after Trinity).

[7] “That *we* might receive — *you* are sons — into *our* hearts — no longer art *thou* a slave,” all these italicized pronouns are only inflectional endings, yet note the mastery and the clarity with which the changes are made. Here at the end Paul addresses every reader personally: “Wherefore,” to sum it all up, “no longer art thou a slave, but a son.” “No longer it slave” is to be taken in the sense of v. 1, the minor heir who is no better than a slave. All this lies in the dim past. “But a son” means a son in his majority.

“And if a son” in this sense, “then an heir through God.” Correct the reading of the A.V. This does not mean an heir still waiting for his inheritance, for such a one would again be only a minor, but an heir who possesses and enjoys the inheritance which God made his through Christ.

The only part of the inheritance still outstanding is the glory of heaven. Here consider Rom. 8:17 and Christ as the Supreme Heir. Our glorious position as such heirs has come about entirely διὰ Θεοῦ, “through God,” the preposition speaking of him as the personal medium. The explanation appears in v. 4 and 6: God commissioned his Son, and commissioned also the Spirit of his Son.

This text places before us the priceless effects of Christ’s Incarnation.

## **Homiletical Aid**

Christmas is past. All the decoration, the caroling, the giving of presents, etc. But Christ’s great Christmas gift remains and is never to be taken from us.

### **The Abiding Blessings of Christmas.**

#### **I. Redemption.**

“To redeem them that were under law,” to buy all of them free. By his doing in their stead all that the law required of them, all of which they could not do. By his also paying the penalty for their disobedience by his vicarious death.

#### **II. Sonship.**

The children of God in the Old Testament were like minor children under guardians and stewards, although they were children. The heathen people were slaves of superstition, idolatry and sin. Then came Jesus, born man of the Virgin, and fulfilled his mission. Ever since, by faith in him we are “sons” in the full sense of the word, sons in their majority with all guardians dismissed. We are able to go directly to our Father without a priest to mediate for us. The entire salvation of Christ is ours.

#### **III. Heirship.**

The inheritance is now ours. All that Jesus obtained for us by his obedience and death. It is our Christmas gift. The only thing we yet wait for is the glory of heaven.

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We have all in spirit been to Bethlehem and to the manger of the heavenly Child. Have you come away empty? Have only your feelings been pleurably stirred? Etc.

### **What Have You Brought Away from the Manger?**

I. The Son, the Godman, your Redeemer?

The Son — deity.

The Godman — born of the Virgin, true man in order to be a substitute for you who are men.

Who bought you free from all the implacable claims and penalties of the law you transgressed.

Are you happy to have this Son as your Redeemer in your heart by faith, till you see him at last in glory?

II. The Spirit of the Son to make you sons?

No longer, like the Old Testament saints, minors, under guardians and stewards, much like slaves.

No longer, like the heathen people, actual slaves of idols, superstitions, heathen vices.

But sons in their majority, able to go to the Father yourselves (royal priesthood).

Sons and heirs, possessed of all the inheritance Christ has obtained for you.

Are your hearts the home of this Spirit of the Son, filling you with joy because of all that is yours now that Christ has come?

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We take Christmas for granted, hold it too cheaply. Really and fully

### **To Appreciate Christmas**

- I. You ought to be a Jew for a while, v. 1-3. You ought to have a good taste of all the hampering, restrictive, troublesome Levitical regulations of a real Jew. The modern reformed Jew has cast much of his old law aside, the orthodox Jew clings to as much as he can. After such a schooling what joy the coming of the Redeemer would be for you, setting you free to be in the fullest sense sons and heirs of God, free from all legal restrictions, penalties, and fears.
- II. You ought to be a heathen for a while, living in fear of idols, in darkness of superstition, observing all kinds of vicious, degrading rites. What the Jews had in the way of Levitical law came from God, what the heathen have is self-made and from the devil. After such a schooling how you would rejoice in the Son, your Redeemer, and in the sonship because of which you know how to pray Abba Father.
- III. You ought to be a cheap Christian for a while, going to church, but getting nothing; listening to sermons, but not to the Gospel in them; doing a few things the church tells you, but running with the world; etc. After such shallowness something ought some day to wake you up and show you the hollowness of your life, the danger you have lived in, the grace of God that did not let you die in that danger. God's Spirit ought then to open your eyes to what Christ and his Spirit and true Christianity really are.
- IV. You ought to be a genuine Christian all the time. One who truly believes in his Redeemer, who has the Spirit of the Son in his heart, who goes to God and prays Abba Father with his whole soul, who rejoices in his liberty and does not seek to get back into legalism, who uses all the gifts of his sonship and looks forward to the last of these gifts, everlasting glory.

Such a Christian knows what Christmas really is.

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This text deals with the Virgin Birth: "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman." That the Son of God was born a human being has been attacked from the beginning. The Jews would not believe that Jesus was God's Son and therefore crucified him as a blasphemer. The Gnostics, the Arians, the



old rationalists, and today the so-called modernists (whose errors are not modern but moss-grown) keep up the denial, although all of these people wish to call themselves Christians.

### **The Attacks Upon the Virgin Birth.**

I. They destroy the veracity of the Bible.

In addition to our text the following are especially attacked: The entire Gospel of St. John and every passage mentioning the Son of God; Matt. 1; Luke chap. one and two; Gen. 3:15; Is. 7:14; Micah 5:3; etc., any or all of which the preacher may discuss.

If these passages are untrue, how much of the Bible is true?

II. They leave no Son of God as the Second Person of the Trinity.

They abolish the Trinity and erect a unitarian God, such as the present Jews and such as the Mohammedans have, a god that does not exist.

They leave Jesus only a divine, godlike man, whose father was probably Joseph, who was conceived illegitimately, who is really so undivine that he lied about his person and his mission. Who is set up as our "example," our great moral teacher, in whose name we should rise up and reform this unjust and wicked world, etc.

III. They cancel the work of the Son.

His redemption — man is to work out his own salvation. His sacrificial, vicarious, substitutionary death in our stead. He fulfilled the law for himself so that God should not condemn him; he did not fulfill it to redeem us, we must do that ourselves. The blood of Christ is especially attacked and is vilified as "the blood theology," etc.

All that rests on Christ's redemption, our sonship and heirship wrought by the Holy Spirit. Our whole spiritual life of faith and the love that springs from faith. The Sacraments become hollow ceremonies. Our hope vanishes. There is no such thing as the resurrection of the body, etc.

IV. They have been crushed from the beginning.

The Church and the great ecumenic creeds, the Apostolic, the Nicene, the Athanasian Creed, and all others-in all the evangelical denominations. Those old creeds voice the Bible faith in the Son and in his Virgin birth in no uncertain terms.

Quote from the Apostolic and the Nicene Creed, if from no other. In these attacks our salvation is at stake. If the Son of God is not born of the Virgin Mary he is no Savior, nor is there another to whom we may turn.

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### **The Christian's Divine Sonship a Christmas Gift.**

- I. To obtain it for us God's Son was born man.
- II. The spirit of this sonship is the spirit of the Son.
- III. The inheritance of this sonship is made ours through the Son.

C. C. Schmidt, *Weg des Lebens*.

# The Circumcision Of Christ (New Year). Gal. 3:23-29

## “As Many as have Been Baptized in Christ Have Put on Christ”

The ancient church did not celebrate the beginning of the new year. Pagan Rome engaged in a boisterous festivity, which the world of today imitates with great pleasure. The ancient church met this pagan effort to brush away all serious thought at the turn of the year by arranging for a fast on a new year's day. Soon this fast extended to a period of three days. The octave of the nativity was celebrated on the first of January as the day of Christ's circumcision. Even now the day is so listed in our latest hymnal and the ancient texts are retained. The idea of a new year's celebration came much later, at the period of the medieval church. Luther opposed the idea and never preached a new year's sermon. Later Protestant preachers favored the idea of a new year's celebration and sought to utilize the texts so as to include both the idea of the entrance of the new year and that of the circumcision of the boy Jesus. In our opinion Nebe is mistaken when a half century ago he thought that the church had definitely turned to the idea of the new year. Here in America the rush and hurry of life has made the day one of minor importance as far as preaching is concerned, although it is a secular holiday. Even under these circumstances the idea of circumcision is by no means lost.

The Catholic church assigns to the day the text found in the ancient *comes* of Balusius Tit. 2:11-14, although this is also the text for Christmas. Gal. 3:23-29 is the text in the ancient *comes* of Pamelius. The gospel (Luke 2:21) deals with the historical fact of Christ's circumcision; the epistle does not need to mention that historical fact when it states that we are no longer under the law, the old *paidagoyos*, but are all without distinction of nation or position the children of God. The preceding section, Gal. 3:15-22, is the

text for the 13th Sunday after Trinity; 4:1-7 the text for the Sunday after Christmas.

In v. 22 Paul states that the Scriptures locked up everything under sin. The Scripture verdict pronounced on all men back to Adam himself is that they are sinners damned to hell. Read the Bible and see how a long time before the day of Moses and Sinai the Bible pronounces all men lost and doomed sinners. What then did the law do when it came into history so many hundred years after Abraham? Its function was a minor one, although it was decidedly significant. **Moreover, before the faith came, we were being kept under guard by law, being locked up together for the faith about to be revealed.** Δέ is not adversative (“but,” our versions), but continuative, adding a different point. In v. 19 we have: “till the Seed (Christ) came”; the same time is referred to by the clause: “before the faith came.” From the time of Sinai until the day of Christ “we were being kept under guard by law.” The Scriptures locked us up securely in the great prison-house of sin, and then there was stationed over us as the great guardsman, we may say warden of the prison, “law.” This warden’s task was to keep us in this state: “being locked up together for the faith about to be revealed.”

Paul speaks in a striking way: “before the faith came — for the faith about to be revealed.” Our versions ignore the article and translate “faith,” as if subjective faith were meant. All of the Old Testament saints had subjective faith, — Moses was a believer, David, etc. “The faith” is not *fides qua creditur*, but *fides quae creditur*, the faith which is believed, the object which we embrace in trust, in v. 19 “the Seed” (Christ). The Old Testament saints believed God’s promise concerning the Seed, the Messiah, Christ. That faith saved indeed. But everything depended on the fulfillment of that promise, on the actual coming of “the Seed,” of “the faith.” Till that glorious day arrived there was need for something of the character of “law,” qualitative, no article (not “the law,” our versions). Of course, the law referred to was the whole Mosaic system, yet ὑπὸ νόμου names only its general quality, “by (what is) law.”

Like a soldier or a sentry “law” stood guard, not to protect, but to allow no one to escape. We know how rigidly the Jews were constrained and locked together by law. This is what God did with the chosen nation. But the effect was that described in Rom. 3:19: when God’s law pronounced the

Jews sinners it thereby stopped every mouth and declared the whole world guilty and subject to God's judgment. So here, when "law" stood guard over the Jews, do not suppose that this had no bearing on the pagan world. If God dealt so with the descendants of Abraham, would he leave the pagan nations without condemnation?

Yet the object in thus using "law" upon the Jews with a reflex effect on the whole world of sinners was not to keep them locked up tight under sin to be lost when one after another died; the object was the escape of all, not only from the power of this guardsman, "law," but from sin, the prison-house, and from all effects of sin. The guard was to keep the Jews "for the faith about to be revealed." Here "the faith" is objective beyond question, for it is to be revealed so that men may see and thus embrace it by subjective faith. It is in vain for Cremer-Koegel *Woerterb.* to assert that πίστις is always only subjective. The New Testament Gospel brings this revelation.

When men today cling to "law" instead of to "the faith" now at last revealed in Christ, who fulfilled the promise made to Abraham, they really seek to perpetuate the temporary function of law, which began at Sinai and ended with Christ. But by doing this they set aside Christ and what he has done and thus lose salvation. Again, by trying to hold to the old warden, "law," and at the same time to the Seed (Christ) and to "the faith" now revealed in Christ, men try to mix law and Gospel; but these are opposites and mix no more than do water and oil. The result is again disastrous.

[24] Looking back once more to the time before Christ's coming Paul explains with a new figure what the law did. **And so (ὥστε) the law has been our slave-guardian for Christ, in order that as a result of faith we might get to be declared righteous. [25] But the faith having come, no longer are we under a slave-guardian.** The guardsman or sentry had been a παιδαγωγός for the Jews until Christ came. Literally meaning a "boy's leader," the term refers to the attendant, generally a slave, who was provided by a wealthy Greek or Roman father for his son for the period between the age of seven and seventeen. It was the duty of this slave to attend the lad and to watch over his conduct. He took the boy to school and to gymnastic exercises, watched over and corrected his deportment that it might befit his station, and kept him from hurtful associations and influences, and from foolish and wrong actions. The lad was thus trained

early and long to be ever a gentleman. The forbidding *vultus paedagogi* came to be proverbial. “Schoolmaster” (A.V.) is wrong, so is “tutor” (R.V.). The *paidagogos* did no teaching, he only took the boy to the school and the teacher. Nor did he administer punishment; the father attended to this.

“And so,” Paul says, “the law (i.e. the Mosaic system) has been our boy’s guardian for Christ.” The American Committee of the R.V. translates “is become.” This translation confuses the past historical fact, about which alone Paul speaks, with the doctrine concerning the moral law, according to which we may say that the moral law leads us to Christ. The elaborate Levitical system has come to an end. There is no more to be a Temple as a type of Christ (John 2:19-21), no more a high priest, no more lambs, etc., etc. All these things directed the Jews to Christ, and they had no meaning beyond this sense of promise. Thus when Christ came this law was abolished as being no longer needed. When now we say that the law is still our *paidagogos* leading us to Christ we refer to the moral law, the Ten Commandments, which show us our sins (Rom. 3:20) and thus draw us to Christ, the expiation for our sins. We only adopt the word *paidagogos* from Paul.

Paul says, the law was for us Jews a *paidagogos* εἰς Χριστόν, “for Christ,” with the purpose “that we might get to be declared righteous as a result of faith, ἐκ πίστεως.” Paul does not mean to delay the justifying verdict until Christ actually came. Millions of Jews died between the time of Sinai and that of Calvary and they were declared righteous ἐκ πίστεως. With so many of its provisions this Levitical law pointed them to Christ, that they might believe in him, and thus receive the verdict of justification as a result of (ἐκ) faith. It was not the law! that justified them, nor the law that wrought faith in their hearts. The ceremonial law was composed of regulations and was thus pure law, pure demand, and required unquestioning obedience in its regulations; but in its regulations this law was full of types and figures and these referred to Christ in a multitude of ways. This was really prophetic Gospel in harmony with the covenant promise made to Abraham, and thus an aid to faith, leading the Jews to Christ.

It is a strong statement that we are justified ἐκ πίστεως. Paul makes it twice in Rom. 1:17; also in Rom. 4:16 and in Gal. 3:12. Ἐκ denotes source,

and we face the question as to how faith can be the source of justification. If the essence of faith is taken to be an activity, *ein Holen Christi*, faith cannot be such a source. We should then have to cancel Paul's ἐκ phrases as being the gravest error, making our justification, and we may add our predestination, result from an activity of ours. But define the essence of faith as a passivity. In the first instant of faith, when the Gospel kindles it, Christ is given to faith, and then indeed we are free to say: we are declared righteous ἐκ πίστεως, as a result of faith, and also: we are elected in' view of faith. For now we refer to no activity of ours, but to the divine contents of faith, to Christ, his merits, etc. So also, as far as election is concerned, the fathers worded it most carefully: "in view of faith" == "in view of the saving merits of Christ perseveringly apprehended by faith." Faith rightly defined is great indeed, and we need not fear to make it the source, as Paul does repeatedly.

[25] With the coming of "the faith" as defined above, all mentorship, whether of the Mosaic system or of any other kind automatically ended. The aorist ἐλθούσης; is historical. Naturally, with Christ present nothing further was needed beyond pointing men to him directly. After Christ finished his redemptive work, no believer, whether Jew or non-Jew, needed anything like a *paidagogos* to point him to Christ through types, figures, symbolical acts, etc. The Gospel proclaims the cross of Christ, his open tomb, his sitting in glory directly, and not through imagery. We indeed still study the old imagery, but not because we need it for ourselves in the way in which Israel of old once needed it.

[26] Γάρ == that you may understand what this means for you Galatians personally, note what you are: **For you all are God's sons through this faith in connection with Christ Jesus.** All of you Galatians. Today we can say: all of us. Whether former Jews or former Gentiles, all of you are "God's sons," no less. This predicate, placed before the copula, is emphatic. The significant term is υἱο, "sons," which the A.V. should not translate with "children." Τέκνα, "children" could not be the word to be used here, for it connotes dearness, and the children of God in the Old Testament were just as dear to God as are those of the New Testament. Secondly, "children" connotes immaturity, which makes them require a mentor, a *paidagogos*. What Paul says is that this day is past. We are "God's sons," mature, with

full standing, independent, with no mentor, in possession of the divine inheritance promised to Abraham, the fulfillment which Christ has brought.

We are in an entirely different position and one greatly superior to that occupied by the Old Testament believers (Matt. 13:16-17). For them the fulfillment was yet to come; we have it, it has come. More than this. The Judaizers who had broken into the Galatian congregations wanted to keep the old *paidagogos* as a permanent necessity, yet not as the *paidagogos* whom God had sent to lead to Christ, but us a tyrant slave-driver for God's sons. What folly! No, says Paul, all of you Galatians have the full status of sons.

“Through the faith in connection with Christ Jesus,” refers again to “the faith” (v. 23-25) as objective, that which we embrace by believing. “The faith” is the objective means of our sonship, “faith” (our believing) is the subjective means. In our versions the matter is confused, we may even say that the translation often conveys an incorrect meaning. When Paul means subjective faith and when he designates its object Christ he says Πίστις Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (objective genitive), in Greek “faith of Jesus Christ.” While we may translate this by “faith in Jesus Christ,” the Greek has no “in.” When Paul here writes ἡ πίστις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ he means the substance of what we trust in, this substance as in connection with Christ Jesus. In fact, there is no doctrine or truth which we are to rely upon that is not entirely rooted and grounded in Christ Jesus. By embracing all this truth centering in Jesus we are indeed “God's sons,” no more minors, no more under mentors.

[27] Γάρ == let me explain. **For as many of you as were baptized in connection with Christ, did put on Christ.** This makes us God's sons. “As many as” == “all you” (v. 26) . All of the Galatians were, of course, baptized. Paul points them to the day of their Baptism as the date when they became God's sons. Baptism is the Sacrament of initiation into the divine sonship.

Look at Robertson (or any other of the newer grammars) regarding static εἰς which == ἐν, so that we may even have εἶναι εἰς. On Rom. 6:3 etc., Robertson is correct; ὅσοι ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστὸν εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημεν, “as many as we were baptized in Christ were baptized in his death.” The same is true with regard to Matt. 28:18: “in the



Name” (not “into”). In his Word Pictures Robertson forgets his own grammar and all that the papyri have taught him and tries to make  $\epsilon\lambda\zeta$ ; in our passage mean “unto,” “in reference to Christ.” But he was a Baptist and feared that here Paul would be understood as saying that Baptism saves. That dare not be.

$\epsilon\lambda\zeta$  ==  $\epsilon\nu$  and the idea to be expressed is that of sphere, or more simply: “in connection with.” Everything about Baptism is “in connection with Christ,” he instituted Baptism, he sent it out to all the nations, all the promises in Baptism come from Christ and are fulfilled by Christ. You cannot be properly baptized except in connection with Christ. This is the simple statement Paul makes.

We need no commentator to tell us that Christian Baptism had nothing to do with the Greek mystery cults. Did the Son of God borrow from pagan cults? Zahn must not say  $\epsilon\lambda\zeta$  means *auf Christum*, for it means nothing of the kind and *auf* would be  $\epsilon\pi\acute{\iota}$ . In *Beziehung auf* is no better. The whole statement of the apostle is ruined when Zahn wants us to think that putting on Christ in Baptism means “to play a role” like an actor dressed for the part. Robertson regards Baptism as “a badge or uniform of service like that of a soldier,” his *sacramentum*, oath of fealty, and “symbolic picture,” — just so it remains “symbolic”! All these as well as all other aberrations must show the preacher how necessary it is to teach the truth about Baptism.

To put on Christ is to become a partaker of Christ’s salvation. The imagery is taken from the Old Testament. To put on Christ is to receive justification: “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me in the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels.” So writes Isaiah (61:10). Here are no actor’s garments, no symbolical ornamentation; here is permanent investiture. When a king is formally enrobed he remains a king. As sons of God we are clothed with royalty, and we remain such sons and princes. See Luke 15:22; Matt. 22:11; also Ps. 132:9 and 16. The objection that Paul is here not speaking about a wedding is pointless. Were grand robes worn only at weddings?

Yet lose not the main point. Christ is here, and we are in living, saving connection with him. We are past immaturity and having a *paidagogos*. Our

Baptism guarantees our position as God's sons. Here is no mere symbolism, no mere swearing of fealty, no law at all requiring something from us; no, here is pure Gospel (Baptism, Christ), and this made us God's sons.

[28] Verse 28 parallels v. 27. All who are clothed alike with Christ in the garment of Christ's perfect righteousness are alike in God's sight. The Mosaic law made great differences between Jews and Gentiles, between free men and slaves, between men and women. All these divisions were now gone. **There is no Jew nor Greek, there is no slave nor free, there is no male nor female; for you all are as one person in union with Christ Jesus.** Ἐνι == ἔνεστι, an Old idiom. Yet ἔνι (which is the preposition ἐνί turned adverb) does not imply ἐστίν the copula, but ἔστιν the verb "to exist," *es gibt*, "there exists neither Jew nor Greek" etc.

Jew and Greek are racial and national divisions in the world of Paul's day. Slave and free was a division that ran through the whole Roman world, which had literally millions of slaves. These four terms are arranged chiastically, the two major ones (Jew, free) outside, the two secondary ones (Greek, slave) inside. The third pair is coordinate, connected with καί, two neuters: "no male and female," i.e. no sex. Paul stops with these abolished differences, you may add others if you wish. Behold what Baptism has done! In God's sight all of us are simply his sons.

Yet this does not mean that the baptized Jewish Christian lost his Jewish extraction and blood, nor did the baptized Greek lose these traits. This did not liberate all slaves, nor make all free men slaves. Nor did it make all females males, and Vice versa. The Gospel changes nothing in the domain of the world and of natural life. Only in certain respects does it work changes, as in the abolition of slavery and in the elevation of the status of womanhood. Here Paul speaks only about the spiritual domain, about God's household, in which all believers are equally sons of God.

He states this in a striking way: "for you are all one person in union with Christ Jesus." The A.V. has: "all one," leaving in doubt whether "one" is neuter or masculine. Ἐἓς; is masculine: "one person," not just "one thing or one body." Paul is not speaking of the *Una Sancta*, the body whose head is Christ, made up of many different members, each with his special gifts (Eph. 4:11:16). "You are all one per-son" means that no matter which one of you God looks at he sees one and the same son of his, with one and the

same Baptism, one and the same justification, none higher, none lower, none richer, none poorer, none better, none worse. It is as though before God's eyes there were just one person, — to see one is to have seen all. Of course, there are differences, but not in this sonship ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ “in, i.e. in union with, Christ Jesus.”

[29] Paul now completes his circle of thought by combining the end with the beginning: **And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise.** Paul has the condition of reality, — even as the Galatians indeed belong to Christ. Εἰ ὑμεῖς Χριστοῦ == “if you (are) of Christ,” the Greek idiom, for “if you are his,” “if you belong to him.” This defines in all simplicity what means, to, be in connection or in union with Christ, — it means to be his.

Ἄρα draws the self-evident conclusion: “then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise.” These terms go beyond our text, and take us into the text for the 13th Sunday after Trinity. In fact “Abraham's seed” goes back to v. 7; “promise” to v. 8, where the promise is quoted, and to v. 16-18 where it is connected With the testament, the inheritance, and with Christ as the supreme Heir. All these thoughts are now brought to a focus. As sons of God we are Abraham's spiritual descendants. To him the promise was made which Christ at last fulfilled. The promise was a testament, signed and sealed, and it made Christ, “the Seed” (v. 16), the Supreme Heir. They who belong to Christ inherit with him, or rather through him. Such blessed heirs are we.

But note throughout the silent contrast: the law makes no sons of God, makes no one Abraham's seed, makes no one an heir. This the promise alone does, because it was fulfilled in Christ. Turn to “the faith” and to Baptism, and to no law and works of law.

## Homiletical Aid

How are you entering the new year? Many enter it with the old sins, the old curse, the old helplessness against the devil, the old lack of sure hope.

### **How the Sons of God Enter the New Year.**

I. As sons, baptized in Christ Jesus.

Though baptized years ago, that Sacrament made us sons of God. It joined us to Christ our Savior. It took us out of the devil's power and domain and placed us into God's family. We were regenerated, reborn, a new man, the spirit began to live in us.

Is the power of our Baptism still in us? Are we still God's sons? If sin and indifference have led us away, let us return and repent. This new year may be our last. We want to enter it aright, with joy in our hearts that we are all the sons of God made so by our Baptism which joined us to Christ.

II. As sons, justified by faith.

All the old load of sin removed for ever, as far as the east is from the west, to the depth of the sea, as a cloud dissolves. This removal took place in Baptism (Acts 22. 16), and continues with repentance and faith. Men deny their guilt. What would they not give to wipe it entirely away, to have a white, spotless soul?

So clean and clear of guilt we enter on this new year. As sons God is our loving Father. As sons we enjoy all the rights and privileges of sons. As sons our Father provides for us so that we need have no worry and fear of any kind. Would you want to enter the new year in any other way?

III. As sons, sure of the inheritance.

Losses we may suffer, but we are heirs with Christ, and our inheritance is sure and certain, reserved for us in heaven. It is ours as sons. We are not slaves of the law, who can never earn heaven; but sons and heirs. We may meet sorrows, sickness, pains during this new year. But our hope will shine only more brightly, heaven awaits us.

Do not enter the new year with indifference as regards the possibility of death. A fool does that. Do not cherish a self-made hope. Such hope is blown away like paper in the decisive hour. Do not make this life your all; leave it, when the time comes, without regret. You are God's sons, and as such with joy, assurance, and hope go forward, hand in hand with him who made you sons, your Lord Jesus Christ.

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Like the old heathen Romans in the time of St. Paul the world today boisterously celebrates the dawn of a new year. The world wants to forget everything of a serious nature. It dances into the new year with levity and frivolity. The Christian does the very opposite. At the opening of a new year his heart swells with joy because of what God has done for him. He looks up to God and praises him for the glorious position Into which God has placed him.

### **The Christian's Glorious Position at the Opening of a New Year.**

- I. He has Christ, and unlike the Old Testament saints he needs no law to point him forward to Christ's coming and work. The whole year is lit up for him by Christ and the treasures of salvation. How happily he faces all the coming days!
- II. He is in a new life, no sin, guilt, and curse upon his soul, since his Baptism he is God's son, dwells in his Father's family and household on earth, enjoys his Father's blessings, etc. So will he live with even greater joy all the coming days.
- III. He is ready for heaven. He has the inheritance of grace already now and soon the inheritance of glory shall also be his. It cannot come "too soon. As an heir he will join the Supreme Heir Christ. What has the world to offer him that could hold him for a day? With heaven as his goal the whole year will be filled with light.

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I note that the preachers at times gravely misinterpret the text. They preach as if the law is still our *paidagogos* to lead us to Christ. The whole Levitical legal system, which once served the Jews in this capacity, has been abolished for almost 2,000 years, and has no function for us today. The moral law is a different matter; it furnishes us the knowledge of sin, Rom. 3:20. Let us not confuse these things. — The expression that we are all "one person" in Christ Jesus is not an admonition to Christian unity, harmony, and love, and is not to be exploited in this way. The meaning of the expression is deeper and should be apprehended and not altered into the

commonplace of Christian unity. — In speaking of us as heirs, too many think only of heaven. All the grace we now have is part of our inheritance. — There is no excuse for misapprehending any part of this text.

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The great division of time: before Christ came — after he came. The Old Testament time, the New Testament time. Today begins

### **Another New Testament Year.**

In which

- I. Christ himself comes to us. Not sending us the ceremonial law with pictures of himself as during the Old Testament time, but coming himself, with all his redemptive work completed, in Word and Sacrament, to make our own all his saving "grace and gifts.
- II. Christ himself makes us God's sons.- Not minor children with a guardian or mentor, but mature, full grown sons possessing all that God has prepared for them, all that Baptism and justification bestows. No time shall ever come on earth when we shall have more.
- III. Christ himself gives us the inheritance of grace. "We are heirs according to promise," what Abraham saw afar is ours (John 8:56), what prophets and righteous men longed to see is ours (Matt. 13:16-17), namely all the New Testament grace and gifts. Only heaven now awaits us.

What a joy to have such a year ahead of us? Shall we make full use of it?

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The two ancient texts for today ignore the new year. The new year of the Church is the First Sunday in Advent. To-day is only the secular new year, a calendar date. Because the old Roman world celebrated this date with wild orgies, the Church made it a day of fasting. To give it a Christian celebration was a medieval Catholic idea. Luther never preached it new year's sermon, he kept the ancient idea of the Church: The eighth day after

the birth of Christ is the day of his circumcision, and this indeed deserves to be celebrated by the Church. Consider then

### **The Day of Our Savior's Circumcision,**

how in our epistle text it reminds us of our release. Since Sinai the Jews were under the Levitical legal system which was ever to point them forward to Christ and to what he would accomplish. But here now in Bethlehem is Christ, and on the eighth day he is circumcised, formally placed under all the old Jewish law, that by fulfilling it he might release us from its requirements. They named him "Jesus," Savior, at his circumcision, and so he comes to us himself now in his Word and Sacraments.

The Day of Our Savior's Circumcision by means of our epistle text reminds us also of our instatement. To take the place of Jewish circumcision Christ instituted the Sacrament of Baptism, by which we have been instated as God's sons, which means not as minor children, but as sons in their majority, enjoying all the rights and blessings of their sonship. By Baptism we were justified and as justified sons all that is Christ's is also ours.

The Day of Our Savior's Circumcision by means of our epistle text reminds us finally of our last inheritance. We now already enjoy the abounding grace of Christ Jesus, pardon, peace, comfort, etc. We have the firstfruits, the advance pledge. What was begun in the circumcision of our Lord was finished in due time and has brought us thus far. Only one more step remains.

Thank God for his unspeakable grace!

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## **HAPPY NEW YEAR! HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

### **True Christians Enter a Happy New Year**

- I. Because they are freed from all that can actually disturb and depress.
- II. Because they possess everything that can make the Christian content and happy.

I. G. G. in *Magazin*, etc., vol. 11. I altered the theme a bit.



# The Epiphany Cycle: The Christian's Manifestation Of Epiphany

## **Epiphany**

*The Glory of the Christian is from the Lord*

“The Lord shall arise upon thee”

## **The First Sunday After Epiphany**

*The Christian's Inner Transformation*

“Be transformed by the renewing of your mind”

## **The Second Sunday After Epiphany**

*The Christian's Manifestation among his Brethren*

“Gifts according to the grace given you”

## **The Third Sunday After Epiphany**

*The Christian's Manifestation among the World and Enemies*

“Overcome evil with good”

## **The Fourth Sunday After Epiphany**

*The Manifestation of the Christian in all Secular Surroundings*

“Owe no man anything but love”

## **The Fifth Sunday After Epiphany**

*The Manifestation in Virtues Through the Word*

The Life rich in the Word, full of Christian virtues

## **The Sixth Sunday After Epiphany**

*The Christian Manifests his Assurance*

“We have a Sure Word of Prophecy”

# Epiphany. Is. 60:1-6

## “The Lord Shall Arise Upon Thee”

The Epiphany Festival originated in the East, and entered the West in the fourth century. It is the oldest of the festivals, and was celebrated as a most high day. Unfortunately, it generally comes on a week day, and in our busy America, where the people generally know nothing about such a festival as “Epiphany,” its celebration suffers, being relegated to the nearest Sunday, changing that Sunday’s significance.

The Epiphany cycle begins in glory, like the Easter cycle, and the six Sundays after Epiphany send that glory afar. The ancient theme of Epiphany is what the word itself signifies: **The Savior’s Manifestation**. He shows himself to be what he truly is. The companion thought of the epistles is: **The Christian’s Manifestation**, which results from the Savior’s manifestation. The original gospel text was the Baptism of Jesus, even as at his Baptism he was fully revealed as the Savior and Son of God. When the festival was introduced in the West the text concerning the Magi was used, and the festival became that of the three Kings, introducing what some conceive as the missionary idea, with which, however, the rest of the cycle does not correspond. We seldom have the entire six Sundays after Epiphany. Since this is the case, it is not best when there are fewer Sundays to take the texts of such Sundays as may appear on the calendar, but to examine the six texts for the after-Epiphany season and to choose from the six the number that may be wanted.

For this text and for the Good Friday text we have thankfully used August Pieper’s *Jesaias II*, a commentary on the second part of the Prophet Isaiah, a most excellent work. We retain Pieper’s transliteration of the Hebrew in English script. Chapters 40-66 constitute a triad, the most magnificent poetry ever penned. Our text is taken from the third member of this triad which deals with The Spiritual and Eternal Exaltation. This

member of the triad again forms a triad, and our text is taken from the first member of this secondary triad (ch. 58-60) and constitutes the third member of this triad which embraces ch. 60. This chapter deals with the Actual Spiritual Glorification of the Church. The portion which constitutes our text may be summarized in the words: \_“The Lord shall arise upon thee\_.” We may formulate the subject of the text in the statement: *The Glory of the Christian is from the Lord*. That Isaiah is speaking of spiritual glory needs no argument for us. That he is speaking of the Christian Church of the New Testament era we also understand. Here is no chiliastic dream and no national conversion of the Jews at the time of the fancied millennium. For our exegetical-homiletical purpose we need not elaborate on these matters.

**[1] Arise, shine! For thy light is come, And the glory of the Lord is radiant above thee.**

Dramatically, without preamble and without naming the Church, the prophet cries to the New Testament Church: “Arise, shine!” With all her members she is to enter upon her great spiritual manifestation. The language is poetic and thus graphic. “Arise” conceives of the one addressed as sitting down in a depressed mood, and “shine” conceives of the soul as radiating joy, happiness, and all that we summarize in the concept light.

“For thy light is come,” Jesus, the Light of the world; “in him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). “Thy” light, because promised to the Old Testament Church from which came the New Testament Church. “Thy light” is defined, it is “the glory of Jehovah,” *Kh’bod J’hovah*. This is not the plain holiness of God, but the holy God in his infinite grace, coming to sinners to save, to bless, to glorify. From the appearance in the fiery Bush to the appearance on the fields of Bethlehem it is grace that shines forth from *Yahveh* as his glory. Ever it is holy grace, the sum of the Gospel, concentrated in words like Mark 16:16: “He that believeth and is baptized shall he saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” This glory of Jehovah is embodied in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the lost, the Judge of the unbelieving world. The light “is come,” *ba’* (perfect), == it is here now. Isaiah visualizes the happy future day; the glory “is radiant,” *sarah*, == has burst into brilliance and now shines in radiance over thee. Isaiah speaks in poetic fashion of the light and glory as visible to the physical eye. The substance is entirely spiritual.

[2] We have the elaboration:

**For, behold, the darkness covers the earth, And dark night the peoples: But over thee Jehovah radiates, And his glory shines upon thee.**

All the peoples of the world in darkness, deepest spiritual darkness, but Jerusalem, the New Testament Church, brilliant with the glory of *Yahveh*, the light of his holy grace. The two imperfects *jisrach* (radiates) and *jera'eh* (shines) merely denote continuance . of a present condition. The tenses do not denote a beginning. Here is not an incipient, but a complete light and glory. Darkness is the symbol of sin, death and hell, it connotes ignorance, lies, deception, sorrow, and doom. “The darkness” (definite) is described in the New Testament as a dread power which holds men in its grip. “Gross darkness” (A.V.) intensifies the idea. Light and its radiance is the symbol of truth, good, life, joy, salvation, blessedness. God dwells in the light. Christ is the light.

The world boasts of being enlightened. Its so called “science” excels the dim candle-light of Scripture and of the Old Church Confessions. The world boasts of its lofty progress, its culture, its achievements. But it still lies in darkness, densest darkness. It fought the world war [I] — for what? The nations are armed and arming, utterly, brazenly selfish, tyrannical where they dare to be, — are the dictators and would-be dictators a sign of progress and light? Morally, corruption is rotting the world. Religiously, unbelief is wrecking millions. Yes, the prophet saw correctly. But in the Church of Christ there is most brilliant light. All the light and the spiritual power you are to manifest has its source in the Lord’s glory (holy grace).

[3] Part of the glory of the Lord bestowed upon his Church is the fact that Gentiles, pagan people, come to the Church.

**And heathen walk hither to thy light, And kings to thy radiance.**

They are attracted to (*l'*) thy light; even kings come, drawn to the radiance. The day that the prophet sees is the time of the Gentiles, when Jesus sent his apostles into all the world. The Old Testament is full of the promises regarding this day’s coming and regarding its blessedness. The bars that hedged in Israel are down. The Gospel wins its victories among the most benighted. Yet Isaiah does not write “the Gentiles” or “all the

Gentiles,” but “Gentiles,” “heathen,” “pagans,” some of them. We ourselves are among them.

[4] What is stated in v. 3 is now graphically elaborated:

**Lift up thine eyes round about and see: Together in crowds all these come to thee! From afar come thy sons, And thy daughters are borne hither on the arm.**

The Church is called upon to see what is happening all around. *Khullam* == all they, i.e. the ones coming. They come *niqb'zu*, “gathered together,” i.e. actually. “in crowds,” and not merely here and there one singly. Some have a long distance to come, some have to be carried. We take these sons and these daughters to be heathen people converted to Christ, and not Jewish Christians carried by the heathen, as Pieper seems to do. The sons and the daughters are the children, hence the latter are carried when tired. The expression *'al zad* is oriental “on the side.” The child was carried on the mother’s hip supported by the arm, or on the arm supported by the hip. The picture is one of tenderness. At the same time we see that they come by families, another lovely feature.

[5] The elaboration continues, describing the effect of this influx upon the Church.

**When thou shalt see this, thou wilt radiate; And thy heart will quiver and expand, When the abundance of the sea turns to thee, And the riches of the heathen comes to thee.**

We subordinate the first clause: “when thou shalt see” etc. *Naharu* (*nahar*) is not “flow together,” but “burn,” “glow,” “radiate,” as one glows with pleasure. *Pachad* is quivering with joy and delight, when one scarcely knows what to say or to do. So also the heart swells or expands. It is debated whether *hamon jam* signifies good or people, the translation “abundance” leaves the question open. In the last line *chejl* certainly means “wealth” (A.V. margin). We think the debate is quite useless, since good and riches would not come to the Church save as the owners would bring them. We have the example in the Magi who brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh. “The riches of the heathen” refers to the heathen who come by conversion.

**[6] The multitude of camels covers thee, The colts of Midian and Ephah; Together from Seba come they, They carry hither gold and incense And show forth the praises of Jehovah.**

The description continues in this strain, foretelling how the influx shall come from far and wide. “The dromedaries” of the R.V. are suggested by Jerome’s translation, but *bekher* is derived from *bakhar*, “to be born as the first,” hence it means colt, here the colts of camels. So many shall come on camels and young camels as to “cover thee,” all thy territory. Midian lies east of the Holy Land, and Ephah is part of Midian. Midian was Keturah’s son, and Ephah was his firstborn. “Sheba” (A.V.) or Seba (grandson of Kush) was a wealthy territory in Arabia Felix or Yemen. These places are not named as being future strongholds of Christianity, as little as the physical city Jerusalem is the capital. Together with Jerusalem these oriental places are used in poetic figurative fashion as picturing the spread of Christianity in the Gentile world. It is not to be expected that the actual names of all the countries in the world to which the Gospel came be here foretold and listed. The reality has been much greater and grander than the prophet’s imagery portrays.

“Gold and incense” too are representative of the greatest valuables which are to be brought as offerings. This passage was literally fulfilled when the Magi brought these very materials as an offering. But the main statement is that “they show forth the praises of Jehovah.” All these Gentiles have learned about him and his saving deeds in Christ Jesus. Pieper thinks that they do not know much about the Lord, but praise him because they now see the glory of the Lord. I would not say this — they surely are fully informed and from the abundance of the heart sing the Lord’s praises.

## **Homiletical Aid**

The manifestation of Christ in the gospels, our manifestation as Christians in the epistles. All that we are is to shine forth, but all that we are comes from the Lord, his light and glory are reflected in us.

### **The Great Epiphany Light.**

- I. The darkness of the world. No saving light anywhere. Ignorance, deception, lies. The terrible consequences already here on earth.
- II. The saving light in Jesus Christ. His person and work. The embodiment of light and of the glory of God's holy grace. The Gospel the means of this light's shining.
- III. The first epiphany of the light. When Jesus came to Israel, preached, died, rose again. Many remained in darkness despite the light, John 1:11. The tragedy of this. Isaiah addresses the true believers among the Jews.
- IV. The epiphany that has reached us. We are the Gentiles of whom the prophet speaks. He describes the great influx from many lands, our land far from Palestine and Jerusalem. We have the Church. Rejoice in the light, sing the Lord's praises, bring your gifts, make the light attract ever more people.

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The source of all our Epiphany joy is

**“The Glory of the Lord.”**

- I. It shines forth from the Lord.  
Describe his holy grace.  
Its manifestation in Christ and his work.  
Its display in the Gospel preached far and wide.
- II. It fills us with its light.  
It has risen also upon us former heathen people.  
The saving light and grace that we enjoy, unworthy though we are.  
What the world is and what we should be but for this epiphany.
- III. It radiates from us.  
Often, I fear, too feebly.  
Often with only a little of the prophet's jubilant joy.

This festival is to move us to a new faith, appreciation, and activity.  
Ye are the light of the world.

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The world so dominating. The Church and we Christians appear to be so feeble, treated as negligible by the world unless we leave our true mission and make ourselves a grand outward organization. Yet, behold,

### **The Epiphany Triumph.**

- I. The darkness and the gross darkness.  
To conquer it seems hopeless.  
False lights make the battle seem the more hopeless.  
But this darkness means eternal doom.
  - II. The glory of the Lord.  
The manifestation of his holy grace in Christ Jesus.  
The saving light of this grace in the Gospel.  
Mighty to overcome the darkness.
  - III. The extent of the conquest.  
From such small beginnings, Christ's twelve apostles.  
Against such odds, Jewish stoniness, Gentile superstition.  
To world-wide extension. How was this possible?
  - IV. Our part and our joy in the triumph.  
All the Lord's glory in our hearts by faith.  
All the Lord's glory shining in our lives by love and obedience.  
Especially our devotion to the Lord (gold, incense).  
The delight in seeing the Lord's triumph spread, till he returns.
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Westermeier is guilty of a fault that Sommer should not perpetuate. He divides the theme: “Thy Light Cometh,” into these supposed parts: “I. The great significance of this call. II. The application of this call to us.” The students in the Seminary are told that this is the “division” that fits every text in the Bible: I. I will first state what it means (Westermeier: the significance); II. I will apply it to us (or to you). Pray, why do recognized homiletics print such drive]?

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It should require, no effort at all for all of us to respond to the Epiphany call: “Arise, shine!” How could anyone of us possibly hesitate, after having received so much from God through Jesus Christ, to make manifest and to show publicly what God has done for him, has made of him, has given to him.

### **The Epiphany Call: “Arise, Shine!”**

- I. Respond with exultation! Because thou hast escaped the darkness and the gross darkness.
- II. Respond with praise! Because the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.
- III. Respond with elation! Because all these converts come to thee.
- IV. Respond with gold and incense! Because thou canst do no less than all these who still come.

# The First Sunday After Epiphany. Rom. 12:1-5

## “Be Transformed by the Renewing of Your Mind!”

The epistles for the Epiphany cycle deal with the manifestation of the Christian, with his spiritual glory, while the gospels deal with the manifestation of the Savior, with his divine glory. The Epiphany Festival itself declares that the glory of the Christian is from the Lord, its source is entirely divine. The First Sunday after Epiphany states that the glory shed upon the Christian from above works in him an *inner transformation or metamorphosis*. The Christian is completely changed, he is in reality a different person. Even his body has become a living sacrifice to God. Moreover, he has entered into entirely new connections: he is in spiritual connection with Christ, one of all those who form the body of Christ, hence also a member of all the other members as they are members of his.

While the gospel text, Luke 2:41-52, centers on Christ and presents the first significant revelation of himself so that we may know and believe, it harmonizes with the epistle in this respect that it offers us the lad Jesus in the Temple and in his parents' home as a lovely example of what our transformation should make of us.

Our text contains the opening sentences of the last grand section of Romans, 12:1 to 15:13, which teaches that “the Righteousness of God Produces a Life of Righteousness.” We are shown at once that this life does not consist in the imposition of legalistic outward rules, the most severe imposition of which still leaves the heart unchanged and produces only self-righteous Pharisees of some kind. A true life of righteousness is attained in him who has received the righteousness of God (δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ 1:17), justification by faith in Jesus Christ, for the effect of the divine verdict is a change in the heart, the birth of a new life eager to run the way of God's

commandments. Justification makes the person justified one of the members of Christ's body, one with Christ and one with his fellow members. Paul has already dealt with the Results of the Righteousness of God Apprehended by Faith in chapters six to eight; in this last grand section he elaborates the details of the life of righteousness. Before he enters upon the details he reveals their source and fountain, the metamorphosis of the heart of the justified believer.

[1] Παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς strikes a new note in Romans. The verb has a variety of meanings. Literally it means "to call to one's side," which may be done for anyone of a number of purposes, in order to cheer, to encourage, to comfort, to exhort, to urge, or to admonish. Here the last is the purpose; hence we translate: "I admonish you," and not, as our versions do: "I beseech you." Luther comments on the words: "He does not say: I command you! for he is preaching to those who-are already Christians and godly through the faith in the new man, who are not to be forced with commands, but to be admonished to do willingly what is to be done in regard to the sinful old man. For he who does it not willingly but solely as a result of admonition, he is no Christian; and he who forces it from the unwilling with laws, he already is no Christian preacher or ruler, but a worldly club-wielder. A law-driver insists with threats and penalties; a preacher of grace lures and incites with divine goodness and compassion shown to us; for he wants no unwilling works and reluctant services, he wants joyful and delighted services of God. He who will not allow himself to be incited and lured with such sweet, lovely words about God's compassion, so abundantly presented and given to us in Christ, so that with delight and love he also does as bidden, for God's glory, to the good of his neighbor: he is nothing, and everything is lost on him. How will he become soft and delighted by laws and threats who will not melt and soften before such fire of heavenly love and grace?"

**I admonish you, therefore, brethren, through the compassions of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, well-pleasing to God, — this your reasonable cultus. [2] And be not outwardly conformed to this world-age, but be inwardly transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you test out what the will of God is, the thing (really) good and well-pleasing and complete.** With οὐ<sup>7</sup>ν the apostle rests his admonition upon all that he has said before; as comprehensive as is

his admonition so also is its basis. “Brethren” makes the admonition fraternal, as one brother speaks to another in regard to what applies to both of them.

The apostle offers his admonition “through the compassions of God.” He makes “the compassions of God” which we have received in such wondrous abundance the impelling motive in accordance with which we are to act in doing what is here urged upon us. Paul was a master in touching the true spiritual springs of action in the people with whom he dealt. All preachers should learn from him. What flows out of unworthy motives cannot possibly please God. Οἰκτιρμοί are tender pities, and, as is the case with all the transitive attributes of God, also the acts and the gifts that result from these pities. Observe the connotation: one who has received God’s tender pities must have been in a sad, pitiful state. These pities stooped down to him, as did the Samaritan to the half-dead traveler on the road to Jericho, and delivered him from his sad estate. The motive thus touched is not only gratitude toward God who in his tender pities has done so much for the Christian, but concern also for self, lest by disregarding the admonition that recalls these tender pities the Christian fall back into his former wretched state. God’s tender pities still embrace and carry us, for we need them every day. Can we ever disregard them, reject them by turning a deaf ear to the voice that appeals to us “through God’s tender pities”?

The word “tender pities” is unusual. The apostle seems to choose it so that we may not look for a connection with the preceding verses, but may think of all that he writes in his letter about God’s love and tenderness to us poor sinners. It may surprise us to note that Paul begins with our bodies: “to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, well-pleasing to God.” Yet he who presents his body does this on his own accord by an act of his will. In 6:13 both the members of the body and we ourselves are to be presented. We must know how the apostle regards our bodies. The body is the organ of our actions, and presenting the body thus means that all our actions are devoted to God. Again, our body is in constant contact with the sinful surroundings in this world. The body is the avenue by which sin may enter from the outside, even after the heart is cleansed. Think of your ears through which Satan would send his lies into your soul, or your eyes to which he would present his printed lies. See how lust enters through the eyes, Matt. 5:28. Think of the evil for which the hands may be used, these

most active agents of our will. To what sin and wrong may not the feet carry you? But when the body is presented to God (aorist infinitive, in a complete and decisive act) all these bodily avenues are closed to Satan and are open only to God. Elsewhere Paul speaks of our members as no longer HlllVeS to the sin-power, but slaves only to God. In the remainder of this section of Romans Paul offers the details in regard to what presenting our bodies to God means.

Θυσία == “slaughter-sacrifice,” involving death, more specific than προσφορά, any kind of “offering” that is brought. Here is one of Paul’s wonderful expressions, an astonishing paradox, and a concentration of most vital thoughts. How is “a living slaughter-sacrifice” possible? When an animal is slain at the altar it is dead, all its blood is poured out. If our bodies are to be such a sacrifice and if we are so to present them, is this not suicide? It is shallow to interpret this word as meaning only a complete surrender of our body to God. Paul does mean a death for our bodies. From Gal. 2:20; v. 24; 6:14 we learn that the sacrificial death is to be accomplished by crucifixion. This enables us to understand the paradox of a living slaughter-sacrifice. Christ ’was slain, was crucified, yet he lives. So a death and a life are to occur for our bodies. They are to be slain as far as sin is concerned, and thereby are to partake of a life higher than any physical life, namely a life that shall end in a blessed resurrection and in eternal glory. Yes, all this in its way is a duplication of what occurred in the case of Christ, not however. a duplication of Christ’s expiation, for this is all-sufficient and perfect, and it could not possibly be duplicated by us with our sinful bodies. This duplication in our bodies is the evidence of our saving union with Christ, it is the result of his death and his resurrection in us and in our bodies, proof that his expiation is truly effective in us.

We now feel the full weight of the two adjectives: “holy, well-pleasing to God,” — “holy” as set apart and devoted to God, “well-pleasing” as a delight to him and accepted by him. The thought is not that this living slaughter-sacrifice ought to be so, but it invariably is so, could not be otherwise. As regards the Jewish animal sacrifices both points were always in question. Read the denunciation of some of these Jewish sacrifices, Prov. 15:8; Is. 1:11-15; 66:3; Jer. 6:20. Hypocrites could also bring animal sacrifices, for they could be made a mere formality. All this is impossible when we make our bodies a living sacrifice to God.

“This your reasonable cultus” forms an apposition to the entire statement that precedes. *Aaweia* is the service or the cultus that is obligatory for all of us, end not only for the priests in their official capacity. Hence we should not bring in the priestly idea. It is what Jesus calls “worship in spirit and in truth,” John 4:23, but as extended to our bodies. Our English has no satisfactory word for λογικός. “Spiritual” (R.V. margin) is a different word in Greek, although, of course, this cultus pertaining to the body could also be called spiritual. *Logikos*, because of its sound, should not make us think of logic, as though this cultus is the only logical one for Christians, “reasonable” in this sense. The implied contrast is not some “misguided,” illogical cultus such as the cultus of pagan sacrifices. Certainly, this Christian “service” is the opposite of everything pagan, although this is not the point here. *Logikos* == belonging to the λόγος in the sense of the reason. The opposite would be something merely ceremonial like the Jewish and other ritual services, something that could easily become merely formal. Even our public Christian services face the danger of mere formality. But to present the body as a living sacrifice to God, as this is bound to be a proceeding both “holy” and “well-pleasing to God,” necessarily also is far removed from anything merely ceremonial or, still worse, merely formal, as it will always be *logikos*, intelligent, involving the reason, the whole mind, which ever guides and controls the body and its conduct, since the body never acts alone. Peter’s use of the word is not identical with Paul’s.

[2] Read two imperatives and not infinitives. In English “fashion” and “form” are not as distinctly different as σχῆμα and μορφή in Greek, the former an outward conformation, the latter the essential form fully expressing the essence or real being. Hence we cannot well translate: “be not adapted in fashion to this world-age, but be transformed” etc. Perhaps the best we can do is to follow Field: “Be not outwardly conformed, but be inwardly transformed,” although this has the same root-word “form” in both verbs, unlike the Greek. “This eon”= the present great stretch of time, but as marked by what transpires in it, and only in this sense “this world,” *dieser Zeitlauf*. This eon is “wicked,” Gal. 1:4; its god is the devil, 2 Cor. 4:4; it is “the eon of this cosmos.” Its opposite is “the eon about to come,” which the Parousia ushers in, the eon of eternal blessedness, of the new heaven and the new earth.

Here is the admonition that cannot be offered too frequently. The present imperative asks us to shun this conformity during the entire course of our lives. Even the σχῆμα, the outward fashion of the world-age, is to be foreign to us. We are to be a separate and peculiar people. Our entire conduct is to proclaim to all who regard us that we are different, that we do not belong, that the world's ways are not our ways. We are strangers, foreigners, pilgrims here, not citizens. We expect to go to heaven and our conduct reflects this fact, and naturally is not like that of men who do not know where they are going, who find their all in this eon.

To many Christians, and especially to the youth, this seems a hard saying (John 6:60). They long “to be like other people,” to retain at least some of the world's ways, enjoy some of its tainted and questionable pleasures. Fondly they imagine that they are so strong spiritually that they will not be injured. So they howl a bit with the wolves, do a little as the Romans do because they are in Rome, avoid the jibes of the world, win its approval. The consequent casualties are many and exceedingly sad.

Μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε — ἀλλὰ μεταμορφοῦσθε are opposites, but they are not on the same level. As so often in Scripture, the positive exceeds the negative. Not even as little as the world's σχῆμα is to be clinging to us; no, from the very inwardness of our mind by a continuous renewal our μορφή is ever to express what we really are, namely Christ's own. With a mind thus transformed we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice in what is our reasonable service, i.e. one with this renewed mind back of it. The dative is one of means: “by the renewing of your mind.” Ever there is a renewing of the mind within us, and by this means a complete transformation of our being, which extends outwardly to our body and to all our visible conduct. All this begins at the moment of our justification and advances through life, till God completes the process at death.

“Renewing,” like the verb “be transformed,” (durative present) denotes a process, which, of course, produces a condition, “newness of life” (6:4) — καινός in both terms, “new” as opposed to “old” in our old man. Νοῦς, “mind,” is the organ of moral thinking and knowing, and harmonizes with λογικός, “reasonable” in v. 1. The Christian's inward transformation is effected when his moral mentality becomes entirely renewed, the very νοῦς or mentality itself. He no longer thinks, understands, judges as once he did, in fact he cannot do so. Things that he once thought fair, good, right, at least

permissible, look wrong and evil to him now; things that once he cared nothing for he deems indispensable now. Take as examples prayer and the study of the Scriptures, all his interest in the work of the church, and thousands of things, both small and great, in his private life.

Εἰς τό with the infinitive states result: “so that you keep testing out (durative) what the will of God is.” Δοκιμάζειν is a favorite word of Paul’s. Metals and coins were tested for genuineness and weight, and any that were spurious or under weight were thrown out. Now the renewed mind wants to find out above all things just what God’s will is, his θέλημα, the thing willed by him. Formerly the unrenewed mind paid no attention to the will of God, and even when it knew his will in some of the simple moral matters it did not hesitate to contradict and to disobey that will. The will of God is fully recorded in the Scriptures, which Jesus bids us search (ἐρευνᾶν). Paul speaks of what follows such searching, namely testing out in our lives this recorded will and by our own experience, and not merely theoretically, learning its excellence.

For this reason τὸ θέλημα is given three appositions: “the thing (really) good and well-pleasing and complete.” Our versions translate these words as adjectives, but we must regard them as nouns, that is, adjectives substantivized. This is plain when we consider the second and the third adjective. How could God’s will be otherwise than well-pleasing to God? How could “well-pleasing to God” modify “the will of God”? So also God’s will ever is τέλειον, — the idea of an incomplete will of God is intolerable. What our renewed mind helps us to do in regard to what God has declared to be his will (in his Word) is to test out day by day in our own lives that the thing God wills is τὸ ἀγαθόν, the thing that is good, is indeed and most assuredly what God says, “the (really) good thing.” Ἀγαθός is “good” in the biblical sense, “good” as beneficial spiritually and morally, “good” in the saving sense. No wonder “the good” is the thing willed by God (θέλημα).

One article combines the three adjectives when making them nouns. “The good thing” is at once also “well-pleasing,” you can give it either name. It should be plain that God is always pleased when we do that which he wills. We must test this out by doing “the good and well-pleasing thing.” We can always discover from the Word what this thing is, and having done this thing, we shall experience the blessing that results. A third specification



is τέλειον. The thing good and well-pleasing is at the same time “complete,” in the sense that it takes us to the goal (τέλος). This thing is not immature like the moral and religious notions of men, which they deem so superior. What God has recorded in the Word as willed by him has the quality of finality, because it does take us to the true goal of a godly life. Test it out in this regard in your life. Some one has written a book on *The Complete Life*, — here we have it. Moreover, God alone can tell you what the true goal is that you must attain. The rendering “perfect” (our versions) is apt to mislead.

The great mistake that even Christians at times make is to determine for themselves and apart from the Word, what is good, what ought to please God, what leads us to the true goal. They call this God’s θέλημα. But all self-chosen works, like those of the Pharisees, are contrary to what God has willed, no matter how vigorously those works may be done. Many are lax and reduce God’s will to suit their worldly desires. What they will they call God’s will, either ignoring the divine Record or interpreting its statements to suit themselves. Thus we see all manner of strange “Christian” lives. Much is allowed to pass that is spurious metal and not gold at all, all kinds of coins that God’s bank cannot possibly accept. Keep making the true tests, and test out (δοκιμάζετε) even the spirits, whether they are from God, 1 John 4:1.

[3] After thus laying down the fundamentals for the sanctification of body and mind in the Christian life, the apostle proceeds with the details which fill the rest of this grand section of Romans. He sees the Church as a great organized body in which every member has his place, his gifts, his opportunities, his obligations, all in harmonious unity. Paul himself has his place and his work. A new paragraph begins, and γάρ indicates that elucidation follows in line with what precedes.

**So I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to be haughty minded, beyond what he must be minded, but to be minded so as to be sober-minded, as to each one God apportioned a portion of faith.** Yes, this is the first requirement in the body of the Church composed of so many. There must be the proper relation between the members as indicated by what God has portioned out to each one.

“I say” is like “I admonish” in v. 1. “Through the grace given to me” is like “through the compassions of God” in v. 1. Paul regards himself as one of the members of the Church. He sees himself with “the grace” that God gave him, making him a Christian, making him an apostle and enabling him to do his apostolic work. By calling this “grace” and a gift to himself Paul indicates that he never deserved it. It is God who has placed him in a position to admonish the Romans as he is here doing, and thus the Romans should accept and obey this admonition. He speaks “to everyone who is among you,” who belongs to you, both high and low. For not only those in office or otherwise distinguished may think too highly of themselves, but also the undistinguished who are offended when they imagine that they are slighted. The first subject of which the renewed mind should take cognizance, to test out what God’s will is, is the person whose this mind is. Every Christian must be “minded” as God wants him to be in regard to every other Christian.

This is expressed by a quadruple *paronomasia* or *annominatio* in chiasmic arrangement, the two com — pound infinitives outside, the two simple infinitives inside: “not to be haughty-minded — beyond what he must be minded, — but to be minded — so as to be sober-minded.” This is even more beautiful in the Greek. In addition we have another simple *paronomasia*: “apportioned a portion.”

One great fault of the unrenewed mind is to be “haughty-minded,” i.e. to think itself ὑπέρ, “above,” others in an unwarranted way. This fault is so easily carried over into the Christian life. Sometimes the opposite virtue is supposed to be this that every Christian is to think himself beneath every other Christian. This would be false, thinking what is not true, a silly inferiority complex. A hypocrite may act in such a way, but his action would be hypocritical. Paul explains: “not beyond what he must be minded.” The word is δεῖ, which expresses necessity, here the necessity due to the facts in the case. “Ought” in our versions is too weak, denoting only propriety. Think of yourself only as highly as you are compelled to think by the warranted facts. Beyond this lies sin, below it sin also, and the sin is falsity in both ways.

One who is versed in the Scriptures is not to pretend to be beneath others who are ignorant of what the Scriptures say, is not to encourage that ignorance. An old, wise, and experienced Christian is not to act as if he

were on a level with the young and inexperienced. I stand higher than a Christian infected with error, higher than one morally tainted, and I am compelled by the Word to think so. Christ and the apostles denounced false prophets, heretics and errorists.

I am “to be sober-minded,” sanely minded, well balanced in what I think of myself. This too is elucidated: “as to each one God apportioned the portion of faith.” Πίστις is saving faith. “Each one” (ἕκαστος) has this faith. To this faith God has apportioned a portion, some gift or gifts. God has done this, and each one of us is to be satisfied and content with his portion, even if it be small. Let those with a small portion remember that their responsibility is correspondingly small, their load is lighter. So to be content is to be sober-minded. The genitive in “portion of faith” is possessive.

It cannot be partitive: God does not deal out saving faith in portions, the Scriptures know of no such portions, nor are we ever to be satisfied with a small portion of justifying faith. “Faith” cannot here mean charismatic faith (1 Cor. 13:2), for “each one” does not have this miracle-working faith. “Faith” cannot have an exceptional meaning, such as the portion of confidence with which one uses some charisma. “Faith” is also not the sum of all charismatic gifts, of which one might have a portion. This would be an unheard of use of the word πίστις.

[4] Paul explains [γάρ] how he comes to speak of each believer’s having some portion allotted to him by God with which he should be humbly content. All of the Christians are one body which has many different members with different capacities and functions, each necessary in its place. **For according as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same task, [5] so we, the many, are one body in Christ, yet one by one members of each other.**

Paul is using an illustration to make clear the position of each member in the Church, one among many others, all of them together forming a living whole. The analogy of the human body is both lovely and illuminating. Πρώξις == “task,” activity, office. In 1 Cor. 12 Paul shows more fully that if all the bodily members had the identical function, there would be no body at all, and, we add the next step, there could then also be no members.

[5] This is also true with regard to the Church, this spiritual, invisible body, the great *Una Sancta*. There are thousands of individual members:

“we the many.” Yet together we are Ἐν σῶμα ἐν Χριστῷ, “one body in Christ,” not in the sense of an outward organization — although after a fashion “one body” could also refer to that, — but in the more vital sense of a living, spiritual organism. We explain “in Christ” in 6:11, where Paul first uses this phrase which occurs so frequently in Romans (the Sixth Sunday after Trinity). Ἐν == “in connection or in union with” Christ. It is faith that forms the spiritual connection. All who have faith in Christ constitute the Church. Word and Sacrament produce faith and-thus form the connection with Christ. “In Christ” is neither physical, local, mystical, nor even mysterious, but entirely simple: “in union or connection with Christ by faith through Word and Sacrament,” — Word and Sacrament the objective, faith the subjective means.

That we all, the many, are one body in Christ is only “the preliminary fact, on which rests the other fact:” yet one by one members of each other.” It is this second fact that is of importance in this connection when we consider our individual gifts and the way in which we must regard ourselves. Τὸ καθ’ εἷς is an adverbial idiom and means “individually,” or “one by one.” Κατά is here not a preposition but an adverb, τό even marking it as an adverb. The nominative εἷς is not the object of κατά regarded as a preposition. Those who call the expression a barbarism, a solicism, or speak of irregularity only betray their own ignorance.

By our union with Christ another union is established, which δέ marks as somewhat different. For we are joined by faith to Christ as our Savior and Lord, but to each other we are joined as equals, as brethren, as members of one body, as differently gifted indeed and thus not alike, yet as all equally in the body and helping to form it. “Members of each other” has the reciprocal pronoun and denotes reciprocity. I belong to all the other members, and every one of them belongs to me. With whatever gift God has blessed me I serve all the others. In turn all the others with Whatever gifts they are blessed serve me. The latter should be brought fully to the consciousness of our people. What is the little I contribute compared with the vastness of What all these others contribute to me? It is folly for anyone to think that he is doing too much. Let him look at what others do for him.

Pick up, for instance, your Bible and consider how many most highly gifted fellow Christians had to work together in arduous labor before the volume you hold could be laid into your hands at a nominal price. Many

hands copied the original sacred writings with meticulous care. Many learned men studied in order to get the text exactly right. Then came the translators and performed their difficult task. Finally the Bible could be printed and brought to you. What did you contribute to all this labor and effort? Nothing. Your fellow members did it all for your benefit. There are many similar illustrations of the enormous benefit each of us receives gratis from our union With all these many other members. Shall you contribute nothing? Is no other member to bless you for a benefit he has received from you?

Withholding, however, is not the only evil in this union of the members in Christ. Every offense you give to your brethren, every wrong you do, does damage beyond what you are able to calculate. No wonder Jesus spoke as he did in Matt. 18:6-7.

Do not say that you have no gift or only a small, useless gift. When Christ made you a member of his body he did it in order that you should work with all the other members. Even the smallest member of your physical body has something to do, otherwise it would be dead and would be amputated. Spiritually dead members of Christ's body are also cut away (John 15:2a). While you are not to be haughtily minded because of your gift from the Lord, but are to keep a sober estimate of yourself and your position, yet this you "must" (δεῖ) do: each one of us willingly, joyfully, intelligently, and withal humbly must do the part assigned to him with the portion apportioned to him as a fellow member amid all the other members in the body of Christ.

## **Homiletical Aid**

The Epiphany season tells us how Christ manifested himself as God's Son, our Savior and Lord. So must every Christian manifest himself as what he really is through Christ. He is to let his light shine that men may see it and glorify God, Matt. v. 16. There have been secret Christians, for fear of men. Some, also, are afraid today to show their Christianity. Most of these perhaps have not much Christianity to show or to manifest.

### **The Manifest Christian.**

- I. We see that he is connected with Christ.
  1. He functions as a member of Christ's body. He believes in Christ, confesses Christ, serves Christ.
  2. He does this as a member amid many fellow members, using the portion of his faith in serving them, receiving their service in turn.

We see where he belongs, with Christ and Christ's members, heart and soul, and nothing can tear him away.

- II. We see that he has a. renewed mind.
  1. A complete inward transformation has taken place, his very mind is changed and made new, he is not the old person he once was.
  2. No longer does he run with the world and adopt its fashion and ways.
  3. His mind now is bent on the will of God, on what is good, well-pleasing, and complete according to God and his Word.

We see which way his mind is turned, that God must have transformed it, that he is turned completely from the world to God.

- III. We see that even his body is a living sacrifice to God.
  1. Dead and crucified as far as sin is concerned, like Christ died on the cross, yet alive to God, his will, his Word.
  2. The Christian's body thus presented to God is his reasonable, intelligent service, far above all rituals, ceremonies, forms and formalities.

We see that from the inward mind to the outward body the Christian is indeed a Christian as the Scriptures describe him. We see that in all this he is not haughty-minded, but humble, content, happy, sober-minded.

Are you such a manifest Christian?

The form of this sketch is objective, save at the very end. See The Sermon 201 etc.: “Objective and Subjective Formulation.” It is easy to convert this sketch into the subjective form, for instance interrogatively: **Are You a Manifest Christian?** or hortatively: **Be a Manifest Christian!** All this belongs to homiletical formulation. The preacher must determine which formulation is best for his audience.

“Manifest” is used in the theme in order to retain the idea of “Epiphany” (Manifestation). But the thought can be expressed Without this word: **Show yourself as a Christian!** or: **Is Your Christianity Worth Showing?** with such parts as: Is your connection with Christ real? — Has your mind been actually renewed? — Did you present your body as a living sacrifice to God?

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Christ’s Epiphany.

### **Your Own Epiphany.**

I. What has occurred within you —

Your connection with Christ and his body by faith, etc. — Your transformation by the renewing of your mind — The presentation of your body to God as a living sacrifice.

II. Is to show itself outwardly.

In nonconformity with the world — In serving Christ and thus the other members of his body — In testing out the will of God — In being content with your portion of faith — In employing your body in the reasonable service God desires.

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Can a sinful human being be completely transformed?

### **The Great Transformation.**

Do not call it impossible! I. It is wrought by Christ, uniting us to himself and his spiritual body by faith etc.

Do not imagine it is only superficial! II. It. transforms and renews the mind itself, filling it-with the will of God, turning it from the fashion of the world, in happy and satisfied humility.

Do not doubt its completeness! III. It turns the body into a living sacrifice to God, dead and crucified to sin, yet alive to God and his service in no mere formal worship, to live at last with the soul for ever.

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Changing the form of presentation, you may ask:

### **Have You Experienced the Great Transformation?**

- I. Has Christ joined you, to himself and to his body?
- II. Has your mind been renewed?
- III. Is your body a, living sacrifice to God?

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Certain outlines found in homiletical works violate the text as our exegesis should show. Thus the  $\theta\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$  of the body must not be converted into a  $\pi\rho\omicron\sigma\phi\omicron\rho\acute{\alpha}$ , and the following theme should be impossible: “We are a Priestly People.” Crucifying the body does not make us priests. — Again, everything asked of us in the text should not be summarized as “our reasonable service,” for this is predicated only of the presentation of our bodies. Untrue to the text is “The God-pleasing Sacrifice 1) of the body, 2) of the soul, 3) of the life.” Sommer has a number if these *Opfer* outlines, four culled from preachers, none of which should ever reach the pulpit. — Many of the outlines that came to our desk seem to have abandoned the Epiphany idea contained in the text, although all of the authors attempt to follow the Church Year.

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The most marvelous exchange:

**New Minds for Old.**



- I. Minds made new in connection with Christ. When we become members of his spiritual body.
  - II. Minds complying with God's will, not with the world. The old minds think only to conform to the world; the new minds, daily renewed, lead us to live God's will, etc.
  - III. Minds sober-minded. Not haughty, but happy in their divinely bestowed gifts.
  - IV. Minds intent on our reasonable service. Presenting our bodies as a slaughter-sacrifice to God.
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Does your Christianity show in your body? It must.

### **A Living Sacrifice to God.**

- I. The body of the Christian, crucified, dead.  
No longer conformed to the world. Gal. 6:14b.
- II. The body of the Christian, living.  
Moved by a constantly renewed mind, the whole person connected with Christ. ("in Christ"), testing out God's will, etc.

# The Second Sunday After Epiphany. Rom. 12:6-16

## **“Gifts According to the Grace Given You”**

The texts for the First to the Third Sunday after Epiphany cover the entire twelfth chapter of Romans. In v. 1-5 the fundamentals of the Christian life are laid down, as these must become manifest in every Christian: it must appear that he presents his body a living sacrifice, that his mind is being renewed, that in consequence he is sober-minded in his estimate of himself, as one member among many of the body in Christ. Verse 1-5 is the introduction to our text. We now hear what “the portion of faith” may be with which God has gifted us, some special ability (v. 6-8) needed in the Church, or some of the virtues that must ever be active in the Church (V. 9-16). The manifestations of the Christian here depicted cover only the intercourse of the Christian with his fellow Christians, each a member of Christ’s body and thus each a member of the other (v. 5). The manifestations of the Christian’s life in the wider circle of men in general form the subject for the Third Sunday.

The epistle harmonizes with the gospel text, John 2:1-11, which recounts the manifestation of Christ’s glory in Cana at the wedding, how the disciples beheld that manifestation and believed on him. It will be noted that the parallel is not found in the miracle Jesus wrought in Cana. The charismata that work miracles are omitted by Paul. The reason is evident: not all Christians have the miracle-working charismata, and Paul is speaking of them all (v. 5). Moreover, in the present age of the Church these exceptional gifts are not to be found, While all those gifts mentioned here by Paul are still everywhere in evidence. What Christ needed to manifest was his deity, — hence the many miracles. What we are to manifest is our

living connection with Christ, — hence these gifts in their exercise and these virtues in their activity.

A word regarding the grammar of the verses. With utmost freedom Paul mixes participles with verbs, or omits verbs altogether, and uses striking terseness. You with your English mind, which knows no such flexibility in language, wonder how Paul can do this. Well, he is writing Greek! The language is wondrously flexible, as the Greek mind is wondrously nimble. Note for one thing that every Greek participle has number, gender, and case, and that every Greek ear hears and notes all three; our English participle has none of these three, hence is not comparable at all. The student will have to read these verses with a Greek, and not with an English eye. It helps a little to read aloud with proper inflection. As for our English translation, well, what can we do?

Do not bother much with the grammars, for even Robertson is disappointing. Dismiss altogether the idea of anacolutha or of grammatical irregularity. There is no irregularity here *in the Greek*, and to think so is only to cast reflection on yourself. Supply nothing anywhere, despite the grammarians and their followers, who are not even sure what to supply, and therefore only spoil the beauty and the forcefulness of Paul's language. Listen not to Robertson's wail of marred symmetry, — really we expect something better from him. This is a Greek vase, painted in elegant Greek design, — every pencil touch by a master of Greek. Approach the language with this attitude. I have as yet met no grammarian who is a first class linguistic art critic. Well, perhaps that does not belong to the profession. Read my translation with your Greek eye.

**Now as having charismata differing according to the grace given to us: be it prophecy, — according to the proportion of the faith! [7] Be it ministry, — in that ministry! Be it the one teaching, — in that teaching! [8] Be it the one admonishing, — in that admonition! He that imparts, — in simplicity! He that manages, — in diligence! He that extends mercy, — in cheerfulness! [9] The love, — not hypocritical! Abhorring the wicked thing! Glued to the good thing! [10] As regards the brother-love — family-affectioned toward each other! As regards the honor, — leading each other! [11] As regards the diligence, — not slow (Robertson; not poky)! As regards the spirit, — fervent! As regards the Lord, — working as slaves! [12] As regards the hope, — rejoicing! As**

**regards the tribulation, — holding on! As regards the (matter of) prayer, — continuing steadfast! [13] As regards the needs of the saints, — fellowshipping! As for the hospitality, — pursuing it!**

The rest is in the same strain. The whole is like the showing of a film, one view after another thrown on the screen. Each time only the essentials. Each time only one strong clear-cut impression. This is how the lives of the Christians look after having been justified by faith; this is how our lives must look. These are the luscious, abundant fruits that make the tree of God's Righteousness by Faith Alone the very tree of life itself. The preacher must connect all these hortations with their root, justifying faith, else he will produce a moral lecture instead of an Epiphany Gospel sermon.

Ἔχοντες, the nominative plural masculine participle: “Now (δέ) as having charismata differing according to the grace given to us,” simply announces this preliminary fact, which as such pertains to all that follows. This fact is expressed by a participle, and not by a finite verb, because in Greek subsidiary matters are placed into participial clauses, their character as subordinate features thus at once being recognized. In v. 3 Paul has referred to “grace given unto me,” namely to the office given him by the Lord. So every Christian has a certain grace given to him. In v. 3 Paul calls it “the portion” that belongs to his faith. He now calls all these portions “charismata,” free gracious gifts, and says that they “differ” according to the grace that bestows them. This is the same grace which also justified us, wholly unmerited grace, adding to our justification these abundant charismata. Comparing 1 Cor. 12 we see that the miracle-working charismata are here omitted. Their distribution was always quite limited. Here Paul speaks about all of us and about the gifts all of us possess, hence he omits mention of highly exceptional gifts by which miracles were wrought. The charismata of which each of us has his portion (v. 3) as a believer are all the gifts which enable us to do any part in our Christian life, in the first place among our brethren for their benefit.

Indeed each one has his charisma, none is left without. The difficulty is that not a few either do not recognize what gifts they have, or do not use their gifts (Luke 19:20), or use them in a worldly fashion (Matt. 7:22). For this reason Paul writes down this list of gifts and briefly indicates how each is to be used. To misuse gifts is worse than to be altogether without gifts.

The first group contains seven functions, each requiring the corresponding gift or ability. First a pair, expressed by abstract nouns: “prophecy — ministry.” All the rest expressed by substantivized participles: “the one teaching — the one admonishing,” etc. Yet the seven are divided into four and three, for four sites connect the first four. We thus have an interlocking variation, at once beautiful and expressive.

“Prophecy” ever comes first with Paul. We know of three kinds of prophets: those who are prophets in the eminent sense, like Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc.; minor prophets, like Agabus, who received only occasional messages of minor importance; and prophets who received no direct messages from God, whose function it was to expound to others the words of Scripture and the words of Jesus and of the apostles after they became known. Paul here refers to this third type of prophecy. It was, and still is, a charisma that can be acquired by almost anyone, by women as well as by men. In 1 Cor. 14 Paul urges all the members to seek and to excel in this gift.

None of the items contains a verb, and no verb is to be understood or to be supplied. As far as v. 13 the injunctions are worded alike, in each one the final phrase or expression itself has imperative force. The omission of the verbs lends a sharp, clipped force to the implied imperative, thus: “Be it prophecy, — according to the proportion of the faith!” i.e. it dare be thus only.

The norm, directive, boundary (κατά) for all prophecy is “the proportion of the faith.” A great debate is carried on as to whether ἡ πίστις (articulated) here signifies subjective faith, *fides qua creditur*, or objective faith, *fides quae creditur*. Cremer-Koegel 893 are rash enough to lay down the dictum that πίστις is always subjective, and that it never means the doctrine which is to be believed. Jude 3 shatters that claim. I have gone through the entire New Testament in careful exegesis and have found “the faith” (with the article) steadily employed in the objective sense. It would be phenomenal indeed if the word indicating action such as πίστις is, were not used in both senses, subjective and objective. But the fact that ἡ πίστις is quite regularly used in the objective sense affords only a presumption that it is objective also in this instance. We have more evidence. The claim that Paul refers to the personal faith of the prophet as the norm for his prophesying is wrecked by the fact that no prophet is mentioned, only

“prophecy.” Again “prophecy” is something objective, and thus the norm (κατά) for governing it cannot be something subjective, some variable in a person’s heart. No prophet needs to be told to follow such faith as he possesses; — where is the prophet who would not do that? But this is not enough to safeguard either the prophet or those who hear him. A man with a faulty faith might expound the Word in such a faulty way. Is he in that case justified by declaring: This exposition is according to my faith, my personal conviction? Nevermore.

Any subjective criterion is variable and is thus no real norm or guide. The criterion for all prophecy, all exposition and elucidation of the Word must be objective, ἡ ἀναλογία τῆς πίστεως. This *analogia* == “the right relation to,” “the true agreement with” the substance of what we believe, which is, of course, the *doctrina*. Paul is voicing the command of Jesus in Matt. 28:20 (Luke 10:16).

It is in vain to introduce false contrasts, thus the notion that the prophet is not to be swept away by his exalted state and ecstatic condition. No true prophet ever spoke in any but a calm, sober, self-controlled way. When we expound Scripture today we enter no ecstatic state. Paul is not warding off enthusiasm, he is protecting against false doctrine. — Another false contrast is that the prophet is told to “exercise his *Glaubenszuversicht*,” and not to shine with words, to seek effects, to indulge in unhealthy pathos because of his exalted feeling. Paul is safeguarding the soundness of the teaching.

The church rests her Analogy of Faith in part on this passage, deriving the term from Paul’s injunction. The Analogy of Faith consists of the contents of all the *sedes doctrinae* of Scripture. Its formulation may be brief, as in Luther’s Smaller Catechism, or more ample as in the Augustana, or no formulation may be needed, as we see from the refutation of the error of Flacius (Concordia Triglotta, 8:69:33-46): “The chief articles of our Christian faith” condemn the error that original sin is the essence of man, namely the articles of Creation, of Redemption, of Sanctification, and of Resurrection. This is a classic example showing not only of what the Analogy of Faith consists, but also its proper use. The Analogy does not show what the true doctrine is or the true interpretation of any passage, but it exposes any doctrinal falsity. Any interpretation of any passage that conflicts with the *sedes doctrinae* of any doctrine of Scripture is by that fact

false, no matter whether you are at once able to see where the falsity lies or not. The Analogy of Faith is a great safeguard.

[7] By the lovely word *διακονία* the “service” or “ministry” is meant which is done freely and in order to benefit other persons, but never to benefit God, for we have nothing that we have not received from him (1 Cor. 4:7), and the Infinite cannot receive benefit from the finite. Note that “ministry” is placed between prophecy and teaching; it is given the second highest place. This means that Paul is thinking of the higher forms of ministry, not merely of the lower which benefit the body. As regards prophecy, the imperative restricts: only according to the analogy of faith. As regards ministry the imperative phrase throws everything wide open: “in that ministry” (the article is demonstrative). The ministry here meant is unfolded in the following exhortations, regarding teaching, admonishing, imparting, managing, and showing mercy. We may paraphrase Paul’s meaning: “Is it ministry for which we have talent and a field? — then in that very ministry let us all exercise our talent!” Note *ἡμῖν* in v. 6. Paul includes himself as far as v. 14 where the first “you” appears.

The highest form of ministry is teaching, instruction, making things plain, starting with beginners, advancing pupils as far as possible. Paul changes to substantivized present (timeless) participles: “Be it the one teaching, — in that teaching.” Paul is offering concrete examples of ministry, hence the imperative *ἔν* phrases continue. There is always the widest field for proper teaching of the Word. A few will be teachers of congregations, and some as writers and officials will teach the entire Church. We need teachers in the church schools, in Sunday school, in the home, in the shop, everywhere. “In that teaching!” means plunge in, you cannot do too much.

[8] The last *εἴτε* adds “admonition,” note “I admonish you,” v. 1. Are you a person with the ability to admonish? You are greatly needed. So many Christians are slothful, so many still love the world, etc. We need admonition that is able to touch and to stimulate the right motives that lie in faith, to make them produce proper results. We want no legalistic works, no works done from worldly motives. Learn from Paul how to admonish.

*Εἴτε* is dropped, but the substantivized participles continue. Thus Paul skillfully interlocks. “He that imparts” or “shares with someone” is

frequently understood as a reference to distributing alms; but alms belong to him who extends mercy. There are higher things that we impart or share with brethren, some of them are quite sacred and precious. For all such impartation the command is: “in simplicity!” only in simplicity. They who think of alms make ἐν ἀπλότητι mean “in liberality,” which the word, however, does not mean, nor does it refer to the size or the value of the imparted gift. “In simplicity” speaks of the motive, which must be single, namely benefit to the other person, not double, covertly also seeking praise, honor, credit for self, a reward for what is imparted. The Christian Should never be doubleminded.

“He that manages” is one to whom certain duties are entrusted. We may also translate “he that presides, that is placed in a leading position,” and we may think of a member in the church council, of the head of some society or of some committee. For him the command is: “in diligence!” ἐν σπουδῇ, lit. “in haste,” but in the good sense of prompt efficiency, no delay, excuses, procrastination. Good and efficient leadership in all the work of the Church is a great blessing, poor leaders are a great handicap.

“He that extends mercy” (Luke 6:36; Matt. v. 7) refers to alms, but at the same time to much more than alms. God extends mercy to us, but not mere alms. In the Greek the verb is transitive: “he that mercies.” Χάρις, “grace,” connotes the guilt of sin, and thus means the undeserved favor which removes that guilt by the blood of Christ; ἔλεος and its verb connote wretchedness and misery, the result of sin, and thus mean the pity which relieves the sinner of these distressful consequences. When used with regard to our extending mercy the connotation of misery and distress remains. Every time you are able to do a merciful deed to relieve someone’s distress, do it ἐν ἰλαρότητι, lit. “in hilarity,” not grudgingly, but happily, with a smile, jubilantly as the most delightful thing you can possibly do. Remember how many received mercy from the hands of Jesus. Mercy marks the true Christian.

All of the six ἐν phrases denote sphere, the first three the spheres of the tasks themselves, the second three the spheres of the motivation producing the tasks, hence no articles with the nouns in these three. How beautifully the motives and the tasks agree should not escape attention. Single-minded imparting, diligent management, joyful mercies, — these please the Lord,



grace the Church. All five substantivized present participles are timeless and characterize the person according to what he keeps on doing.

With these seven works Paul covers all the main lines of activity found in the Church. No single activity is restricted to anyone person. Some may have all seven of the gifts and may engage in all seven of the activities; on the other hand, no one is entirely Without at least one gift. Grace abundant — grace sufficient!

[9] As in 1 Cor. 12 Paul speaks of the gifts and then adds chapter 13 regarding love, so here the seven charismata are followed by the injunction regarding “the love,” the article pointing to the particular, well known love which is the fruit of justifying faith and the root of all virtues and graces. Here “love” does not look backward at the charismata, for the seven constitute a completed unit, but forward to the twelve following virtues. The virtues differ from the charismata. As their name indicates the latter require certain gifts from God, and not all Christians have all of these gifts; but the former, the virtues, together with their source, “the love” are the natural spiritual products, all of which should belong to all of us.

Ἡ ἀγάπη has an interesting linguistic history. In the LXX the word may still be used to indicate the lower forms of love, even erotic love. The word grew in grace and in the New-Testament stands on its moral height. Dictionaries and commentators leave much to be desired in the way of a workable and concise definition; we are compelled to offer our own, the more so since entirely wrong ideas are offered. Thus in his excellent essay Warfield makes the distinctive feature of ἀγάπη the value perceived in the object so loved. When God loved the foul, stinking world, what value did he see in it? When we are to love our enemies, what value do we see in them who also may remain our enemies as long as they live. Our definition must fit all the New Testament passages. I think this definition will do it: ἀγάπη is the love of clear comprehension and understanding, coupled with a corresponding purpose. God clearly comprehended all that was wrong with the world and in his love purposed to change the world. So the Father loves the Son, comprehending all that the Son is and purposing to deal with the Son accordingly. But test out this definition yourself. By φιλία is meant the mere love of affection and liking, hence also φίλος == “friend.”

This love of comprehension and corresponding pur-’ pose — “unhypocritical!” is the injunction. Because this love is so noble a Virtue, hypocrites imitate it. “Hypocrite” and the adjective are taken from the Greek actor who wore a mask on the stage. “Genuine love!” is Paul’s bidding: “No stage-actor love, no mask of love!” “Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth,” 1 John 3:18. Only the gold coin will do, no counterfeit. Lack of the *agape* often parades in the language of the *agape*. Those unsound in the faith like to boast of their *agape*; what they really possess is not worthy of so noble a name.

The injunction regarding “the love” has its own important position. Now follow plurals and these come in pairs or triplets. Paul introduces even such variation.

The first pair properly heads the procession: “Abhorring the wicked thing! Glued to the good thing!” A negative and a positive injunction. Recall what we have said about the Greek participles as compared with the English. Here we have only participles; they are not at all intended as imperatives, their imperative force is due wholly to the context. No linguistic irregularity of any kind is involved. “The wicked thing,” “the good thing,” like “the love,” are articulated, hence most definite, and at the same time comprehensive: all this that is wicked — all this that is good. Πονηρόν is “wicked” in the active, vicious sense and connotes malignant, pernicious, destructive. The Christian ever turns in abhorrence from this dreadful thing.

“The good thing,” however, is not merely the morally good thing which the world accounts as good in its superficial and shallow judgment. In many connections ἄγαθός has a soteriological sense: savingly good. It is “the good thing” first of all spiritually, and then also morally, but morally as accounted “good” in God’s sight. To this good thing we are ever to be glued (lit.), i.e. most firmly attached. Note the passive voice: God is to attach us most closely to the good.

[10] Each of the nine following injunctions begins with a dative, the tenth with an accusative. All of these are datives of relation: “as regards,” or “with reference to”; the accusative likewise denotes relation: “as for,” and is used instead of a dative to mark the conclusion of the series. The ten nouns are emphatic, each one placed forward. It ought to be plain that the entire

ten are construed alike. But often they are sadly confused, as in our A.V., both by commentators and by grammarians, when they construe these nouns diversely and never catch the strong refrain which they and their cases produce.

“As regards the brother-love — family-affectioned towards each other! As regards the honor, — leading each other!” Again a pair, marked as such by the two “each other.” “The brother-love” == the one essential to all Christians. This is to be “family-affectioned,” i.e. similar to the affection that binds together the members of a family. We cannot preserve the paronomasia φιλαδελφία — φιλόστοργοι. In one sense all the members of a family are alike, and this is also the case in the Christian brotherhood; hence all have the same family affection toward each other.

Yet in another sense there are differences in a family: children, parents, grandparents; similarly in the family of the Church there are differences. The participle προηγούμενοι puzzles many, hence they seek for odd and peculiar meanings, even Moulton and Milligan do this. Luther translates: *Einer komme dem andern mit Ehrerbietung zuvor*. Our versions try to imitate Luther, but unfortunately they did not understand him well. “In honor preferring one another” is too much the idea of Moulton and Milligan: “account others better than or superior to oneself.” This demands what in many cases would be both utterly false and impossible. Compare the exposition of v. 3 (the First Sunday after Epiphany). Paul did not think every weak, every misguided, and every erring brother superior to himself. Keep the acknowledged meaning of the participle: “As regards honor — leading each other!” When it comes to bestowing deserved honor on some brother, let us all take the lead and bestow that honor. So Paul ever did in the case of his faithful and deserving assistants, likewise in the case of others who had earned honor. We note that in the Koine προηγέομαι is allowed to govern the accusative (ἄλλήλους).

[11] After two pairs we have the first trio: “As regards the diligence (which we all ought to exercise), — not slow! As regards the spirit, — fervent! As regards the Lord, — working as slaves!” These three do form a trio: never slow or poky in diligence; for the spirit is ever fervent (lit. seething), and that is due to the fact that we are the Lord’s slaves. Slowness for and in the Lord’s work is a common fault. Procrastination is the thief of time. Distasteful work, disagreeable tasks are easily put off, and then never

done. It is your “spirit,” the new life within you, that must ever prompt you to diligence. The participle ζέοντες, “seething,” “boiling” (comp. Acts 18:25) is graphic. With a modern figure we would say: when steam enough is generated in the boiler, the engine speeds over the rails. Too many have insufficient steam.

The ultimate power that moves us is “the Lord,” as regards him we are δουλεύοντες, we function as his slaves. Yet the point of this participle and of the entire slave idea is not the English one that the slave is forced to do a lot of work, but the Greek idea that in all his work the slave carries out no will of his own, only the will of his master. So here, not the quantity of work is stressed, but the quality. Apply this δοθλεύοντες today. Thousands are busy doing “church work,” but this is not work ordered by the Lord, it is self-chosen work, and what the Lord orders is left undone. These slaves play the Master, he must thankfully accept what they are pleased to offer him. If τῷ Κυρίῳ were not in this series of datives, we might regard it as an indirect object, as our versions and just about everybody else do: “serving the Lord.” But the chain of datives obtains: “As regards the Lord, — acting as slaves!” doing his will alone, taking orders from no one else, acknowledging no other Master. 1 Cor. 7:25 (6:20).

Luther and others adopt the inferior reading καιρῷ in place of Κυρίῳ: *Schicket euch in die Zeit!* Adapt yourselves to the period in which you live! mistranslating the participle. Others translate correctly: “serving the time,” the age in which we live. But the sense is unchristian, for we are never to be slaves of the age in which we live, doing what this age demands. In whatever καιρός we live, Christ is our Master. Eph. v. 16 is quite a different injunction.

[12] The first trio is followed by a second: “As regards the hope, — rejoicing! As regards the tribulation, — holding on! As regards the (matter of) prayer, — continuing steadfast!” “The hope” is the subjective hope which every one should have in his heart. In the case of the Christian this subjective hope rests on the objective hope, the divine promises sealed and signed in the Word, which are absolutely certain of fulfillment. Ordinary human hopes in religion have no objective foundation, and will never be fulfilled. Here Paul says: “As regards this our hope, — rejoicing!” in v. 2: “glory on the basis of hope.” It is worth our while to know how the Scriptures connect hope with joy, glorying, and high delight. A man without

hope despairs. For this reason men manufacture some kind of a hope for themselves. The Christian has the one and only hope that is genuine, based as it is on Christ; hence he can and must rejoice.

In 5:3 hope and tribulation are placed side by side. Despite our high hope, our present life has its θλίψις, pressure, affliction. Paul is not referring to the ordinary ailments of this earthly existence, as in 8:18-23. By “the affliction” he means the hurts that come upon us for Christ’s and for the Gospel’s sake; read and note Matt. v. 10-12; John 15:18 etc.; Acts 14:22; Rev. 7:14; also other passages that speak about tribulation. At present we do not expect to suffer for Christ’s sake and we manage to avoid most of that kind of suffering. But times may suddenly change as they did recently in Russia, where to be a Christian is often as much as a person’s life is worth. Here the injunction is: ὑπομένοντες, bravely remaining under, bravely persevering, not trying to slip out from under, not trying to evade by denying the faith, by compromising, etc., also not complaining, but steadfast to the end. What shall we say then of those who shape their doctrine, their practice, and their conduct so as to avoid offending the world? Today many Christians so resemble the children of this world that the two cannot be told apart.

The Christian’s great resource, refuge, source of strength in all tribulation is “the prayer,” i.e. the prayer that ought to be the staff and stay of all of us. Προσευχή is prayer in the widest sense, at times, equal to “worship.” Do not think that the only form of prayer in tribulation is “petition,” begging God to deliver us as quickly as possible. You are to thank God for testing you, for helping you to endure thus far, you are to praise him and glorify his Name in the midst of your tribulation, you are to ask for strength to endure to the end. Προσκαρτεροῦντες (see the word in Acts 1:14; 2:42 and 46) means to adhere with all one’s might, hence “continuing steadfast.” Never grow faint in praying, never give up and say: “It is of no use!” God hears every believing prayer. He will bring it to pass, in his own wondrous way and in his own best time.

[13] Now the last pair: “As regards the needs of the saints, — fellowshipping! As for hospitality, — pursuing it!” In the second injunction the accusative of relation is used in place of the dative, in order to indicate that this injunction ends the series. In the first injunction κοινωνοῦντες does not govern the dative as our versions imagine: “Distributing to the

necessities of the saints,” R.V.: “communicating” etc. Without the least linguistic warrant, dictionaries and commentators invent a false meaning for κοινωνία and its verb. They do so for this passage and also wherever alms are mentioned, especially in 2 Cor. chapter eight and nine. Instead of acting as safe guides to the commentators, the dictionaries let the commentators guide them. Now the noun means “fellowship” and never anything else, and the verb “to fellowship.” This true meaning applies perfectly in every passage. The fact is that in all the passages where gifts of money are mentioned this true sense of the word produces the noblest of meanings. But the commentators fail to perceive this and thus invent the meaning “contribution,” even “collection,” “to contribute (money),” “to distribute (money),” A.V., and the like. Both linguistically and exegetically this is deplorable. The philologists who produce the dictionaries deserve the sharpest censure.

What are we to do “as regards the needs of the saints,” of our fellow believers whether in our own midst or elsewhere? Κοινωνοῦντες! we are to show our fellowship with them, we are not to ignore them as if we were not one with them. This indeed means that we are to help them with gifts, but it means much more, namely that these our gifts tell of our fellowship. Our brethren and we are in the Communion of Saints, and therefore we help them. We help the poor in our community who are not Christians, but this is not an expression of spiritual fellowship, it is only an expression of humanitarianism. Read the word “fellowship” in 15:26 and there too obtain the apostle’s full and noble meaning.

Paul is writing these words from Corinth. He had taken up a grand collection in all his Gentile churches and was about to have this collection conveyed to the poor saints in Jerusalem and the rest of Palestine. His object was not merely to help the poor in the Mother Church because of love and charity, but to cement the spiritual fellowship between the Mother Church and her Gentile daughter churches in all these distant lands. In 2 Cor. he writes about the eagerness of the Macedonian Christians for this exercise of fellowship. The church in Rome is not one of Paul’s churches; hence he is not asking the Romans to partake in this evidence of fellowship.

Here learn something about our contributions of money to the church for its local and its general work. Place them on Paul’s high level. These gifts express our “fellowship.” Anything less is not nearly enough. Because we

are one in fellowship we join hands in our contributions. How strong is your sense of this spiritual fellowship? Your gifts furnish the answer. Of course, there must be the fact of true fellowship. If we are only an outward organization, the inner spiritual incentive is absent. Even if the money desired is obtained, it is not the kind of money we want because it expresses no fellowship. What must our leaders do? Everything possible to strengthen the true fellowship. From that the gifts will flow, and they will please the Lord. What about those among us who violate this fellowship in their doctrine and in their practice? who fellowship as they please with those who are not of us? To violate and damage our fellowship is a crime for which I do not wish to answer to the Lord on judgment day.

Companion to this “fellowshipping” is the exercise of hospitality: “As for the hospitality, — pursuing it!” The noun means “love of strangers,” and the article indicates this as the regular virtue of Christians. A whole chapter would be needed to set forth this hospitality among Christians in the apostle’s day. It was a great necessity and was exercised as a great virtue. When brethren traveled they took along letters to fellow Christians with whom they could lodge. So Paul and his party in their travels sought out Christians wherever they could. Paul’s many messengers depended much on hospitality. Persecuted Christians, exiled, fleeing from enemies, found shelter and help in this hospitality. Pagans remarked that the Christians who had never seen each other treated each other as blood-brethren. The situation is different today, the opportunities for exercising this virtue are much less. “Given to hospitality” (our versions) treats the accusative of reference as if it were an accusative object, and the verb is not “given to.”

Instead of dodging the obligation of hospitality, the Christians are to run after and pursue it as something most desirable to capture. Paul has the participle *δικοντες* again in the next verse, and some object to this. They fail to perceive the beautiful touch which the apostle here introduces. The enemies pursue or persecute Christians; do you, Paul says, pursue or persecute the hospitality that aids these pursued Christians.

[14] The chain of the datives of reference is ended. Now follows variety. First a synonymous pair of imperatives: **Bless those persecuting (pursuing) you! Bless and do not curse!** This echoes Jesus’ own injunction given in Matt. 5:44. The Master used both “bless” and “those persecuting you,” and expounded “bless” by saying: “pray for them.” The iteration: “be blessing

— be blessing” (present imperative, iterative) emphasizes, and the addition of the negative: “be not cursing” emphasizes still more. The natural man curses his unjust persecutors, the regenerate man prays for them that they may repent and that thus God may pardon them. Our flesh too would like to curse. Here are the first imperatives in Paul’s catalog, three at once. They are due solely to the language pattern which Paul is weaving.

[15] Two imperatival infinitives follow. These infinitives are not “absolute” (Robertson). In this entire catalog we have the different Greek ways of expressing mild commands, used here in variation to avoid monotony, illustrative of Paul’s linguistic skill, which many fail to see and appreciate. Observe that the peremptory aorist is absent. **Rejoice in company with (μετά) rejoicing ones! Weep with weeping ones!** The Germans use their infinitive as an imperative, but in a sharp sense, not in the mild Greek sense. The participle repeats the verb in simple verbal beauty. The two verbs and the two participles rhyme, and only three words constitute each bidding. Divided joy is doubled, divided grief is halved. Yet here is more than friendly sympathy, because the joy and the tears of the Christian are often called forth by what the world does not understand. After the scourging by the Sanhedrin the Twelve “rejoiced,” yes rejoiced and with them the believers (Acts 5,41). In Rom 5:3 Paul writes: “Let us glory in tribulation!” Paul weeps over the enemies of the cross of Christ, Phil. 3:18.

[16] Now follow three imperative participles, like those in v. 9, then a present imperative. In v. 9 the participles are forward for emphasis, now they are placed last. **Minding the same thing toward each other! Not minding the high things, but moving along with those (who are) lowly! Be not wise in your own conceit!** Distinguish from 15:5 which asks for unity. Here Paul asks that I am to want you to have what I if I were in your position would want to have for myself. I am not to be generous toward myself and niggardly toward you. This is also to be the case with regard to every other brother. The idea is not that if you are the governor of a state, I should want to be the same. That would be foolish. But that I should want for you What in such a case I would want for myself.

The general principle is made specific as to things and as to persons. The ambitious man sets his mind on high and exalted things; of course, he wants them only for himself, and in seeking these disregards others. But he who



minds the same thing for others as for himself will not withdraw from lowly brethren, he will “let himself be carried along with them,” as one who regards their interests as he does his own. The rendering: “Condescend to men of low estate,” may be misunderstood. Here is no stooping down as of a superior to an inferior. Τοῖς ταπεινοῖς might be a neuter, so that we are to stoop to lowly things instead of striving for high things. The meaning of the participle compels us to regard τοῖς ταπεινοῖς as a masculine. You can “be carried along with” persons, not with things. When used as a noun in the New Testament ταπεινός is always a masculine. The man who is not set on high and proud things will gladly go with his humble brethren, even as he is minded for them as he is for himself.

Φρόνιμοι is really not “wise,” but *klug*, “smart,” “sharp.” Παρ’ ἑαυτοῖς “with or by your own selves” == in your own estimation, thus pointing to the opposite of to mind, “the same thing” that you mind for yourself and for all others. The man with unbalanced ambition thinks himself extremely sharp by getting undue advantage for himself, no matter how his brethren fare, especially the lowly who cannot elevate themselves. The articles in τὰ ὕψηλά and τοῖς ταπεινοῖς are generic: whatever — whoever they may be.

## Homiletical Aid

Godless people need no preachers to admonish them to live their lives in godlessness. Hence they have neither preachers nor churches. With godly people this is different. We have been inwardly transformed by the renewing of our mind (last Sunday). Certainly we must show this blessed change. When we do so we have our Epiphany. For this Sunday the apostle Paul offers us a picture of

### **The Model Christian among his Brethren.**

Next Sunday he will shew us the Model Christian among his Enemies.

- I. In the congregational life (v. 6-8).
  1. The presupposition in this entire text is that there is a congregation and that the Christian is a member. Why? Because

of the means of grace by which alone Christians exist; because of the Christian spirit and Christian work that in this text is taken for granted.

2. The official part in the congregational life: the preacher and others prophesying according to the analogy of faith; ministering in spiritual things; teaching; admonishing; managing — all this faithfully.
3. The unofficial part: all of us accept this prophecy, teaching, admonition, managing, etc.
4. The general part: we teach and admonish each other wherever necessary; we give with singlemindedness; we join in works of mercy as in a happy task.

II. In the every day life (v. 9-16).

1. Love without a trace of hypocrisy.  
Love that abhors what is wicked.  
Love that cleaves to what is good.
2. Love in all the particular manifestations:  
Where a brother needs affection.  
Where a brother deserves honor.  
Where there is work to do.  
Where the spirit should be fervent.  
Where we can be the Lord's slaves.  
Where tribulation arrives.  
Where thus we need prayer especially.  
Where saints are in need (hospitality etc.).  
Where persecutors hunt us (v. 14).  
Where joy and where tears prevail.  
Wishing to all the same thing with a mind free from conceit.

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### **Gifts According to the Grace Given to Us.**

- I. The grace that provides for our congregational needs (v. 6-8).
- II. The grace that helps us in our daily contacts (v. 9-16).

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### **Gifts According to the Grace Given to Us.**

- I. Undeserved gifts. That is what “grace” means, and the undeserved character of all the gifts we possess and others possess for our benefit is too little recognized.
- II. Rich gifts. Grace always generous. So many gifts, such high gifts, — see what they enable us to do as members in our church body! What if most of these things could not be done?
- III. Gifts needed by you. How much we need prophecy, admonition, etc., what we would be if left without. How much we need the love (intelligent and purposeful) from our brethren and all that this love with its various gifts works. What it means to be surrounded by brethren who seek to obey v. 9-16.
- IV. Gifts needed from you. As you benefit by the gifts and Christian works of others, so they are to benefit by such gifts and abilities as you have and by the works you are able to do. Shall you alone, for instance, be admonished when you need it, and shall you never admonish? Shall you have others rejoice with you, weep with you, while you never do either of these with them? Shall others be diligent and benefit you, while you are lazy and benefit no one?

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### **The Manifold Gifts of God.**

- I. Imparted by grace. II. Regulated by faith. III. Directed by love. In part one 1 Pet. 4:10; James 1:17; 1 CM. 4:7 are effectively used. (Loy)

This text with its many items affords an opportunity for a homily; see *The Sermon* 112 etc., for this type of sermon.

**It is Good to be Where God Dispenses His Spiritual Gifts.**

1. Where his grace is busy.
2. Where his Word is offered.
3. Where the soul receives ministration.
4. Where the heart is taught.
5. Where we receive due admonition.
6. Where we share with each other.
7. Where we have Christian leadership.
8. Where Christian mercy is shown.
9. Where Christian love is unfeigned.
10. Where wickedness is abhorred.
11. Where good is embraced.
12. Where brotherly affection prevails.
13. Where each leads in honoring the other.
14. Where all are diligent, fervent in spirit, serving only the Lord.
15. Where all rejoice in hope, persevere in tribulation, are instant in prayer. ’
16. Where no saint in need’ is forgotten.
17. Where persecutors are blessed and not cursed.
18. Where they rejoice with the joyful, etc.
19. Where all are minded alike toward each other, without conceit.

The parts may be as numerous as they are in this case, and each part receives free treatment. The fault to avoid is mere loose talking. A homily is

not a Sunday school lesson transferred to the pulpit, where the preacher alone talks.

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Even the best Christians are not perfect, nor am I. Yet, for myself I want to be in their fellowship and company. One great reason is that then I am in the midst of the spiritual gifts which God's grace bestows, enjoy the gifts of others, contribute with such gifts as I have. There is no other company where I belong as completely as this company of true Christians.

### **The Great Garden of God's Gifts.**

- I. Planted and tended by God's grace. In the hearts and the lives of his children.
- II. For the enrichment of our faith. Verse 6b-8 by prophecy, admonition, etc.
- III. And for the unfolding of our love. Verse 9-16 in all Christian graces and virtues.

I want to enjoy all that this garden offers to me, and I want to be part of it by what God's grace makes grow in me for others.

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### **The Christian's Life a Life in Grace.**

- I. It has its origin in grace.
  1. The grace obtained by Christ, and appropriated by faith.
  2. The gifts of this grace. Gifts for offices. General gifts for the service of God and our neighbor.
- II. It ever glorifies grace.
  1. We are part of God's people.
  2. Those outside attracted to come in.
  3. Thus God is glorified.

O. H. in *Magazin* etc. vol. 8.

# The Third Sunday After Epiphany. Rom. 12:17-21

## “Overcome Evil with Good!”

The admonitions comprising this text form a distinct group, and despite the R.V. deserve a separate paragraph. The text for the preceding Sunday placed the Christian amid his fellow Christians, our present text places him in the wicked world among his enemies. Both texts treat of the manifestation or Epiphany which the Christian should make of his genuine Christian character. In the gospel text, Matt. 8:1-13, Jesus reveals himself by means of two great miracles, and a leper and a centurion reveal their faith in him. Both the gospel and the epistle contain the Epiphany idea. It is strong in the epistle which reveals what the Christian really is when he comes to deal with his enemies.

We have explained the imperative participles found in the previous text. We now meet several more of these participles: **To no one giving back evil for evil!** Tit for tat. Pay back in the same coin. *Wie du mir, so ich dir!* The maxim of the Pharisees, Matt. v. 38 and 43. Μηδενὶ ἀποδιδόντες == to no one duly giving back; and κακόν == what is base. The man who treats you basely has it due him to be treated basely in turn. By this injunction Paul is not abolishing the law of strict justice. It is not our function to execute that law. See the example of Christ, 1 Pet. 2:22-24, and compare the injunctions 1 Pet. 3:9; 1 Thess. v. 15. Keep in mind how God treats us who are base. Moreover, who are we that we should escape base treatment? When it is inflicted upon you, commend your case to God.

With this negative injunction, to inflict nothing base upon any man, no matter how his base treatment of us has made him deserve baseness in return, the apostle joins the positive injunction: **Setting your mind on things excellent in the sight of all men!** The whole mind (νοῦς) is to be set

forward (πρό) only on καλά, things morally noble or excellent. “In the sight of all human beings” is forensic: they to act as the jury and the judge. Even under the severest provocation nothing base, always and ever what is excellent. Not one thing base (κακόν), singular; any number of things excellent (καλά), plural. The thought is not that by having our mind constantly planning what is morally excellent we shall escape base treatment. To expect this is to be disappointed. The thought is that by our conduct We may never injure the Gospel in the eyes of men. Our own person is not our supreme concern, this is the good name of the Gospel.

[18] The trio of injunctions is completed by another imperative participle: Suffer baseness from any man — plan only excellent things in the sight of all men — and thus: **If possible, as regards what (comes) from you, being at peace with all men!** It is not always possible. The most peaceful Christian may be set upon and attacked by wolves (Acts 20:29; Matt. 7:15) or by dogs (Phil. 3:2; Rev. 22:15). He may have to defend Christ, the Gospel, his faith, his church, truth and right, against the attacks of base men. Then the Christian appears fully armed, a knight in shining white armor and does valiant battle. In his real nature the Christian is a pacifist; for Christ he is a militarist, — both in the purest sense of the terms. He has Christ as his noblest example. The caricatures are those who confound the sword with the olive branch. Τὸ ἐξ ὑμῶν is the adverbial accusative and ἐκ denotes origin: “as regards what originates from you.” The Christian starts no strife, only the flesh in him is capable of that. He may, however, become involved in strife through the fleshly attacks of others.

[19] One more imperative participle and then the construction changes. In the class of injunctions for peace belongs this one regarding ἐκδίκησις, “vengeance,” lit. “the act of exacting justice.” This we are not to take into our own hands. We are not to retaliate. **Your own selves not avenging, beloved; on the contrary give place to the wrath!** The emphasis is on “your own selves,” — to exact justice for your own selves would be wrong. This precept runs counter to the oriental idea, which prescribed just about the very opposite. To exact full vengeance was not only right, but a matter of personal and family honor. Blood feuds were kept up. Places of refuge and a sanctuary had to be established. Apart from the oriental idea of vengeance, the conviction that vengeance should be exacted is deeply



ingrained in the natural mind. Criminal wrong ought to be avenged. From this conviction flow all our criminal laws with the government as the executor. Paul writes about the state in the next chapter.

Christian ethics do not contravene the natural feeling of justice. All the pacifism here taught by the apostle does not grant license to the wicked man to keep on with his abuse. Vengeance is sure to reach him. This Christian peacefulness means that you are not to act in your own case. Even in civil law a judge may not sit in a case involving his own person or his relatives. Our own wrongs swell out of all proportion in our own minds. When exacting justice for our own selves we should thus deviate from justice. To balance the scales of justice exactly when our own feelings and interests are at stake is a task that should never be imposed on fallible man. See how Jesus acted, 1 Pet. 2:23. See how he scores the Pharisees for acting as judges in their own case and for acquitting themselves, Luke 16:15.

No; our business is to step aside: “Give place to the wrath!” This is a peremptory aorist imperative, and yet it is prefaced by the engaging address “beloved.” Paul’s love sees the danger and cries out in sharp warning; weaker love might be silent. Some imagine that among the Romans there were outbreaks of vengeance and vindictiveness. We hold it to be ethically wrong to imagine such evil of the Romans as long as all evidence is wanting. To warn against a sin is not evidence that that sin is rife among those warned.

We must not disregard the article “*the* wrath.” Paul is not saying: Give your own wrath a little time to cool off before you act! Nor is he saying: Give the wrath of your enemy time to cool off! Τόπος is never used with regard to time, the Latin *spatium* is so used. Τάπος means “place,” a place in which to exercise a function. In Eph. 4:27: “Do not give place to the devil,” means: “Do not permit him room in which to operate, bar him out completely.” Sirach 38:12: “To the physician give place” == so that he can treat the patient. “Give place to the wrath!” means: Get out of the way, give room for the wrath of God to deal out justice! Of course, the thought is not that by another course of action we should prevent God’s wrath from reaching the evil doer, but by getting in the way of that wrath by our wrongful interference we ourselves should be hurt.

“The wrath” is God’s own wrath, comp. v. 9 and 3:5, also 1:18 where this wrath is mentioned for the first time and thus has the genitive “of God.”

**For it has been written** (perfect tense, signifying: And is still on record in Deut. 32:35), \_\_“For me\_\_ (alone) **vengeance** (the act of exacting justice, ἐκδίκησις)! **I** (alone) **will give back due return!**” Is not this enough? Could the matter rest in juster hands? What a relief to you and to me that we need not carry the responsibility of exacting justice ourselves! How we should bungle the matter! How we should fail of doing justice and ourselves become subject to God’s wrath. From the all-seeing, all-knowing God and his wrath not one who wrongs us will escape, save by true repentance. But in many cases God seems to wait so long. Shall we be impatient with God? What if he had struck swiftly for our sins?

[20] “Make room, stand back!” is really only a negative command. It also assumes that the enemy is incorrigible, so that nothing but God’s wrath and exaction of punishment remains. But in any given case is the enemy really beyond hope? We can never know; “love hopeth all things,” 1 Cor. 13:7, down to the very end. That is one reason why God’s wrath so often delays so long before striking. Hence also our positive obligation. Paul adopts for his own thought, without quoting, Prov. 25:21-22: **But if thine enemy come to hunger, be feeding him! If he come to thirst, be giving him drink! For by doing this, coals of fire wilt thou be heaping on his head.** Here is the commentary on Matt. v. 44, on the ἀγάπη, the intelligent, purposeful love we are to show our ἐχθρός, our personal enemy. Feeding him, giving him drink are only two examples of this love. By all manner of kind actions toward him at every opportunity we are to seek to convert this enemy into a friend, at least to turn him from his enmity.

The present tenses πεινᾷ and ὀφᾷ are ingressive: “come to hunger, come to thirst.” The present imperatives are iterative: “be feeding him” every time this happens, lit. be giving him morsels, as one tenderly gives morsels to a child — “be giving him drink” is causative: “cause him to drink” as one holds the cup to a child’s mouth. It may well be that these two examples are chosen by Paul because hospitality toward a guest, the breaking of bread with someone, meant so much in the orient. It always meant safety for a stranger and even for an enemy. We commonly think of charity, but this is far too superficial here.

To heap coals of fire upon an enemy's head sounds like a strange figure, although the Scriptures have made us familiar with it. Not one or two little glowing coals are referred to, but an entire heap. If actual burning coals were thus placed on one's head, how the man would dodge and knock them off! That must be the *tertium comparationis*. He who has done deeds of hate and enmity against you finds it intolerable to be showered with deeds of love and kindness by you. His hate and his enmity cannot endure such treatment, they disappear. Oriental expressions like "coals in the heart," "fire in the liver" are of the same type as coals of fire on the head. Even ordinary human wisdom supports this course of love toward a personal enemy. For if when he strikes me, I strike him in turn, I only rouse him to strike me again, and if I again strike back the same result ensues. So an endless chain of injuries is the result for me, and likewise for him. But if I reward his blow with a kind deed, although he may keep on with his blows for a time, he must finally grow ashamed and weary and so both of us will escape the Vicious chain of injuries and will enjoy benefactions.

[21] Paul summarizes what he says about evil, κακόν, "baseness." **Be not conquered by the evil, but be conquering in connection with the good the evil!** Do not let the base power gain one victory after another over you, but in every battle gain a victory over the base power. The one would be a sorry course of defeat, the other a happy course of triumph. Many would call ἐν instrumental; it is far better to take it in its first meaning: be conquering "in connection with the good." The context indicates the connection intended. "The good" (ἀγαθόν) often means the thing that is soteriologically good, savingly good. We may define it in different ways, as the spirit of the new life in Christ, as the Gospel power in us. Thus too ἐν, "in connection with," becomes plain.

Both present imperatives are iterative. We cannot make the negative one mean: "stop being conquered!" (Robertson), because this would imply that up to the present time the Romans had been conquered by the evil. Where is the evidence for this condition of the Romans? None exists. Note how Paul touches the true motives and norms of the religious will. Who wants to be conquered all his life long? Who would not love to conquer? Who wants "the base" (thing) to keep downing him? Who would not love to be connected with "the good" (thing) in constant victory and triumph? Every word strikes home, — a center shot. This is the way to preach.

# Homiletical Aid

It ought to be easy for us to love our brethren. Yet even in this we fail often. What then about our enemies? Yet we must know God's will. The weaker we are in carrying it out, the more we should go to Christ as our fountain of help. He loved us and saved us while we were his enemies (Rom 5:8 and 10). Only in the light of God's love for us sinners and of Christ's saving death for these sinners can we understand the command: "Love your enemies!" and can we actually and most joyfully obey that command.

Here is where true Christianity and the true Christian manifest themselves, and men do see that they are from God and have Christ in their hearts.

## The Model Christian Among his Enemies.

- I. How does he get enemies?
  - a. By no fault of his own. His heart is a garden of virtues. He sets his mind on things excellent in the sight of all men. He would live at peace with all men. How then can the true Christian have even a single enemy?
  - b. By fault of others. They are determined to quarrel with him and hurt him for some cause or other. Their hearts are base and thus they are hostile to those whose hearts are good. The godly are hated for Christ's sake.
  - c. Here we must add that at times by their faults Christians do arouse enmity in others. 1 Pet. 2:20; 4:15. They must at once repent and amend. Our text does not enter this phase of the subject.
- II. How does he treat his enemies?

Like his best friends.

  - a. He kills the desire of the flesh for revenge and never returns evil for evil (κακόν "meanness").
  - b. He obeys the Spirit, returns good for evil, and never wearies.

III. How does he succeed with his enemies?

He could not succeed any better.

- a. God takes care of them for him. Vengeance belongs wholly to God. The Christian steps aside for God.
- b. Many an enemy is converted into a friend. The fiery coals.
- c. The Christian himself conquers evil and is not conquered by evil (“meanness”).

Is this how you win out over your enemies?

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Political pacifists and militarists. The Christian is manifested as

### **The Lord’s Pacifist, who**

- I. Seeks to be at peace with all men.
  - II. Recompenses no man evil for evil.
  - III. Strives for things excellent in the sight of all men.
  - IV. Leaves vengeance to God.
  - V. Treats his enemy with love.
  - VI. Conquers the evil with the good.
- 

The pacifism of Jesus reflected in his true followers.

### **The Lord’s Pacifist.**

- I. His great faith that God takes care of vengeance (i.e. of exacting justice).
- II. His great love that does only good to his enemy, never pays back evil for evil, makes things excellent and the good his strength.
- III. His great hope that coals of fire will do wonders.

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When God declares:

**“Vengeance is Mine!”**

he makes vengeance

- I. Just. The evil man must be repaid for his evil, wrong, and the hurt he inflicts. The sense of justice which sin has left in man’s heart, and the biblical sense of justice agree. How could the opposite be true?
- II. Certain. God indeed takes vengeance out of our own hands; we could not deal justly in our own case. He reserves it for his own hand, which is infallibly just. No evil man can possibly escape. Let him realize the terror of the wrath.
- III. Yet only secondary. He leaves the coals of fire for you and for me, repentance and pardon for the evil man. He bids us suffer the evil, seek peace with all men, use the Gospel good to conquer the evil. All this that he may not need to condemn in his wrath, but save by his grace in Christ Jesus.

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One of the best ways of showing that you are indeed a true Christian is the way in which you treat your personal enemy, someone who keeps being mean to you (*kakon*). Do not claim Christianity for yourself, if you too treat that person with meanness. Only if you do the very opposite can you support your claim. Your task is to make your enemy’s meanness intolerable for him. You are to treat him as your best friend, no that your kindnesses to him, done for Christ’s sake, feel like coals of fire heaped upon his head, which neither he nor anyone else is able to endure. Thus the enemy is moved to cease his meanness, an action which is good for both him and for you, and he may even become your dear friend.

So the question for you is:

**Can You Produce Coals of Fire?**

We may put this question in a number of ways that should prove helpful.

- I. Have you sufficient fear of the wrath? Look at the terrors of this wrath as revealed in the Scriptures and you will always give it a wide place and plenty of room when it has to do its terrible work.
- II. Have you squelched your vengeful flesh? If not, then take the law and kill the flesh. Never let the flesh move you to recompense evil for evil, or in any way to avenge yourself.
- III. Have you learned to seek peace? This is peace with all men. Set your mind on things' excellent in the sight of all men, things which their moral judgment must approve.
- IV. Have you an appreciation of God's grace and love? How he pardons your sins? How he wants your enemy to repent and to be saved? How he asks you thus to do him all kindness?

Learn to produce coals of fire!

# The Fourth Sunday After Epiphany. Rom. 13:8-10

## “Owe no Man Anything but Love”

This section of Romans deals with the Christian in the world, namely how he is to show himself a Christian in the world. This showing or manifesting himself is the Epiphany idea that runs through these epistles. Last Sunday we saw the Christian among his enemies, — he is bound to have them in this world. We saw how he manifests his Christianity when treated meanly by enemies. In Rom. 13:1-7 we see the Christian under pagan government, but this section is not used. as a text in the ancient selections; it is passed by and 13:8-10 is selected, a broad text, dealing with the Christian in all his secular surroundings and contacts. One word marks him: Love.

We meet love in the text for the Second Sunday after Epiphany, Rom. 12:9, but this is love for our brethren in the Church. There is a great difference. While in essence love is love and quite the same whether expended on a brother or on an unbeliever, there ever remains the difference that upon the brother with whom we are in fellowship we can bestow thousands of gifts which it would be impossible to bestow upon an unbeliever and a worldly man. It is so with God's love: it showers spiritual gifts and blessings upon his children which it cannot shower upon other men. So Rom. 12:9 and 13:8 etc., are quite different.

As regards the gospel text for the day, Matt. 8:23-27, the Tempest on the Lake, I see no special contact between that and the epistle. It is not necessary that there be such a contact. It is sufficient to observe that as Christ manifests himself in many ways, so also does and must the Christian. That Christ manifests his deity, his divine attributes, etc., is understood, also that any real parallel manifestation on our part is impossible. So Christ's



Epiphany is exalted far beyond our Epiphany, yet our Epiphany is and remains vital for us.

[8] Christians live surrounded by other people in their communities; their daily work, their various social contacts, their pleasure, their travel, etc., bring them into touch with all sorts of human beings. How shall the Christian show himself the Christian amid all these varying associations? One word is enough to state the answer: By his love. The Whole question has been answered ages ago by the law of Moses, the sum of which is love. All that the apostle can do is to repeat the law and to add a few pertinent words.

**Be owing no man anything except to be loving each other!** This is the one unpayable debt. The obligation is new every morning, like the light of another day, nor does it cease at nightfall. It remains as steady as the ticks of the clock, and as full of life as the pulse-beats of the heart. Many other debts and obligations we pay, they are discharged. I owe you \$1,000, due today. I pay you the money and the interest today. Then I am through, completely through. Not so with love. If every day I love to the limit, on no day am I farther along with this debt of love than I was on the very first day. I cannot outrun my shadow, I cannot outrun the obligation of the debt of love.

It would be a misinterpretation to say that “be owing no one anything” means: “Never contract a debt, never borrow money or anything else!” Jesus himself commands us to lend, Matt. v. 42, which shows that to borrow is not wrong. Only one thing in regard to debts in general lies in the present durative tense ὀφείλετε, “be owing to no one,” namely this that as Christians we will not let a debt stand after payment is due. Till payment falls due the debt is in abeyance, and thus for the time being no debt; but when the debt falls due, it must be paid, and that then ends the debt. It is impossible to treat love in this way. For the definition of ἀγάπη (ἀγαπᾶν) turn back to Rom. 12:9, the Second Sunday after Epiphany. In the present connection this definition is especially important, for we are to show “love” to all men with whom we come into contact. This cannot be φιλία, the love of affection. Jesus never loved Caiaphas, Annas, the bloodthirsty Sanhedrists with φιλία. I may indeed like some men who are worldly and religiously pagan, they may have engaging qualities. I think Paul was φίλοι with the Asiarchs who would not have him risk his life in the theater at

Ephesus; they were not Christians. But all such *philia*, is a side issue. The Christian's obligation deals with a far higher form of love, with ἀγάπη, the love of intelligence, understanding, comprehension, coupled with a corresponding great purpose. I do not like (φιλεῖν) every Christian; it is not required that I should. But I must love (ἀγαπᾶν) not only every Christian but every human being. What this means v. 9-10 explains. Τό makes the infinitive ἀγαπᾶν a noun, the object of ὀφείλετε.

It is God's law that lays this obligation upon us. For the Christian the law is still the directing guide, although no longer the tyrant master. **For he that loves the other has fulfilled law.** Ὁ ἀγαπῶν the substantivized present participle; it characterizes the person according to his continuous loving. Despite the view of Robertson and of many others Paul constantly makes a difference between νόμος, "law," whatever has the quality of law, i.e. law in general to which concept also the Mosaic Law belongs; and ὁ νόμος, "*the Law*," i.e. the special code of law which God gave to Israel through Moses. Yes, he whose character it is to be loving has fulfilled what is law, what God has laid upon him as law. There is a paradox in the tenses. By means of our constant loving the debt of love is never paid off, and yet by our constant loving the debt is always already paid off. The paradox is true: never paid — always already paid. In πεπλήρωκε we have merely the regular Greek perfect tense: the moment I love I have fulfilled law. When Robertson calls it a futuristic present perfect, he fails to see the paradox and misses Paul's thought.

[9] Now comes the explanation (γάρ) as to why love is our obligation according to "law" and what this love requires of us. The explanation utilizes some of the Commandments of the Mosaic code, because God himself gave this code in written form, and no other code has ever equaled it in purity and in precision. The article τό which introduces the four Commandments unites them and also the 8'L clause into one substantive which then forms the subject of "is summed up." **For this: "Thou wilt not commit adultery! Thou wilt not murder! Thou wilt not steal! Thou wilt not covet!" and if there be any other commandment, in this statement it is summed up, namely in this one: "Thou wilt love thy neighbor as thyself!"**

All of the future tenses of these Commandments are volitive legal futures, but volitive for the person addressed, demanding what his will shall be. Hence we translate: “Thou wilt” etc. “Thou shalt” etc., is volitive on God’s part. These future tenses are common in legal dicta. They have a strong imperative force: “Thou wilt do so and so, with no contrary thought even entering thy head.” Since love to men in general is the subject Paul cites the Second Table. He selects four Commandments because four is the number of rhetorical completeness. Any four of the last seven Commandments would answer Paul’s purpose, save the Fourth Which refers to children, Paul is repeating the teaching of Jesus, comp. Matt. 22:34-40; Luke 18:20; and the lawyer’s question in Luke 10:29. Paul places the Sixth Commandment before the Fifth, as in Mark 10:19, and Luke 18:20; also the LXX. The original order in Ex. 20:13-14 is not binding.

The fact that the four Commandments are negative in form is immaterial, for every negative involves the corresponding positive, see the explanations in Luther’s Smaller Catechism. Thus when Paul quotes the sum of the COmmandments from Lev. 19:18: “Thou wilt love thy neighbor as thyself!” he freely uses a positive statement. Note that ἀνακεφαλαιοῦται is derived not from κεφαλή, “head,” but from κεφάλειον, *Hauptsache*, “main thing,” and means a summation of the chief and essential point.

We are to love God supremely, above everyone and everything else, but our neighbor only as we love our own self. The verb is again ἀγαπᾶν, the love of comprehension and of corresponding purpose. This love perceives that our neighbor and we are on the same level before God, hence that we ought to love ourself no more than our neighbor. We ought to do him all good as we would want it done to ourself. Our neighbor is our fellow man, in particular when he needs our help and assistance. What an ideal world this would be, if every one loved his neighbor as he loves himself! If I were in need, a thousand of my neighbors would fly to my side to help me. If anyone were in need, I would be one of the thousand to go to the rescue. But selfishness is the motive that prevails, and even when good deeds are done, men generally search for some selfish motive, so little is true *agape* known.

[10] **This love works no ill to the neighbor.** Ἡ ἀγάπη has the article of previous reference, hence we render: “This love.” Love is an active quality, never merely a disposition or otiose feeling. Love is energy that works, of

course, in correspondence with its inherent intelligence and the purpose that accords. Love cannot possibly be inactive. Paul's statement is negative and thus in the nature of a litotes: "works no ill," κακόν, nothing base, mean, morally inferior. This whole field is completely closed to love. So the negative involves the positive: "it works only good," and that means good in the spiritual and soteriological sense.

Thus Paul comes to the final deduction: **Fulness, accordingly, of law — this love.** The noun with the article is the subject ἡ ἀγάπη; the noun without the article is the predicate, πλήρωμα, which is placed forward in the sentence for emphasis. Fulness of law and nothing less is this love. Of course, "this love" means the quality of the heart together with all its works. Πλήρωμα, with its suffix -μα, denotes result: "fulness," not an activity "fulfilling." Our versions use "fulfillment," which may be understood as an activity, hence is not precise enough. Law is like a vessel. Examine what is in it. Up to the brim it is filled with this love of which Paul has spoken. Nothing else could possibly be substituted for this love.

A number of questions obtrude themselves, although Paul passes them by. We know that "this love" is the product of faith and springs from no other source. That must be plainly stated in the sermon, for people often imagine that they are able to produce this love by their own efforts. This love does all its works for Christ's sake, and is thus acceptable to him, see Matt. 25:35-40. The world cannot possibly possess this love. This is another point that must be impressed upon our people. We shall be judged at last according to our works of love, for they constitute the public evidence of our faith in Christ, — evidence, not merit.

## Homiletical Aid

The source of all Christian virtue, which many do not know, which many vainly imitate, which the Christian must know and have in his soul, as he walks among his fellow men here in the world.

### The Necessity of Christian Love.

- I. Love, not mere works.

## II. Love, therefore works.

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We meet our obligations, pay our debts, and then are rid of them. The great exception is the debt of Christian love, the fruit of faith in Christ. It constitutes

### **The Unpayable Debt.**

- I. Always already paid, in every work of love that we complete, day after day, hour after hour, in keeping one Commandment of the law of God for Christ's sake after another Commandment, as regards one neighbor in this and in that relation and then another neighbor in the same or in other relations, — “has fulfilled the law,” v. 8, “is the fulness of law,” v. 10.
  - II. Yet thereby never paid. The law that requires love for the fulfillment of its Commandments never lets the Christian go; the Christian's heart cannot cease to love as long as his faith endures; the objects calling out his love, namely his fellow men are ever about him.
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We hear much talk and much preaching about “love.” Many imagine that loving will save them. This is one of the forms of self-righteousness. Our text deals with the love which we owe to our neighbor, and we have long learned that our neighbor is any man who is in need of some kind, be he friend or foe.

### **What We Must Know About Christian Love.**

- I. We must know what Christian love really is. Common love, conjugal, parental, filial, between friends, only earthly, nothing spiritual, natural affection or affection. Christian love full of true comprehension and understanding, full of a corresponding purpose. Examples, the model God's love of the world, Christ's love of sinners. Hence we love even our enemies with this spiritual love.

II. We must know how Christian love is created. Not by the law, although love is demanded by the law. Only by the Gospel which brings us the love of God and Christ for salvation. Our love is created by their love, like fire kindles fire. We love our fellow men for God's and for Christ's sake. This makes Christian love spiritual, distinct, exalted, which the world does not understand. This love is born of faith in the Gospel. Only believers have it, but they must have it.

III. We must know what love does. All that the law of God requires, for instance in the four Commandments repeated in our text. This love never does any ill, i.e. always does what is good, savingly good for our neighbor. For this love is never blind but full of intelligence. It does all this voluntarily — before one asks, it has already gone and done the work. It does all its works for Christ's sake. Thus it fulfills the law.

Apply all this to yourself and to your own love. May it never wane or leave undone what it should do!

# The Fifth Sunday After Epiphany. Col. 3:12-17

## The Life Rich in the Word, Full of Christian Virtues

The series of texts taken from Romans is ended; The summary of the last text is love to our neighbor. This text referred to the law. It is now followed by one which bids us let the whole word of Christ dwell in us richly. This word is the fountain of love and of all its tender Christian Virtues.

We thus have no difficulty as regards the sequence of thought. Still we must know what Nebe records: "The ancient church did not contemplate the celebration of a fifth and even a sixth Sunday after Epiphany; she appointed texts which were to be utilized as needed either in the longer Epiphany season or in the longer Trinity season." Be this as it may, both the gospel and the epistle texts for these last two Epiphany Sundays appear to be quite appropriate. When texts are to be omitted because some year has fewer after Epiphany Sundays, I should not drop the text for the Sixth Sunday, but some other text.

It is well to see how the chapter from which our text is taken is built up. In the first paragraph, v. 1-4, we are shown: that the Christian's life ever looks upward to Christ. In v. 5-11: that this life breaks with all the old Vices, since the new man has been put on. In v. 12-17: that this life is full of Christian virtues and rich in the Word (our text). In v. 18 etc., the Christian life for the various groups of members in the congregation is sketched. We see how our text carries forward the great Epiphany theme of the epistles, the manifestation of the Christian life.

After the negative paragraph, directed against the vices, comes the positive one, the complement of the other. **Accordingly put on, as elect of God, saints and beloved ones, tender feeling of compassion, kindness,**

**lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; (13) enduring one another, and forgiving each other, if anyone against anyone may have complaint, — as also the Lord forgave you thus you too.** Οὕτως, “accordingly,” connects this one paragraph with the others. Risen with Christ (v. 1-3), we get rid of the old vices (v. 5-11), and “accordingly” put on the Christian virtues. The peculiar Judaizers who at this time were disturbing the Colossian Christians advocated a set of rules, by the observance of which dangerous demon influences were to be warded off and a superior type of Christianity was to be attained. Paul scorns these fantastic Judaizers and refutes their notions about demons by strongly telling the Colossians that Christ has completely conquered and made a public display of the whole hellish empire, which now no Christian need fear. As for attaining the height of the Christian life, we need no more than to get rid of the vices, cultivate the old virtues in the light of the Word, and each do his part in his particular station, wives, husbands, etc.

The figure of putting off and putting on a garment is quite common and dare not be pressed. For the new man (v. 10) and the Christian virtues (v. 12-14) are not put on loosely over the body like a garment for a day, and when worn out, to be replaced by another garment. The putting on here meant is not only permanent, even as the aorist imperative ἐνδύσασθε means “put on once for all,” it is an act of spiritual amalgamation. The reason for using this verb is the fact that the new man and in particular his qualities, the virtues, appear outwardly to others, somewhat like a beautiful garment catches people’s eye.

“As elect of God, saints and beloved ones,” of course, does not mean “in so far as you are this,” but “as in fact you are” what these titles convey. But why does the apostle here designate the Colossians in this manner where the regular Christian virtues are enjoined upon them? Because the Judaizers in Colosse withheld every such designation from the Colossian Christians. They did not judge the church members to be “elect of God,” did not accord them the prize “as God’s elect,” etc. (see v. 2:16 and 18). According to the Judaizers these Christians were an inferior group, hardly deserving the Christian name, because they did not observe the decrees of the Judaizers (2:20), did not avoid certain earthly elements by means of which the demons secretly damaged the Christian personality and spirituality. Paul’s designations of the Colossians flatly contradict the Judaistic derogatory



designations. Not that Paul says this is my judgment of you, but this is God's.

We read three coordinate designations: “elect of God — saints — beloved ones.” The three are synonymous. Paul uses so many terms because he means to contradict the Judaizers the more completely and to assure the Colossians the more fully. The Judaizers had set themselves up as arbiters who had the right to accord or to withhold the prize. But God alone is the arbiter, and he accords the Colossians these titles as the great prize. This obligates the Colossians to put on and to display the Christian virtues. The three terms are anarthrous, which indicates that there are many others besides the Colossians who are also “elect of God,” etc.

The verbal noun ἑκλεκτοί is like a passive past participle, the genitive “of God” naming the agent who elected. Some think that God elected the Colossians when they were efficaciously called by the Gospel (v. 15). If this were meant the apostle would have written the proper term κλητοί, as in Rom. 1:6. Ἐκλεκτοί and κλητοί are not identical. “Elect of God” must be dated in eternity (Eph. 1:4). Like ἑκλεκτοί in Matt. 22:14 the verbal contains the entire elective act of God, i.e. the entire doctrine of election. Because it took place in eternity we shall always have difficulty in conceiving the act. For eternity is timelessness, the opposite of time, and our finite minds cannot conceive anything that is timeless and thus also infinite. Hence we can define this act of God only in our halting human way, that, with the whole *massa perdit*a of the whole of mankind before his omniscient eyes, he chose as his own all those whom his grace in Christ Jesus would succeed in saving and bringing to glory.

Ἅγιοι, “saints,” are those separated unto God. God makes this separation as he made the election. Sometimes the perfect participle is used: ἡγιασμένοι, “they who have been and are now still separated from the world unto God.” Both terms refer to both justification and sanctification. “Saints” in the Catholic sense are those canonized by the pope because of superior sanctity, miracles, etc. In the biblical sense all true believers are “saints.”

The Colossians are also ἡγαπημένοι, “such as have been and still are beloved of God,” perfect passive participle. This refers not to the universal love with which God loved the whole world, for then the term could not be

in the same group with “elect of God” and “saints.” Paul means the love which God is able to bestow upon his own, upon whom he is able to shower many gifts which worldlings could not and would not accept.

How can the apostle call the entire congregation “elect,” etc.? Is there no sham Christian, no hypocrite in their midst? When we point to a field and call it a wheat-field, we do not imply that there is not a single weed among the wheat. When we praise the citizens of some city or of some country we do not mean to praise such criminals as may be found among the citizens. The natural limitation which is implied is well understood.

All of the vices (v. 5-11) as well as the virtues which are placed by the apostle over against the superstitions of the Judaizers are such as pertain to the second table of the law. This need not surprise us. For our conduct toward men reveals our relation to God, 1 John 4:20-21. Moreover, the virtues of the second table are in constant daily and hourly evidence in our conduct toward men, and thus eminently show that we are true Christians according to the Scriptures, despite such people as the Judaizers with their self-made holiness. There are still many of these, though they are not superstitious in regard to their doctrine like the Colossian Judaizers were.

The first two Virtues constitute a pair: “tender feeling of compassion — kindness.” *Σπλάγχνα* and *οἰκτιρμοί* are two virtues mentioned in Phil. 2:1, a synonymous pair. The former means “viscera,” — not “bowels” (A.V.), which makes us think of the intestines — the nobler viscera, heart, lungs, and liver. The Greek connected the tender emotions with a stirring of these inner physical organs. Thus to the Greek the word *Splagchna* means “tender feeling” (as in Phil. 2:1). Yet a genitive may be added, specifying the kind of tenderness referred to as in our passage: “tender feeling of compassion,” *οἰκτιρμοί* always idiomatically a plural. *Χρηστότης* is a wider term and means “kindness” in general. The compassionate feeling goes out to the miserable, the hurt, the suffering and distressed; kindness to all whom we can help or benefit. These two constitute a pair. Both prompt us to bestow something, and thus in a way place us above those upon whom we make the bestowal.

“Lowly-mindedness, meekness” constitute a corresponding pair, but they place us below other people. In Phil. 2:5 etc., we have Christ’s astounding example of lowly-mindedness. In paganism the admired virtue was

domination, powerful self-assertion, assuming a lordly position above other men. Hence to the pagan mind ταπεινοφροσύνη was despicable, a poor, low, pusillanimous mind, unable to assert itself and to lord it over anybody. Christianity ennobled the word by placing it into a sphere that was utterly beyond the pagan ethics. Pride is gone. Others are not beneath our feet. We ourselves are only poor sinners. It is not as Chrysostom imagined that we lower ourselves the while we are nevertheless great and high. No; we know that we are not great at all, hence we never even pretend that we are great. So we move and act among men.

“Meekness” goes with lowly-mindedness and is here the meekness toward men. Trench explains: “He that is meek indeed will know himself a sinner among sinners; or, if in one case (meaning Christ’s case, Matt. 17:29) He could not know himself such, yet bearing the sinner’s doom. And this will teach him (the meek Christian) to endure meekly the provocations with which they may provoke him, not to withdraw himself from the burdens which their sin may impose on him, Gal. 6:1; 2 Tim. 2:25; Tit. 3:2,” — three excellent examples in these three passages. Meekness was elevated to this height by Christianity.

Comporting with these two is “longsuffering,” the mind holding out long under provocation, injustice, and meanness, not giving way to resentment and retaliation.

We thus have five items, similar to the five in v. 5 and in v. 8, and yet not like them after all, for Paul adds two, formulated with two participles denoting actions; in this way, while leaving the five as five, he obtains the sacred seven. For these last five are Christian virtues, completed thus to seven. Ordinarily five is the number of rhetorical incompleteness, and ten of the greatest completeness. Thus when the Col. 3:12 — 17 1-95 writer stops with five items the reader himself is asked to add the other five so as to have ten.

[13] Ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων == “bearing with one another,” enduring the labors which others cause us, putting up with their faults, their thoughtlessness, ignorance, etc. There are many disagreeable things in our daily contact, — even as we are imperfect, so are others.

Sometimes the friction becomes so great that one may have just complaint against another, μομφή, *Beschwerde*, *Vorwurf*. Plain wrong has

been done to me. Nor is it a case in which I am merely sensitive or touchy and imagine that I have just complaint, whereas when looked at dispassionately there is no real cause for complaint. What should I do? Forgive at once, on the instant. Χαρίζομαι means to make a free grant of something, somewhat like our verb “to forgive.” Instead of holding the cause of the complaint against the offender even for an hour, hold nothing against him in any way. Too many have the idea that I have a right to grumble and to complain about being wronged and hurt until the offender humbly comes to me and asks my pardon, I then graciously pardon him. This is not correct. So also pastors have the idea that when a complaint is brought to them or when a quarrel starts, the pastor has the right to hear the case like a judge, and decide who is in the wrong and to what extent. The upshot of this procedure is that shortly both parties will turn in complaint against him. The pastor is not to act as a judge. Complaints are not to be settled in this way. The parties are not to be brought face to face to incriminate each other.

Let the pastor go to each of the two separately and hold up to each one this Christian obligation, *to forgive from the heart at once*. Yes, the wrong suffered is great — let it be as great as it will, a veritable mountain. Since when are we not to forgive when we have something big to forgive? That is the very time to show forgiveness. When each of the two has thus agreed to forgive from the heart, then the pastor may bring them together to seal their forgiveness by shaking hands, etc. But does not God demand confession of sin before he pardons? Certainly, but I do not happen to be God when here I am to pardon, I myself am a sinner who often wrongs his brethren. Never is one of the parties to demand that the other must confess and admit what is charged against him; so also vice versa. When the pastor deals with each privately, each of his own accord and by searching his own heart before God is to say wherein he has done wrong to the other. When then they come together in reconciliation, each will confess what his own heart before God prompts him to confess, each will accept the other’s confession as thus made. This is the true way to carry out Paul’s injunction, settling quarrels so that they indeed remain settled.

Paul adds: “as also the Lord forgave you, thus you too,” — no second verb needed. Matt. 18:21-35. Since everything has been forgiven us, thousands and thousands of sins, how can we for one moment hold anything

against a brother or a fellow man? Why the moment we are wronged, the great forgiveness we have received from the Lord ought to flash into our minds, blot out instantly even the slightest feeling of resentment, and fill us with forgiveness for any wrong. “Even as” points to the great motive, and does not mean that like the Lord we are to await confession and repentance and then forgive. I am not in the same class with the Lord. But his immense pardon of all my many sins is the motive impelling me to forgive the wrong done me, which can never be as grave as my sins against the Lord.

[14] The cluster of seven virtues enumerated in v. 12-13 is now crowned with love. **Above all these things, moreover, the love! which means bond of the completeness.** [15] **And the peace of Christ, let it be arbiter in your hearts! for which you were also called in one body. And (ever) be thankful!** Many imagine that they must supply the verb “put on” with “the love.” They then press the meaning of the verb and run into extravagant ideas: the seven virtues are the undergarments, and the love is the outer robe holding them together! Since when do undergarments need to be held together by an outer robe? Paul has no verb at all and thus obtains an exclamation with strong imperative force. “Above all these things” == as of even greater importance. “The love,” as well as “the completeness,” mean not love as a general quality and completeness as a general condition, but the specific love and the specific completeness known to Paul and to all his Christian readers. If your English mind feels that you must have a verb, let it render: “Above all these things have the love,” i.e. the genuine Christian love.

Ἀγάπη is the love of intelligence and corresponding purpose, as we have so often defined it, to be distinguished from φιλία, the love of mere affection or liking. We have seldom found anything approaching a correct explanation in the elaborate dictionaries. In the LXX the word was still applied to the lower, even the erotic, forms of love; this is no longer the case in the New Testament, where we shall always find these two points: 1) adequate intelligence and understanding, 2) a corresponding animating purpose. So here. The love that thoroughly understands all that God asks of us regarding our brethren and our fellow men and that understands also their conditions and needs; secondly, that has the one strong purpose to treat them accordingly. Yes, this goes “above all these things,” above single virtues. In fact, this love is the mother of all these virtues. In his great

article in *Christian Doctrines* Warfield offers much information, but he is certainly wrong when he claims that ἀγάπη sees value in its object. When God loved the world full of sin he saw that all value had departed from the world (intelligent love), yet he resolved with corresponding purpose to restore and even to increase the value that had been lost.

Ὅ ἐστι == “which means,” and it does not need to agree in gender with anything, despite objecting grammarians. Paul is telling us not what the love itself *is*, but what it *means*. Love here means “bond of the completeness,” of the τελειότης, the condition that has reached the τέλος or goal. Paul might have said that the real love is the real completeness, i. e. the attainment of the Christian goal. He says more: the love is this completeness as to its binding power. State it in this way: the (real) love, of which we Christians speak, means for us a cementing bond belonging to the completeness which we Christians know as our goal. Robertson has the idea that the bond is a girdle holding the seven virtues together. Why run a figure into the ground? Read no adjectival genitive: “love is a perfect bond.” The possessive genitive is enough: “bond that belongs to completeness.”

There is here no thought of binding the seven virtues together, as if they needed such an act. These virtues are themselves bonds which unite. What Paul says is: Fail not to add love, for this is the bond of true completeness itself and thus goes ahead of everything else.

[15] Paul adds: “And the peace of Christ,” which he bestows, “let it be arbiter in your hearts, for which (peace) you also were called in one body, and (ever) be thankful” for that. Here Paul strikes at the Judaizers in Colosse. They arrogated to themselves the position of arbiter and denied to the Christians the prize of full and true Christianity, certainly trying to disturb the peace of the Christians. Paul might have said, Christ is the one true arbiter, listen to none other. He says something more effective: “the peace of Christ”, this is ever to be the sole arbiter speaking in our hearts. Where this peace accords the prize, there and there alone it remains, all Judaistic contradictions to the contrary notwithstanding. Βραβεύω == “to act as umpire,” as arbiter, to decide with finality where the prize belongs. The meaning is not “to arbitrate” (R.V. margin), which is quite different, i.e. to compose differences in a dispute. “To Rule” (our versions) is wrong.

“The peace of Christ” is to be taken in the objective sense, namely the condition of peace established by Christ (who himself is our peace, Eph. 2:14) and bestowed upon us as a gift, the condition when all is well between God and us, the condition of safety and salvation. This peace is to render its decisions about us and the kind of Christians we are, in our own hearts. It is the peace of Christ and will ever speak with Christ’s voice. Listen to no superstitious or fanatical Judaizer (legalist, perfectionist, and whom else we may have today). When we think that this peace of Christ comes through Christ’s ransoming and remission of sins (1:14), through his reconciliation effected in the body of his flesh by means of his death (1:22), we will never listen to shallow human arbiters. Abide in Christ’s peace, and the prize is yours, let Judaizers say what they please. We may even translate: “Let the peace of Christ accord the prize in your hearts.”

Paul says: for this peace you were also called in one body, namely to have this peace, to have it award the prize to you for being complete, — all you “in one body,” not bound together like the Judaizers by man made decrees, but by the genuine Christian virtues and by true Christian love, completion’s own highest tie or bond. In the epistles *καλεῖν* always refers to the effective successful call; in the gospels it is used also to designate the invitation that may be rejected. Like all heretics the Judaizers hate “the one body” and try to tear individuals away from it, thus to damage or to destroy it. Paul’s reference is meant to move all the Colossians to remain true and loyal to the one body to which Christ has called them by means of his precious Gospel call.

The present imperative means: “and be (ever) thankful!” not merely thankful in general, but thankful for having been called by Christ, thankful for this precious peace and for its according you the prize. Thus the Colossians will turn deaf ears to the Judaizers and will proceed on their happy way as all Christians should.

[16] Listen to no Judaizers or deceivers, listen to the Word! **The Word of Christ, let it dwell in you richly in all wisdom, you teaching and admonishing yourselves with psalms, hymns, spiritual odes, with grace singing in your hearts unto God!** [17] **And everything whatever you may be doing in word or in work, (do) all in the name of the Lord Jesus, thanking God the Father through him!** “The Word of Christ” matches “the peace of Christ” (v. 15). This is the Christ whom Paul has

described at length in the infinite supremacy of his nature, power, and saving work (1:15-20). His peace, his Word are indeed the supreme gifts to Christians.

“The Word of Christ,” by no means excludes the Old Testament, for all of Christ’s teaching was based on the Old Testament. True, the New Testament was as yet not entirely written, but Christ’s word was spread orally by the apostles. All of this Word is referred to. It is to dwell in us, we are to be its house and home. “Richly,” in all its rich’ abundance; “in all wisdom,” filling us not merely with knowledge, but with the ability properly to use and to apply this knowledge. It is astonishing how men thrust the Word of Christ aside as if it were of no value, while they fill themselves with all sorts of human books, written by Jew and Gentile, and with periodicals of the same type. Much of this literature is mere chaff, but much of it too is rank poison. Floods of it are sent out.

We need not disturb our minds about the following participles. Their construction is perfectly regular. In Greek the participle has number, case, and gender and thus is perfectly clear in meaning. So here: “(you) teaching and admonishing yourselves (ἑαυτούς, which does not mean ‘one another,’ our versions) with psalms, hymns, and spiritual odes, with grace singing in your hearts unto God.” Paul is not making all of the Colossians preachers who should usurp the office of the ministry. He is thinking of the public worship, when as “one body” the congregation is gathered together. It is the singing especially that offers a golden opportunity to all. Not that one teaches and admonishes another. The hymns are not to be sung in that way. We all teach and admonish ourselves. The hymns are full of doctrine, the best kind of teaching, and also full of admonition of all kinds. Cast in metrical and poetic form all of these hymns are beautiful, easily retained in the memory. Psalms, hymns, odes are the three forms of composition, all meant to be sung; only odes might be secular, hence the adjective “spiritual odes.” See Eph. v. 19, in the text for the Twentieth Sunday after Trinity. I instruct and admonish myself when I sing in church; so does every other singer. This is the main thing. That the instruction etc., reaches also others is incidental and not referred to here.

“With grace singing in your hearts unto God” certainly does not advocate silent singing. This is vocal singing, but not like some choir singing a vocal performance. The heart is to sing along ἐν κάρτι, “in



connection with grace,” God’s grace which made us what we are, the grace by which we live spiritually. It is all very well that those who are actually dumb or physically too weak do not sing vocally, but all others ought to be happy to sing aloud, — for what will they do in heaven where all is song? Moreover, our singing is “to God,” to his praise and honor, and the more we teach and admonish ourselves, the more will he be pleased. So much for the public worship.

[17] The spirit of it is to permeate the entire life of the Christian, every last thing We do “in word or in work.” Everything is to be done “in the name of the Lord Jesus.” This phrase is often badly misunderstood. It does not mean “in the spirit of,” “with the authority of,” “in mystical union with” (like birds in the air, fish in the sea, preposterous ideas). The ONOMA is the revelation of the Lord Jesus, by which he makes himself known to us and by which we know, believe in, and love him. The preposition ἐν has its “first meaning” in connection with. Thus to have word and work “in the Name of the Lord Jesus” == to have them connected with the revelation of the Lord Jesus, so that they agree with that Name or revelation of our Savior-Lord to whom we belong absolutely and altogether. Him we should obey as our Lord. “In word and deed,” even down to eating and drinking, 1 Cor. 10:31, means to omit nothing even as πάντα, “everything,” and πάντα, “all,” state. The omission of the imperative makes the command stronger.

Paul" repeats the gratitude: “and be thankful” he said in v. 15, and now: “thanking God (the) Father through him.” Comp. Eph. v. 20, written at the same time. By doing everything in the light of the Lord’s revelation we shall indeed have constant reason for thanking our heavenly Father. This is what makes a truly happy life. The danger is that we try to do only some things in the name of the Lord Jesus and the other things apart from him and his name. Thus there will be both unhappiness and lack of thanksgiving.

Paul’s aim is to sketch the main ethical features of the Christian life, as a truly Christian and for this reason bright, happy, grateful life, in all its simple features far beyond the superstitious, fear-filled, ignorant lives of the Judaizers. Human doctrines and rules of living produce no better results today, although the peculiar type of Judaizers once infesting Colosse is long gone.

# Homiletical Aid

When we compare this text with the preceding epistles its distinctive feature appears to be v. 16 regarding the Word of Christ which must dwell richly in us. This answers the question regarding the source of the manifestations of the Christian life. It is drawn and constantly replenish-ed from the Word of Christ.

Grace an undeserved gift of God. Also the fruit of the Spirit in our hearts.

## Hearts Full of Grace.

- I. Whence is their grace?
  1. The source the Word of Christ. It is full of grace, for all the Gospel doctrines are pure grace.
  2. Drawing from the source: this Word is to have our hearts as its house and home, there to dwell, and that richly (not beggarly), in all wisdom, so that we use and apply this Word in all our lives.
  3. Why many hearts are devoid of grace. They are starving for the Word.
- II. What are these hearts like?
  1. The names show it: elect — holy — beloved.
  2. Their virtues show it: compassion — kindness — lowly-mindedness -meekness — longsuffering — love.
  3. The peace of God shows it, by according them the prize of being true children of God.
- III. How do these hearts act?
  1. They forbear.
  2. They forgive.
  3. They do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.
  4. They are thankful and thus happy.

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## **“Let the Word of Christ Dwell in You!”**

- I. This Word will put grace in your hearts.
- II. This Word will give you the peace of God.
- III. This Word will show you to be God’s elect, holy, beloved.
- IV. This Word will fill you with love and Christian virtues.
- V. This Word will enable you to do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus.

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Did you ever take off the lid and look carefully into your heart? Better do so.

## **What Really is in Your Heart?**

- I. Is it really the Word of Christ? Not mere fragments of this Word, but the Word richly, with its wisdom.
- II. Then, very likely, there is also God’s grace.
- III. Also the peace of God, to award you the prize that declares you elect, holy, beloved.
- IV. Then we may expect also the real Christian virtues, love, compassion, etc. And with all this in the heart there will be no question about the conduct.
- V. Then you will do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. Your heart will not let you do otherwise.

I have not filed this outline down. Left it in the rough. Try your skill at it.

We want to be wheat, not tares (referring to the gospel text for the day).  
When are we real Christians? Many mistaken opinions.

Real Christians.

- I. The inner essentials. 1) The Word of Christ in the hearts. 2) The peace of God in the hearts. 3) Grace in the hearts. 4) Fraternal virtues in the hearts. 5) So that before God we are elect, holy, beloved.
- II. The outer evidence. 1) Teaching and admonishing ourselves by means of public services, the psalms, hymns, etc. 2) Doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. 3) Ever returning thanks to God the Father.

# The Sixth Sunday After Epiphany. 2 Pet. 1:16-21

## “We have a Sure Word of Prophecy”

To the gospel for this Sunday, Matt., 17:1-9, the historical account of the Transfiguration, the one companion text is this epistle which deals with an application of this historical account, an application made by one of the three eyewitnesses himself. Our people should hear a good sermon on this important text. Its subject is: *The Christian Manifests his Assurance*, his assurance of the facts of the Gospel and of the inspired Gospel record of Scripture.

Peter is establishing his Gentile Christian readers in the faith, and here he impresses upon them the truth that their faith rests *not upon myths but upon divine revelation*. **For not by following out sophisticated myths did we make known to you the power and Parousia of our Lord Jesus Christ, but as become eyewitnesses of his majesty; [17] for instance, when receiving from God (the) Father honor and glory, a voice being brought to him, such a one by the majestically befitting glory: “This is my Son, the Beloved, in regard to whom I was well pleased!” [18] and this voice we on our part heard brought out of heaven, being together with him on the mount, the holy one.**

The issue in this letter is “the power and Parousia of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Pseudo-prophets will come in future days, and will charge that the apostles followed out nothing but *σεσοφισμένοι μῦθοι*, “sophisticated myths,” having the nature of sophisms. The perfect participle states that these myths have the abiding character of sophistication or spurious wisdom. In the aorist participle: “by following out,” lies the sneer that what the apostles said about the Parousia was not even such a “myth,” but only a deduction which they made from a cunningly fabricated myth. The one

article makes one concept of “the power and Parousia,” and the addition of “power” brings out the omnipotent might involved in the Parousia. To reject and to scoff at the Parousia is to attack Christianity at a vital point.

Deissmann’s new wisdom on the term “Parousia” is spurious. It is not borrowed from paganism, from an emperor’s grand visit, the city so honored often dating events from such an imperial parousia or presence. For the word is used already by the Twelve and by Jesus in Matt. 24:3,27:37:39, where most certainly no pagan influence can possibly be assumed, besides, the Twelve and Jesus spoke Aramaic in Matt. 24. “Our Lord Jesus Christ” is the full confessional title. “Our Lord” == to whom we belong, who purchased and won us, to whom alone we bow. “Jesus” is his personal name, “Christ” his soteriological title".

All the aorist verbs and participles used in v. 16- 18 are strictly historical tenses and state the historical facts as facts. To read any of them in any other way is to pervert Peter’s meaning. It is fact: “we made known to you the Parousia.” It is fact: “we did not follow out myths.” On the contrary, the fact is, we were eyewitnesses of Christ’s majesty. “We” does not mean Peter and John, the only two now left of those who had witnessed the Transfiguration, — Herod had killed James years before (Acts 12:2). This idea rests on a misunderstanding of γάρ. All of the apostles were eyewitnesses Of Christ’s divine glory. John testifies (1:14): “We beheld his glory, glory-of the Only Begotten, from the-Father.” All of them saw the risen Lord, saw also his ascension. “Eyewitnesses of his majesty” means the majesty of his deity.

[17] Here γάρ does not mean “for.” Too many fail to see that here, as in other instances, Ἰδο means “for instance” and introduces a case when apostles actually saw Christ’s majesty. The correct meaning of γάρ also helps dispose of Robertson’s charge that by proceeding with the participle λαβών instead of a finite verb Peter is guilty of writing a violent anacoluthon. Peter wants no finite verb, he chooses the participle because this subordinates the clause, — he could report still other instances of the majesty. Moreover, the Greek participle has number, gender, and case, far exceeding our English participle in this respect, and it is thus used in Greek with greater flexibility, yet with perfect clarity. So often the inflexible English is incapable of a like construction. The subject of the anacoluthon has never been treated by the grammars as a separate subject, hence these

wild shots by grammarians whenever they think that they see such an animal. Peter certainly has no anacoluthon here. But understand well, the real anacoluthon is a legitimate use of language, necessary to convey a certain meaning which could be conveyed by no other means.

The aorist λαβών states the simple historical fact that Jesus did receive from God the Father honor and glory. Γάρ excludes the relation of lawn; with any other verb form as far as the idea of time is concerned — an error committed by those who translate it “for” and regard the Whole sentence as an anacoluthon. The nominative case also excludes such a view. In Greek “God Father” is to be taken together as one name; “Father” is added because “my Son” follows. The construction is a genitive absolute: “a voice being brought to him,” which at once makes it clear that Christ’s reception of honor and glory is the historic reception at the Transfiguration and not at some other time (resurrection, ascension). The aorist ἔνεχθείσης states no more than the fact. As God made Jesus “receive” (aorist), so a voice “was brought” (aorist) to him by God. To seek and to claim to have found a relation of time between the participles and other verb forms is to wreck the sense of Peter’s entirely simple and lucid statements.

Instead of saying only that “God” did all this, Peter says far more: “by the majestically befitting glory” was such a voice brought to Jesus. The adjective is exceptional: μεγαλαπρεπῆς δόξα, — μέγας == great, and πρέπει == to befit. But this intends to restate what μεγαλειότης in v. 16 has already stated, namely “majesty.” Hence we render: “by the majestically befitting glory.” We must also know that Peter loves to repeat terms, thus here: “glory — glory,” and the word “great” in the two compounds. Τοιᾶσδε is the correlative demonstrative: a voice, “such a one,” i.e. so *einzigartig*, so phenomenal.

The ὑπό phrase states the kind of voice this was; the accusative in v. 18: “this voice we heard,” does not refer to the kind of voice this was, but to what the voice said. Thus Peter simply quotes What the voice said: “This is my Son, the Beloved, in regard to whom I was well pleased.” It is the Father who says “my Son.” To deny the Sonship of deity to Jesus is to call the Father a liar. “Beloved” is the verbal adjective, and is passive and in apposition. Derived from ἀγαπᾶν, the highest type of love is meant, namely the love of full comprehension and corresponding purpose. The Beloved is the Son *ensarkos*, incarnate, his human nature at the moment transfigured

and rendered glorious, as it now is for ever since redemption is complete. Some are determined to make ἀγαπητός == μονογενής, “the Only Begotten,” but in an emasculated sense, namely as referring not to the *generatio aeterna*, but to the begetting of Christ’s human nature. All the labor spent on this identification is worse than in vain.

We must not change the tense: “in regard to whom (εἰς ὃν not: in whom) I was well pleased” (not “am well pleased,” our versions). In eternity God was well pleased. The verb is at times, as here, to be taken in the intensive sense: well pleased so as to choose or elect for something. So God sent his Son on the great mission. The Son is now in the midst of this mission, and thus the Father glorifies him in his human nature and says this about him. Yes, he was well pleased and sent him, and this honor and glory which was given to the Son on the Mount of Transfiguration still attests this good pleasure. We now see why Luke 9:35 renders the original Aramaic by ὁ ἐκλελεγμένος, “the One who has been chosen or elected.” The ἔξοδος, or decease of which Moses and Elijah spoke to Jesus is the completion of his redemptive mission.

[18] Peter testifies: “and this voice we on our part heard brought out of heaven, being together with him on the mount, the holy one.” The readers know the story in detail. They know that not all of the Twelve were present, but only three of them and that Peter was one of the three. So ἡμεῖς, “we on our part” needs no further restriction than “being together with him on the mount,” adding “the holy one” because what Peter is narrating has made the place holy indeed. Note that Peter repeats “voice” and “brought” (conveyed).

The point to be noted is that Peter here writes as one of the ἐπόπται. “eyewitnesses,” and offers this notable instance of the glory of deity manifested visibly and audibly in Jesus. Here are no myths, here are facts. More of them could be offered. This Son of God will return in his glorious Parousia, to the confounding of all who sneer at the idea.

**[19] And we have as’ more sure the prophetic Word, to which you are doing well in giving heed as to a lamp shining in a dismal place, till day dawn and a light-bearer arises in your hearts; etc.** When Peter says: “we have as more certain,” etc., he refers to himself and his fellow apostles as those who made known the power and Parousia of Christ; note how



“you” referring to the readers follows. “The prophetic Word” is the Old Testament with all its prophecies. These prophecies promised and foretold. They were sure and certain indeed. But once the apostles witnessed with their own eyes and ears the evidences of Christ’s deity, they had all of these prophecies “as more sure or firm” than ever, βεβαιότερον, predicative and emphatic. Naturally, the fulfilled prophecy is more sure to us than is this same prophecy while still waiting for the fulfillment. And to see some of the prophecies fulfilled so gloriously assures us the more that the rest of the prophecies, (here those concerning the Parousia), shall also be perfectly and gloriously fulfilled.

So Peter encourages his readers: “to which (Word) you are doing well in giving heed,” and then adds What this Word really is: “a lamp shining in a dismal place, till day dawn and a light-bearer arises in your hearts.” The rare word ἀγχηρός does not mean “dark,” but “dismal.” This “dismal place” is not in the hearts of the readers. People who are doing well are not to be called “a dismal place.” Nor is the imagery borrowed from the outdoors, with a traveler trying to pick his way through *strueppige Wildnis*, rocks, brambles, jungle. A lamp would then be of no use.

This place is a house, in which a “lamp” may indeed afford good fight until day breaks. But this house is “dismal” indeed because of its “heresies Of perdition and denial of the Master” (2:1), heretics speaking evil of the; truth, making merchandise of you (2:2-3), carrying on their libertinism, etc. In a house of this kind, dismal for any righteous soul (2:7), Peter’s readers will be compelled to live their earthly lives. Their one hope and help is “the prophetic Word,” which tells about Christ, who also has come, whose majesty the apostles have actually seen, the Word which tells of the dawn of a better day at Christ’s Parousia. Peter does not say “a dark place,” though many think he must, but dark is already connoted “in” a lamp.” This place is worse than dark, it is dismal and full of dangers.

The words “till day dawn and a light-bearer arises in your hearts” perplexes many, especially the phrase “in your hearts.” The best commentary is Luke 21, 28: “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your head; for your redemption draweth nigh,” and Matt. 24:32: “Ye know that summer is nigh.” Dawning day has its light-bearer, its φωσφόρος, namely the morning star: Jupiter, Mars, Saturn, or Venus, rising shortly before the sun and forming a conspicuous object in the

sky just before dawn (Standard Dictionary). Dawning day and this light-bearer thus belong together. “Light-bearer” is far greater than “lamp,” in fact it is the planet in the dawning sky. The old prophetic Word (lamp) shall eventually be exceeded by the increasing fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the approaching Parousia. So it was when at Christ’s first coming the prophecies were fulfilled, — the fulfillment outshone the prophecies. This shall be repeated on a grand scale when Christ’s return draws near. Before his Parousia bursts on the world, like an oriental day, the understanding of the signs shall fill the hearts of the believers like dawn and like the morning star at dawn. Christ’s coming as a thief in the night does not mean that believers did not expect his coming, were not ready for it. They shall indeed see and understand the dawn and the light-bearer.

[20] Yes, the Word is more certain to us because of the fulfillment it already has had. Still more fulfillment will follow. So Peter writes regarding his readers: **realizing this first of all that no prophecy of Scripture occurs from one’s own interpretation; [21] for not by man’s will was prophecy ever brought, but as borne along by the Holy Spirit, from God men made utterance.** Here again the participle forms no anacoluthon. In the fine Greek way the realizing of what here is said about all Scripture prophecy is made subsidiary (hence the participle) to the heeding of this prophecy. The right word is γινώσκοντες, not mere intellectual knowing, but personal realization. Various things deserve to be realized, but this “first of all” (πρῶτον) that no prophecy of Scripture occurs from man’s own interpretation.

The prevalent idea is that Peter here says, no one is to interpret Scripture prophecy according to his own notion, — an idea very true in itself. Our versions translate in this way. Yet, why does Peter then not say how we are to interpret? It is all very well for the commentators to come to Peter’s assistance and to tell us that the Holy Spirit must furnish the interpretation, — which again is all true enough in itself, although it would be better to say outright: *Scriptura ex Scriptura explicanda est*, Scripture is to be interpreted by Scripture. What Peter actually says is that the interpretation which anyone gives to a Scripture prophecy does not govern the prophecy, but the prophecy governs the interpretation. Reverting to v. 16, the apostles did not invent myths and then, to square with such myths, prophesy a Parousia of Christ. So also no Scripture prophecy ever was formed in such a way, — a

prophet planning how he wanted the interpretation, and then shaping the prophecy to suit. Then indeed the scoffers might scoff about “sophisticated myths.”

Because the proposition is general and covers all Scripture prophecy in relation to its interpretation, the tense is the present, as it is in all such propositions.

[21] What Peter says in v. 20 is due to the origin of prophecy: “for not by man’s will was prophecy ever brought,” — anything that any human being ever willed (θέλημα) had nothing to do with Scripture prophecy. Only false prophets bring prophecies that originate in what they willed. They want things to happen so and so, and then they prophesy them accordingly. This is their standard procedure. They cry: “Peace, peace!” because they want peace, when God says there is and will be no peace. They said to the Jews, Jerusalem would never fall, but would overthrow the Romans, — that is what they wanted. But you know what happened. So they want no Parousia, resurrection, and judgment, and they prophesy accordingly.

Ἄλλά no! Genuine prophecy is from God: it was brought “as borne along by the Holy Spirit, from God men made utterance.” “As borne along,” φερόμενοι, is descriptive, — the verb is used with regard to ships with sails, the wind bearing them along on their course. Ὑπό is the regular preposition to indicate the agent with passives, and here the agent is the Holy Spirit. Thus ἄνθρωποι, human beings, indeed ἐλάλησαν, “made utterance,” yet this utterance was ἀπὸ Θεοῦ, “from God,” not from anything they had willed. The verb is not λέγω, which includes the thought and the speech; λαλέω means only the opening of the mouth to break silence. These men were only God’s mouthpiece. In Matt. 1:22 the angel says the same: “the thing uttered by the Lord (ὕπό) by means of (διά) the prophet.” We have these significant prepositions quite often, comp. Luke 1:70; 3:18; 3:21; 4:25. Peter combines: “made utterance from God,” — the very utterances were “from God.” Indeed, the readers do well in giving heed to “the prophetic Word.” It is a shining lamp indeed.

I marvel at the men who write commentaries on this passage and never once use the word Inspiration, yet this will ever remain one of the great *sedes doctrinae* on Inspiration. Peter presents the fact, — no theory, no hypothesis. All talk of “theory” is a dangerous mistake. The fact of the case

is that God and the Holy Spirit are the real speakers, the prophets and apostles are their mouthpieces. Our fathers called God the *causa efficiens* or *principalis*, and the human speakers or writers the *causae instrumentales*. The act itself they called the *suggestio rerum et verborum*. As a statement of the fact reported in Scripture no better terse definition has ever been offered. If you ever find a better statement, let me know.

The Scriptures themselves are the great evidence of their Inspiration. The pages of Holy Writ have no counterpart in human writing. Hence the flood of commentaries never ends. No assaults harm “the Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture” (Gladstone), this Gibraltar that defies all attack.

Our fathers used three illustrations to elucidate the two *causae*, efficient and instrumental: 1) a man dictating to an amanuensis; 2) a player blowing the flute; 3) a plectrum striking the strings of a lyre. In all three of the illustrations the *tertium comparationis* is the fact that the *causa efficiens* produces its desired results by means of the *causae instrumentales*. The fathers offered these illustrations as mere illustrations of this point, just as any man seeks to make something clear by adding illustrations. What is wrong with the old illustrations of the fathers? If you do not like them then offer better ones. But what has been done by men of supposedly good sense? They pounce on one of these illustrations and charge the fathers with “the dictation theory.” Strange, — we hear nothing about a flute theory, or a plectrum and lyre theory! What mental weakness is this that cannot distinguish between a theory and an illustration? The fathers used three illustrations. It is not honest to turn one of them into a theory. It betrays the opposite of scientific, theological thinking.

I have used only the one word Inspiration because there is only one Inspiration which we commonly designate as Verbal Inspiration. None other exists. Inspiration deals throughout not with Woerter, vocables, but with Worte, words as expressing thought. Hence men, moved by the Holy Spirit, ἐλάλησαν “made utterance,” i.e. uttered words. God spoke through “the mouth” of his prophet. If this is not Verbal Inspiration, what is it? Those who do not want Verbal Inspiration really want no Inspiration of any kind, they want to treat the Scriptures as an uninspired human book. Why be cowardly and still talk hazily about “Inspiration” because in church circles this is still popular? Be brave and deny the whole thing and, then do to Scripture what you please!

# Homiletical Aid

The Christian is assured, certain. So St. Luke once gave Theophilus the certainty of the Gospel facts (Luke 1:1-4).

## **The Christian's Invincible Assurance.**

It rests on no fables, like idolatry, Mohammedanism, Mormonism, or other fake religions, but on

- I. The Gospel facts.
  1. The first coming of Christ was prophesied in the Old Testament and was fulfilled.
  2. Example, the deity of the Messiah, and its revelation in Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration.
  3. Thus the second advent, now still a prophecy, but soon to become fact.
- II. The attested facts.
  1. All men of all ages cannot be present to see and witness for themselves what happened to Jesus 1900 years ago; hence we have the witnesses to attest the facts. Three in the case of the Transfiguration, the fullest legal number.
  2. It is folly to reject attested facts.
  3. The blessedness of the prophetic-Old Testament attestation (v. 19).
- III. The divinely recorded facts.
  1. God inspired the record of Scripture, the record of the prophecies and the record of the fulfillment. So also the record of the prophecies of the Parousia. Verbal Inspiration.
  2. Human assaults upon this record.
  3. The divine certainty which this record produces in truly believing hearts.

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Heb. 13:9. — Eph. 4:14-15. — 1 Pet. 1:24-25. There is false certainty, as when one believes myths, fables, fictions.

### **The Christian's Joy in True Certainty.**

- I. It is ever renewed when he compares the prophecies and the fulfillment.

The sample in our text, the fact of the deity of the Savior.

So all the other facts.

- II. It is ever increased when he notes that the Scriptures are inspired.

He has more than the fallible record of men. God himself inspired the Bible writers in every word they wrote for our salvation.

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Doubt, uncertainty, denial of the truth, myths, religious notions and dreams, outright lies. But the Christian's refuge is his Bible.

### **The Christian and His Bible.**

- I. The dismal place, in which he is compelled to live at present, where heresies, irreligion, skepticism, attacks on Christ, the Gospel, and the Bible abound — dismal indeed!
- II. The one and only lamp, which God has given him, the Scriptures, verbally inspired, containing the divine facts, the divine truth of salvation — the one and only lamp in all the world for the soul.
- III. The dawn and the day-star that arise in our hearts as the signs of Christ's second coming or Epiphany are fulfilled as we approach the great last day and are thus made more certain than ever. Our summer draws nigh, Matt. 24:32; we lift up our hearts, Luke 21:28.

# The Lenten Cycle

## The Blood-bought Christian

### The three Preparatory Texts:

**Septuagesima**

*Not All*

**Sexagesima**

*One Hundred Percent*

**Quinquagesima**

*The Love of Comprehension and Purpose*

### The Texts for Lent Proper:

**Invocavit**

*“Receive Not the Grace of God in Vain”*

**Reminiscere**

*“Abound More and More”*

**Oculi**

*“Walk as Children of Light”*

**Laetare**

*“Children of the Free”*

**Judica**

*The Blood That Bought Us*

**Palm Sunday**

*Our Savior’s Humiliation and His Exaltation*

**Thursday Of Holy Week**  
*“Showing Forth the Lord’s Death Till He Come”*

**Good Friday**  
*“As a Lamb to the Slaughter”*



# Septuagesima. 1 Cor. 9:24-10:5

## Not All

We take the theme of the Lenten Cycle to be

### **The Christian Bought by Christ's Blood.**

Yet we remember that the Sundays are not included in the forty days of Lent. We preach no Passion sermons on the basis of either the gospels or the epistles that have been chosen for the Lenten season. All of the Sundays are days of joy as being repetitions of the Easter festival. This is true regarding all of the Sundays during the entire Church Year.

Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima Sundays belong to the Lenten and not to the Epiphany Cycle. These three Sundays introduce the Lenten season. The cycle closes with Good Friday. It is built up step by step until at last Calvary is reached in both the gospel and the epistle texts. Epiphany and Easter begin on the festival height, each gradually leading us down.

We conceive the line of thought in these texts to be the following:

[1] 1 Cor. 9:24-10:5, Septuagesima: *Not all*. The keywords of the text are: “lest I myself should be a castaway” and “with many of them God was not well pleased.” The text warns. Although we are blood-bought, we are on that account not yet saved.

[2] 2 Cor. 11:19-12:9, Sexagesima: *In weakness strength is made perfect*. The key expressions are this statement and the other two: “I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities” — “I will not glory but in mine infirmities.”

[3] 1 Cor. 13:1-13, Quinquagesima: **Love, the blood-bought Christian's mark**. The guiding expression is: “If I have not love, I am

nothing.”

The first text for Lent proper is that for the Sunday after Ash Wednesday, which is the first day of Lent.

[4] 2 Cor. 6:1-10, *Invocavit: Receive not the grace of God in vain!*

[5] 1 Thess. 4:1-7, *Reminiscere: Abound more and more!*

[6] Eph. v. 1-9, *Oculi: The children of Light.* Made such by the sacrifice of Christ.

[7] Gal. 4:21-31, *Laetare: The children of the Free.* By way of promise.

[8] Heb. 9:11-15, *Judica: His own blood, or the blood of Christ, or the Mediator of the New Testament.* We are indeed blood-bought.

[9] Phil. 2:5-11, *Palm Sunday: Christ's humiliation and his exaltation.* “Obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him.”

[10] 1 Cor. 11:23-32, *Thursday in Holy Week: The Sacrament for the blood-bought Christian.*

[11] Is. 52:13-15; 53:1-12, *Good Friday: Bruised for our iniquities.*

To my way of thinking the line of thought is coherent. The texts are well-chosen. To present the subjects they contain to our people in an adequate manner should be a most satisfying task. In my judgment the preacher should be clear regarding the main message of each of the texts and regarding the sequence of the messages as they reach their climax at Good Friday. Without such clearness the preacher may at times be nonplussed and even quite lost, his outline and his sermon betraying his condition. I do not regard my sketch of the sequence of the thought to be above criticism. If you can improve on it, do so by all means! For that very purpose, namely to stimulate you to your very best efforts this book has been written. Even the best one of us is still short of perfection. There is always a goal ahead beckoning us on.

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Our present text is taken from First Corinthians 9-10 and offers us Paul's illustration of the runner in the stadium and his historical illustration of the

Israelites in the desert. Both are to illustrate the same truth. Although Paul is an apostle, this fact does not assure his salvation, he might yet become a castaway. Although the Israelites were so highly favored of God, yet in the end God was not pleased with many of them, they perished in the wilderness. We are blood-bought indeed, and yet that fact alone does not insure our reaching heaven. Septuagesima Sunday is to prepare us for Lent; it does so by means of this double warning, one for each individual drawn from Paul, one for all the people drawn from Israel in the desert. Paul did not become a castaway, the Israelites were cast away.

This epistle surely agrees closely with the gospel for the day, Matt. 20:1-16. Many labored in the vineyard, but most of them had to be told to take their pay and trot (Luther's expression). Many are called, but few are chosen. The main points of the gospel and of the epistle are the same.

**Do you not know that those who run in the stadium all run, yet only one receives the prize?** Paul means: Of course, you Corinthians know all about these athletic contests, you see them in your own stadium. The entire Hellenic world delighted in these athletic meets ever since Alexander the Great had introduced them. We may think of great football and baseball matches today and of the great series of athletic events in the Olympic games. Paul's illustration is taken from the major contests in which only a single prize was offered: "only one receives the prize." The second and the third runners might obtain public mention, but they did not receive the coveted prize.

Paul at once makes the application: **So run that you may attain!** If we extend the *tertium comparationis* unduly we only spoil Paul's illustration and confuse his meaning. He is not using all of the features of the races in the stadium to illustrate the Christian life; he is using only the one point that while a number run yet only one man obtains the prize. With οὗτως Paul says only this: That is the way in which each one of you is to run. In the Christian race every one of us may obtain the prize. But we shall have to run like that runner in the stadium who gets the wreath.

[25] Paul borrows another figure from . the athletes. This is their astonishing self-control. This feature was exercised with rigor during their training for a period of no less than ten months. **And every man engaged in a contest practices self-control in every respect.** They would not think

of breaking training. They do not yield to their appetites or desires. Food, drink, hours of sleep, hours of practice are regulated with but one object in view. Ὁ ἀγωνιζόμενος he who engages in an ἀγών, an athletic contest. We have our words “agonize” and “agony” from these Greek terms. As applied to the athletic events, even the spectators “agonize” when these contests are in progress.

**Now they, in order to receive a perishable crown, while we one imperishable.** Paul takes it for granted that we too are in training and are exercising the self-control required. Paul does this not as a mere compliment, but in psychological wisdom. So he contrasts only the crowns. That awarded the athletes was “perishable,” made of twigs of wild olive, ivy, or parsley, or perhaps of laurel or pine. They had no intrinsic value, only the honor attached to winning them was valued highly. Think of it, months of severe training and then an agony of exertion, — for a handful of leaves!

But we receive an “imperishable” crown (1 Pet. 1:4), the crown of glory, already laid up for us in heaven. Στέφανος is the proper word to designate these crowns made of leaves and the crown which Jesus wore. Trench would make it only a symbol of victory, but the crown of thorns on Jesus’ head was intended to mark him as the King of the Jews. The diadem was the symbol of royalty, but it consisted not of metal or jewels like our present crowns; it consisted of a fillet around the brow and head, and one might wear a number of such ribbon-crowns.

[26] Paul uses himself as an example. He applies what he has said to himself, and so ought each one of us. I for my part so run, as not uncertainly; I box, as not flaying the air. Tot in the compound τοίνυν is restrictive: “I for my part now” (not “therefore,” our versions). The two statements are negative, yet in the nature of a litotes: “not uncertainly” == with full certainty; “not as flaying the air” == but as knocking out the opponent. This is not the boasting common to athletes before the game, when all solemnly declare they shall win. This sort of crowing was foreign to the apostle. In the case of athletics subjective certainty in advance always stands on shaky legs. The nature of the Christian’s certainty is different, since it rests on Christ.

Δέρω. “to flay,” is very strong, but the thought of knocking the skin off the air is highly ludicrous. When a boxer strikes a terrific blow that lands nowhere but on the air all the spectators laugh. In “I box” Paul utilizes another contest from the Isthmian games. He needs this imagery of boxing for what he desires to say about himself.

[27] Paul interlocks his thought as is often done in Hebrew poetry. This is always beautiful. **I give my body a black eye, and I make it a slave, lest in any way, after having preached to others, I myself should be rejected.** We now see who Paul’s opponent is, namely his own body with its desires and passions so ready to militate against his high calling. Ὑποπιάζω == to hit under the eye (ὐπό == under, and ὤφ == eye). The A.V. is too delicate: “I keep under,” and the R.V. is too broad: “I buffet,” margin “bruise,” which might refer to any part of the body. To hit a powerful blow under the eye is to knock out the body entirely. Paul does not maul his body, strike it in a score of places. With one well-placed stunning blow he floors his opponent for the count.

The figure seems strong, yet it is too weak. For to knock out is to score a victory only for a day. Paul’s victory is continuous. Hence he adds a second figure: “I make my body a slave.” Here the point of comparison is the fact that the slave can never assert his own will, but must ever obey his master’s will. “Bring into subjection” (A.V.) and “into bondage” (R.V.) omit the main word, for δουλαγωγῶ means “to lead around as a slave.” Why does Paul treat his body as the opponent? Not merely, as in other connections, because the flesh in us tries to use the body and its members for the purpose of sinning, but in the present connection because of what he has said about not accepting support and pay for his work from his congregations. He needed food, drink, clothes, lodging, but he worked at his trade and earned the necessary money. Study the entire chapter. Prominent clerics live in grand style today; not so the great apostle Paul.

The final purpose clause drops the figures and speaks the reality, that Paul might preach to other people and help to save them while in the end he himself would lose salvation. It is preposterous when commentators seek to inject the figures just used into this clause and thus make Paul say outrageous things and ruin his entire thought. The κῆρυξ has nothing to do with the games, and ἄδοκιμος is not a technical athletic term. One grows

impatient with this mistreatment of the apostle's language, especially when he is criticized like a schoolboy.

A κήρυξ is a herald, and κηρύσσειν == to herald. The verb is generally translated “to preach,” yet this must always be regarded as a herald announcing a message or a proclamation which has been given to him. His business is simply to announce it, and not to change one iota. He would not think of doing so. What about the many preachers who dress up their herald announcement to suit themselves? “Thus saith the Lord!” is your cue and mine. Yet this very character of the message may make the herald of it only a phonograph. He has the γνῶσις or knowledge, he asserts the ἐεοβοία or right, but after all fails to let the ἀγάπη or saving love enter his own soul. He dispenses salvation to others, and overlooks himself.

Ἀδόκιμος is derived from δοκιμάζω, “to test.” Coins and metals were tested for their purity and their weight. Those tested and found good were δόκιμος, tested and proved, i.e. accepted; those with wrong weight or filled with base alloy were ἀδόκιμος, tested and disproved, i.e. rejected. We lack the corresponding adjectives in English. A preacher may look like a good coin, but a little touch of acid shows that he is counterfeit, *adokimos*. The A.V. “a castaway” is a fine translation.

[10:1] Paul's presentation thus far is conditional: if one fails, he will be a castaway. He now makes this stronger. History shows that Israel failed and received the consequences. **For I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, that our fathers all were under the cloud, and all went through the sea, [2] and all were baptized to Moses in the cloud and in the sea, [3] and all ate of the same spiritual food, [4] and all drank of the same spiritual drink; for they were drinking out of a spiritual rock that accompanied them, and the rock was Christ. [5] But with the most of them God was not well pleased; for they were struck down in the wilderness.**

“I do not want you to be ignorant” is a litotes frequently used by Paul for: “I want you to know and to consider this well.” It is history, — read it aright, apply it as a warning to yourselves. “Brethren” appeals to the readers so that they may do this. The story is tragic: all, all, all with such blessings of grace, and yet not all in the end, even “most of them” struck down and never reaching Canaan.

“Our fathers all” are the Israelites, who had Abraham’s covenant and from whom as being our fathers we Christians of today have received it and its fulfillment in Christ. All of them God brought out of the galling Egyptian bondage. God was in the pillar of cloud (Ex. 13:20-22) and led them forth. All passed safely through the Red Sea, “upon dry ground” (v. 22). Phenomenal deliverance indeed!

[2] “All were baptized to Moses in the cloud and in the sea,” ἐν “in connection with cloud and sea.” The meaning is not “by.” The worst misconception of the analogy here used occurs when the idea of water is stressed by the Baptists, and when cloud and sea are sup-posed to have immersed the Israelites. No water fell from the miraculous cloud, at most the Israelites were immersed in the shadow of the cloud. But even such a tenuous notion is impossible with regard to the sea, for the Israelites walked through the sea “upon dry ground” (Ex. 14:19-20). There was not even a dew. The Egyptians, however, yes, they were immersed and drowned in the sea.

The analogy in regard to Baptism is to be found in the separation that God effected. The pillar of cloud kept the Israelites from the Egyptians, and the passage through the sea completed and made permanent this safe separation. So Baptism separates us as God’s blood-bought saints from the world. The second point of the analogy lies in the fact that this deliverance by way of cloud and sea united the Israelites and made them one body. This is union or unification. Henceforth, as one body, one people, and one nation Israel was to live as God’s people under him alone. So Baptism unites us in inner unity to God’s people as his saints (separated unto him), to live as his people under him and his Word alone. A similar separation took place in the case of Noah, and it was accomplished by means of the ark; here too water was the means employed, 1 Pet. 3:21. Noah was permanently separated from his wicked generation and was set apart unto God.

Εἰς Μωσῆν cannot mean “into Moses.” That the deliverance at the Red Sea carried the Israelites into the person of Moses affords no conceivable sense. “Unto or for Moses,” as God’s representative and as the mediator who was to function on Sinai in the transmission of the law, is the thought. So we today are baptized, not into Christ, as some vainly try to maintain, but unto and for him, to be his own for ever.

[3] As the Israelites received the type of Baptism, so they also received the type of the Lord's Supper. The typical correspondence lies in the fact that "they all" did eat, "they all" did drink, "the same spiritual food," "the same spiritual drink." Both the food and the drink were in no wise the product of nature. The food was "the corn of heaven" and "angels' food," Ps. 78:24-25. These were gifts of the Spirit. In his discourse on the Bread of Life Jesus points out that this food in the desert nourished only the body, but it was food and drink that had a higher purpose, "spiritual" in the full meaning of the word, intended to draw the soul unto God. That the Israelites failed to eat and to drink so that this spiritual effect ensued, was their great sin.

[4] Regarding the food Paul needs to say no more. Regarding the "spiritual drink" he says much more, for here proper elucidation is needed. The more so since fanciful legends were current. The story was circulated that after the first water-miracle recorded in Ex. 17:1-7 the stone which Moses struck rolled along on the journeys of the Israelites, until at the death of Moses it disappeared in the Sea of Galilee. The second miracle was also connected with this rolling rock. It was lost when Miriam died, to whose merit the first miracle was ascribed. It returned for the second miracle. Hence it was called "Miriam's Well." The well mentioned in Num. 21:16-18 is identified with the rock, so that the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan comments on Num. 20:19: "The well that had been given as a present to them climbed up with them on the high mountains, and from the high mountains came down with them into the valleys, surrounded the entire camp of Israel, and refreshed them, each at the door of his tent."

Paul had to clear away these wild fancies. Yes, a rock did accompany Israel throughout the desert wanderings, a rock out of which they kept drinking all the time (ἔπινον, imperfect). But this was no physical rock, no rolling boulder, no πέτρος, but a πέτρα or rock-cliff. On two occasions Moses did use a natural rocky cliff at God's command. But Paul writes about a far mightier *petra*: "and that rock was Christ." The two miracles only emphasize the fact and furnish the imagery for calling Christ a *petra*. An expedition of many thousands, journeying for years through a great desert and arid land, would soon have perished for lack of water. Let no one imagine that Israel always just happened to find camping places with water available. Christ led them, and thus they were provided with this absolute



necessity. On two occasions this was brought home to them, when no water was found. Then it was supplied miraculously. Did the Israelites trust this heavenly provider? Their murmuring answers the question.

How can Paul bring Christ into the history of the desert journey when this occurred many centuries before Christ was born? Because the person of Christ exists from eternity; because the Old Testament and the New Testament people of God are one people; because from Adam onward there is only one Savior, namely Christ. Therefore too he gives the same blessings to his people, to Israel the types of Baptism and of the Lord's Supper, to us these Sacraments as antitypes, — to each section of his people according to the time in which their life is placed. Therefore too both the manna and the water in the desert are called "spiritual." They were to be eaten and to be drunk, to be sure, to keep the body alive, but also especially to obtain the spiritual effect, faith, love, obedience to Christ.

[5] Here is where the Israelites failed. "But with the most of them God was not well pleased," a litotes, "he was altogether displeased," he was angry. Read Stephen's address, — a long story of unbelief and disobedience. Every normal consideration and all right reasoning should have made the Israelites trust the Lord, appreciate the wonders of his grace, and obey his every word. But they so conducted themselves as to call forth the violent anger of God. Paul does not argue the matter. The tragic facts speak for themselves. That God was gravely displeased is evidenced by the fact: "they were struck down in the wilderness." God is the agent with the passive verb. All these Israelites died, some a violent, some a natural death. Moses wrote Ps. 90 in regard to the great dying. All the long, long journey was marked by a procession of graves. The journey was lengthened in order that all, save two, should die before reaching Canaan. Moses himself had to die, although he was in every way physically unimpaired. Sometimes it is supposed that all these Israelites were also damned. Moses was not damned; he appeared to Christ at the time of the Transfiguration. Who was saved and who of those that perished was damned we cannot determine. The point of the history is the truth that despite the greatest grace, promise, and blessings we may end tragically.

## **Homiletical Aid**

The sermon of M. Loy treats only the first part of the text:

### **The Race for the Crown of Glory.**

- I. Christ secures the crown to all believers.
- II. All true believers run to obtain the crown.

This sermon is valuable in pointing out several most necessary facts. “The whole history of the Christian Church and the experience of all Christian believers shows how needful it is to guard against the mistake of confounding the gift of divine grace and the merit of human work, and of supposing that if we must enter upon a contest for the crown we must, of course, work out a righteousness of our own merit because of which we shall be crowned.” Next the question of doubt. You are not paying for the crown. “That would be the way of trouble and failure: of trouble, because you would be worried with incessant doubt, whether you have run fast enough or straight enough to satisfy the conditions; of failure, because the fundamental stipulation of the race, that the crown shall be accepted as a gift of grace would be violated from the start.” — “If the crown has not been won for you and is not in the infinite mercy of God bestowed upon you as a free gift, you will never win it.”

Heed these hints, lest your sermons leave an entirely wrong impression.

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The Christian bought by Christ’s blood has a crown laid up for him, 2 Tim. 4:8. This is the crown of eternal glory. Christ bought it for you at the price of his blood. Let no man take your crown.

Be warned! Many after all fail to receive their crown. Through this text and the Scriptures otherwise rings the solemn warning:

### **Not All, Not All!**

- I. This might include even an apostle. How much more you and me.
  1. St. Paul knew that he was like an athlete training for an athletic event. So he and we must avoid everything, and observe

everything, that might harm our faith and Christian life, lest we lose the crown that is ours in heaven. Be not as much as possible like the world, — such folly may cost you the crown.

2. St. Paul knew he was like a runner in a race who must strain to the utmost to gain the prize. So he and we must take our faith and our faithfulness to Christ in dead earnest. The dawdling, indifferent Christian will forfeit his crown.
3. St. Paul knew that he was like a boxer with an opponent that he must knock out if he himself is not to be knocked out. So he and we have our body and its desires and passions to knock out, to enslave, that our faith may triumph and gain us the victory.
4. St. Paul knew that it was possible to preach to others and to save them, while losing salvation oneself. Here is a warning for us preachers and for all who hold a position in the church. Fight the good fight of faith, nothing less will do.

II. It did include the Israelites in the desert.

1. Their wondrous blessings of pure grace: cloud, Red Sea passage, manna, water out of the rock and all along in their journey. Yet only two reached Canaan. The fault was unbelief, disobedience.
2. You are baptized and the crown is thus sealed to you. If confirmed, you have the Holy Supper and the crown is assured to you. Treat it as a matter of indifference, let your faith decline, your obedience wane, and the crown that was yours will fall to another.

Not all, not all! How about you?

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I would make part one of Stoecker's outline part three:

### **Strive for the Imperishable Crown!**

- I. The striving is hard.

- II. The danger is serious.
  - III. The reward is great. (or, let us say: The crown is glorious).
- 

M. Frommel's sketch attracts:

### **Paul's Herald Cry: Forward into the Race and the Battle!**

- I. Corinth's illustration spurs us on.
  - II. Israel's defection gives us warning.
  - III. The heavenly prize beckons us onward.
- 

Gerock is richer, although he too treats only half of the text:

### **Earth's Reward, or Heaven's Crown?**

- I. There it is a perishable wreath, here an imperishable prize.
  - II. There only one wins, here every one of us is to obtain.
  - III. There the course is broad, here the track has divine bounds.
  - IV. There the success is uncertain, here it is entirely certain for the faithful contender.
- 

Superimposed analysis (*The Sermon* 99) sometimes serves the preacher.

What does it profit, if you gain the whole world, all its royal crowns, all its dictators' powers, and yet fail to obtain the imperishable crown? What if you do lose everything else, yet obtain this crown?

### **Obtaining the Incorruptible Crown.**

- I. It is altogether impossible.

If you imagine that you can earn it.

If like the Israelites you disregard Christ and the fact that he bought that precious crown for you.

If you do not use the means of grace and utilize their power.

If unbelief and disobedience enter your heart.

II. It is rather difficult.

It will require that you run with faith and faithfulness, i.e. keep the narrow way and turn from the world.

It will require that you knock out your opponent, the bodily desires that would turn you from Christ and his grace and his means of grace.

It will require that you ever test yourself lest you become a castaway, imagine you are a true Christian while you are not.

III. It is strangely easy.

Christ has bought the crown for you and has already laid it up for you.

Christ gives you his grace to believe and to be faithful. You have his saving means.

Christ gives you the assurance which is to make you certain that you shall indeed obtain.

Christ crowns you at last.

# Sexagesima. 2 Cor. 11:19 To 12:9

## One Hundred Percent

The gospel for the day is Luke 8:4-15, the Sower Sowing the Seed. Some that fell on good ground brought a hundred-fold. The epistle shows us one whose Christian life bore that much, we may say *One Hundred Percent*. Because Paul himself here tells about it, he feels like a fool, for fools boast as he feels he is now doing. The Corinthians have driven him to it because they followed false teachers. Paul is forced to make a comparison in order to open their eyes.

In v. 18 he writes that many boast according to the flesh, so he will do a little boasting also. But his boasting is not of the fleshly type, indulged in to gain honor and credit for himself, but he has a high spiritual purpose, to win the Corinthians back to the Gospel and its true teachers. **For gladly you bear with the fools, (you) being (so) intelligent!** This is irony. Really intelligent people cannot tolerate fools of any kind, and especially not boasting, bragging fools. But you Corinthians are so intelligent that you tolerate such fools even gladly. Well, then, Paul need have no compunction about acting the fool a bit himself and boasting like one. Ἀνέχεσθε governs the genitive, and φρόνιμοι is not σοφοί, “wise,” but “smart,” “sharp.” The sting, of this remark lies in the implication that such smart people are bigger fools than the fools they indulge; and that by getting such indulgence from people who think themselves so smart, these fools are smarter than the smart ones on whom they impose.

[20] Paul drives this thought home with a vengeance. The Corinthians are so smart that there is scarcely a limit to their folly. **Why, you bear it if one enslaves you, if one devours (you), if one captures (you), if one lifts himself up (over you), if one smites you in the face!** [21] **I am speaking**

**by way of disgrace that we on our part have been weak.** All of these “ifs” in the conditions of reality restate actual past facts. By casting his thought in the form of a condition with “if” Paul implies that the Corinthians would again tolerate the same abuse from the false apostles and regard it as a thing perfectly in order. “If one bears down on you as if you were his slave,” that is item number one. Again, “if one eats you down,” we should say “eats you up,” eats you out of house and home. Again, “if one captures you,” not “takes of you” (A.V.), but makes you his captive, so that he has you right where he wants you, to do with you just as he pleases. Again, “if one lifts himself up over you,” makes himself your master, so that you are compelled to submit. Number five adds the finishing touch, “if one smites you in the face,” but not to subdue resistance on your part, — resistance is not even thought of! — no; this is the regular treatment accorded you Corinthians. And think of it: they like it!

Δέπει means literally: if one “flays” you, strips off your skin. Paul lists five items, and five is the half of ten, the number of fullest completeness. To list half of ten invites the reader to supply the other half and thus to get the complete picture. As regards irony, you must know that there are two kinds, one that aims only to cut and that also disregards the facts, the other that lets the facts speak, to wound in order to help. The latter is in fullest accord with Christian ethics.

[21] Now comes the stunning blow. Paul says: “I am speaking by way of disgrace.” You think perhaps of disgrace for these false apostles because of their outrageous bearing or of disgrace for the Corinthians because of their disgraceful tolerance of such men. You are mistaken: “disgrace that we on our part have been weak.” This lordly bearing of the false apostles in Corinth, — why, Paul says, it puts us, me and my assistants, disgracefully into the shade as being poor weak fellows who do not know how real apostles ought to act, namely in a high and mighty way. The cutting thing is this that Paul does not put the disgrace on the Corinthians for their disgraceful submission to these tyrants, but on himself and his assistants for not having played the tyrant toward the Corinthians, a procedure which they would have liked. But it is so to this day. Fake religious teachers get their people just where they want them and can lord it over them to their heart’s content. Note well that ὡς ὅτι simply == “that,” as is now fully assured; discard any other idea as being behind the times.

[22] Now, however, the dam bursts and the torrent pours out. If it is boasting that Paul must do, he will boast indeed. Every word throbs with life, burns with vitality and with power. Not one false note. Only the high spots are touched, — a large number of items must be passed over. After the first few words the false apostles are left miles behind. They are not even faintly in the same class with Paul. He uses no “we,” lest someone charge him with appropriating to his own credit what belongs to another. So he writes “I — I,” and this makes him feel like a fool, like a common boaster and braggart. Yet there is not a trace of egotism in this recital; for when we come to the climax, Paul boasts of his weakness, to which he has just referred in 21 a.

**Now in what thing anyone may be bold, — I speak (only) in folly — bold am I also.** Let them bring on any thing, Paul will outmatch them. Yet when making this boastful challenge, Paul admits that he feels that he is acting the fool. That the Corinthians must understand.

**“Hebrews” are they? I too! “Israelites” are they? I too! “Abraham’s seed” are they? I too!** Do these false apostles come with the boast of being “Hebrews,” the national name which the Jews preferred, or of being “Israelites,” the religious national name which they loved, or of being “Abraham’s seed,” the purely religious name which they loved, — Paul says: Let them name themselves in whatever way they please, I am their equal and more.

[23] A new avenue opens: **“Ministers of Christ” are they?** Is this their proud claim? No “I too” follows as an answer to this question. Now Paul writes: ὑπὲρ ἐγώ! **Way beyond that I!** Note that ὑπὲρ is only an adverb. While making this boast, Paul feels that to talk in this way (λαλῶ) is like talking wildly: **I am talking as one beside himself,** Who does not know what he is babbling about. Think not that Paul here admits that the false apostles were “ministers of Christ.” Paul only quotes their claim as a claim, and sets his own boast over against it, which goes far beyond mere claim. These fake teachers have only their claim. Paul has the reality. They have only their claim, Paul has all the marks and the evidence of the reality. Paul is even an apostle, not on the same level with Silvanus, Timothy, Titus, etc., but higher and not an apostle in title only but also in work, suffering, and worry. This must be noted for a clear comprehension of what follows.



Way beyond am I: **in labors — excessively! in prisons — excessively! in stripes — beyond measure! in deaths — often!** The ordinary rhetorical four of minor completeness. These false apostles are not distinguished for “labors,” and certainly not “exceedingly.” Rom. 16:18 tells us what motivates them, their belly. Their labors Paul described in v. 20 of this text. The force of these adverbs is not that these false apostles do some work for Christ, but that Paul claims to do more. Not at all. The adverbs modify ὑπέρ. When it comes to labors Paul is entirely beyond them. When it comes to prisons, the same is true. Also with regard to stripes Paul is “beyond measure” beyond them, and in “deaths” he is beyond them “often.” Many times he faces death, a thing these others would not dream of doing. So for all the excessive labors this is the apparent reward: the inside of many a prison, the welts caused by lashes administered on the bare flesh, and every now and then a good, intimate look at death.

[24] **By (the hand of) Jews five times I got forty (stripes) less one; [25] three times was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned; three times was I shipwrecked; a night and a day I have spent in the deep.** Here are the specifications for “in deaths — often.” Again the five items denote the half of full completeness. Five more should be supplied to complete the full story of mortal danger. For scourgings Deut. 25:3 fixed the number of blows at forty. So as to be sure not to exceed forty the Jews stopped at thirty-nine. Beyond that fixed number lay the death penalty. Men at times died upon receiving thirty-nine blows; that number brought nearly every man close to death. “To get thirty-nine” means to get the full count.

[25] The three beatings with rods were administered by lictors in Roman courts. The *Lex Porcia* prohibited the beating of Roman citizens. In Acts 22:24 Paul avails himself of that protection. But on three other occasions tumults arose, as in Acts 16:22-23, and it was impossible to claim and to secure the law’s protection. So Paul’s rights went for naught.

The one stoning is fully recorded in Acts 14:19-20. Paul was left lying for dead, and the intent had been to kill him.

We know nothing about the three shipwrecks. It seems that during one of these wrecks Paul was adrift for a night and a day in the open sea on some wreckage, in danger of drowning, in danger also of not being picked up. The dramatic historical perfect, following the aorists, is perfectly in order,

for it intends to feature the past duration: shipwrecked when night was setting in, not picked up till night was again about to set in. This second night would probably have ended the life of the exhausted man.

**[26] As regards travels — often! with perils of rivers! with perils of robbers! with perils from (my) race! with perils from Gentiles! with perils in city! with perils in wilderness! with perils in sea! with perils among pseudo-brethren!** The travels are not one of this list of items, as our versions translate. Why has no one seen that “as regards travels” is a dative of relation and governs all the following datives, the eight κινδύνοις? Construe: “Beyond am I (V. 23) ... as regards travels.” “Often” as regards travels, and in no less than eight types of danger, grouped into two with genitives, two with ἐκ phrases, three with ἐν phrases of place, and a final ἐν phrase with persons.

The point of note in these travels filled with such dangers is that Paul is *an apostle, commissioned to go*, to travel, no matter What the dangers. He utterly outranks the fake disciples in this respect. If they traveled, it was done where the road was safe, and they had no commission to do even that.

“Rivers” and “robbers” are genitives of source. Many rivers had no bridges and the fords were dangerous, especially after rains. Despite the Roman law, brigands infested the lonely portions of the roads and robbed travelers, and often killed them. The story of the Good Samaritan is drawn from life. All of the perils here listed are mortal, all are specifications for “in deaths — often.” During his travels Paul was often threatened by death from his own race, due to the murderous hate of the Jews, who also at times succeeded in stirring up the Gentiles. Acts 17:5 offers a sample. Ἐκ denotes origin.

Now four ἐν, the last being distinct because it names persons. “In city” one should think that Paul would be safe, but here plots to kill him were often hatched. “In wilderness” the danger is evident. So also “in sea.” Finally “in (among) pseudo-brethren,” men on the order of Judas, men whom one trusts as “brethren” and who traitorously betray that trust. Pseudo-brethren are mates to the pseudo-apostles referred to in v. 13.

**[27] As regards labor and toil, amid sleeplessnesses often! amid hunger and thirst! amid fastings often! amid cold and nakedness!** Here again “labor and toil” are datives of relation, and all of the phrases depend

on these two datives. Always, always hard work, and often and often amid hardships. Four phrases indicate minor rhetorical completeness. Tired and weary, often no rest awaited the apostle; “sleeplessnesses” refer to the many sleepless nights. The hard labor had often to be done “amid hunger and thirst.” For the long journeys on foot not enough food could be carried, and water was often lacking. It would be ridiculous for Paul to insert ceremonial “fastings” after hunger and thirst. These are the fastings which became necessary when the food supply ran low and had to be stretched as far as possible. Then “cold and nakedness,” cold and not enough clothes, particularly at night when crossing the higher altitudes, especially in the spring and in the fall.

**[28] Apart from the things** (that thus come in) **besides**, (there is) **the press of a crowd upon me day after day, the worry over all the churches!** “The things besides” are the ones just listed in v. 23b to v. 27. These are only the extras, thrown in for good measure. The *χωρίς* phrase is astounding. Here the reader imagines that he has been told the main things that made Paul’s life so hard, and now he finds that all of these are only the minor troubles, the greens that garnish the roast, the perquisites handed to Paul besides the full salary. These come only “often”, there are more difficult things that come “day after day.” For describing the extras Paul uses five verses, for describing the main load one line. This is sound psychology as far as the effect to be produced on the readers is concerned. That one line concentrates and strikes home.

The two nominatives are exclamatory: “the press of a crowd — the worry!” This was the real load under which the apostle staggered. In every place where he worked crowds soon besieged him with questions and difficulties to be solved. In addition there was on his mind “the worry over all the churches,” anxiety over their well-being and their progress. He sent his assistants out to secure reports for him. He often debated What to do. Yes, here was the heart of his apostolic work, the churches themselves, and not merely the incidentals that threatened only his own person.

**[29]** In view of this main burden Paul exclaims: **Who is weak, and I am not weak! Who is being trapped, and I on my part am not being burned?** Talk about weakness, then just look at me! No; here is no boast crying: See what a strong man I am! Here is the reverse, the admission of

greatest weakness, just as in v. 23. Mark this well, for this is the key to the entire text.

The synonymous question has the sense: Is anyone getting himself into a fatal trap, and I on my part am not doing far worse, getting myself into fire? Ever σκανδαλίζω means to catch in a trap, the victim being killed by the trap. The figure has nothing to do with stumbling. One stumbled without being killed, but this trap always kills. If we make the verb metaphorical and refer it to offending, the offense is always deadly. Both questions are often badly misconceived. It is folly to understand: “When a brother stumbles, Paul is set on fire with grief.” This extravagance has gone so far as to make of Paul almost a heavenly *Christus consolator*. The sense of Paul’s words is perfectly simple: Is there anyone whose work and whose burden are about to kill him as a trap closes down upon and crushes its victim, and am I not on my part then, as compared with such a man, one who by his work is being burned up gradually as a man in the midst of fire?

**[30] If I have to boast, in regard to the things pertaining to my Weakness will I boast!** The statement is paradoxical. Who would dream of boasting of weakness? Men boast of strength and of power. Paul says: I have more of weakness than of anything else, hence of this will I boast, if I must boast.

[31] This is not speaking facetiously. **The God and Father of the Lord Jesus knows, he who is blessed to the eons, that I am not lying.** “God knows” is not an oath, whether in this briefer form as found in v. 11 or the more expanded form used in v. 31. We have neither the form of an oath nor the necessity for an oath. Compared with v. 11 the expansion found in v. 31 is somewhat more impressive. “God knows that I am not lying” is the statement of a fact, and it assures the readers of the utter truth of what Paul has been saying. The apposition: “he who is blessed to the eons,” i.e. for ever, is a common Jewish benediction often attached to the name of God.

[32-33] The first round of boasting ends with v. 28. Verses 29-31 state the main feature of all the items that contain a boast, Paul’s exceeding weakness. In this mention of weakness lies the thought, that where one is weak and amounts to nothing God can step in and through such a person can accomplish great things by his power. You can pour nothing into a vessel already full (with strength of our own), but into an empty vessel you

can pour everything. Paul's very career began in weakness, — he had to run away as a fugitive in the dead of night.

**In Damascus the Ethnarch of Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to arrest me; [33] and through a door in a basket I was lowered through the wall and escaped out of his hand.** See Acts 9:23-25. Aretas had an Ethnarch who ruled Damascus. The Jews came to him with severe charges against Paul and he guarded every gateway, the Jews assisting, in order to arrest Paul. High up on the wall of the city, where houses were built against the wall, one house was found that had an inconspicuous little wooden door which lead out through the wall. No one seemed to know about this little door. Through it Paul escaped, as he states. That escape does not show him to be a strong hero; we see only weakness. A lone, miserable fugitive is a figure to be pitied.

**[12:1] It is necessary to boast. While not a furthersome thing, yet I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.** I here follow the correct reading. Paul boasts only under compulsion. He now comes to the climax of his boasting, the visions and revelations he has received from the Lord. To narrate them is really not “furthersome” for the Corinthians. Paul would thus rather not mention them at all, either now or at some other time. He does so only in self-defense. “Visions and revelations” imply a number of them. Paul describes only one.

**[2] I know a human being in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body I do not know, whether out of his body I do not know, — God knows), such a one snatched up to the third heaven. [3] And I know such a human being (whether in the body, whether apart from his body I do not know, God knows), [4] that he was snatched into Paradise and heard unspeakable utterances which it is unlawful for a human being to utter. [5] On behalf of such a one will I boast, but on behalf of myself I will not boast, except in the weaknesses.**

Paul describes what happened to him as if it happened to some other ἄνθρωπος, “human being.” He can scarcely believe that he himself was in Paradise. How it happened, he has not the remotest idea. Another might boast: I, I was in Paradise! Not so Paul. All that distinguishes this human being is his connection with Christ. The Greek “before fourteen years” ==

our “fourteen years ago.” This dates the event While Paul was in Tarsus shortly before Barnabas called him to work in Antioch.

If you ask Paul whether the soul was in the body at that time or out of the body, he can tell you only that he does not know, that God alone knows. Note this well. Men of today want to have everything explained: how was this, how was that? The very men who had the experiences did not know. Miraculous things exceed the capacity of the finite human mind and their manner of occurrence cannot be explained.

This human being was snatched into the third heaven. The first heaven is that of the clouds; the second is that of the far firmament, the sky and the stars; the third heaven is the abode of God, of the angels, and of the glorified saints. Do not let anyone who never was in heaven contradict Jesus and Paul about the number of the heavens or about anything else heavenly.

[3] The repetition in this verse intensifies the solemnity.

[4] Here we are told that the third heaven is “Paradise.” Compare Luke 23:43: Jesus and the malefactor in Paradise. It is the place to which the spirit of Jesus went, “Father, into thy hands,” Luke 23:46. See also Rev. 2:7. “Paradise” is one of the lovely names for heaven; the name is taken from the Garden of Eden; in the Old Testament Paradise is described in Edenic colors. The tree of life appears even in Rev. 22:2. God preserve you from the follies of the speculative modern theologians, who certainly profane and defile Paradise!

Here Paul “heard unspeakable utterances which it is unlawful for a human being to utter.” He offers only a bit of his miraculous experience, and thus says nothing about what he saw or felt. “Unutterable utterances” is an oxymoron, a contradiction. It is solved to some extent by the relative clause “which it is not lawful for a human being to utter,” i.e. to say aloud. Paul says he heard these utterances. But they were not intended as a revelation to men, he alone was to hear them in the manner and at the time he heard them. It was unlawful, against God’s will, that he should try to utter them to anyone here on earth. As a result Paul had kept this vision a secret for fourteen years. He was taken to Paradise, he was blessed by these heavenly utterances. It was almost incredible to him, that he, a creature of

the greatest weakness, should be so distinguished by God. Even now, under the strongest compulsion by the Corinthians, Paul uses great reticence.

[5] Paul writes as though there were two Pauls. The one Paul is he whom God cheered and blessed for all his excessive labors and afflictions by giving him a glimpse of Paradise. Of this Paul and of what God thus did for him Paul will boast. But of the other Paul, who is only Paul, he utterly refuses to boast, for this Paul has no merit whatever, nor any credit or desert. Whatever. Only one thing about which he might boast is found in this Paul, and that is his weaknesses. Why boast of these? Because God's strength is made complete in our weakness.

[6] What Paul thus says about his weaknesses he does not want to have misunderstood. **For if I shall ever want to boast I will not be, a fool**, like so many who make fools of themselves by exaggerating or even by outright lying, just to aggrandize themselves; **for**, in such a case, **I will tell** nothing but Simple truth, yet Paul adds, **but I forbear**, I do not intend to use such boasting, I want no personal credit. Whatever boasting Paul does here is done in self-defense, in the interest of the Gospel, whose apostle he is.

Paul indeed *was* something (1 Cor. 15:10). Why he does not make a display of it and boast he states: **lest anyone get to reckon in regard to me beyond what he sees me (to be) or hears from me**. Paul feared to be aggrandized even more than to be despised. The former would rob the Lord of credit. So Paul wants everyone to esteem him as they actually see him and hear him speak. No more.

[7] Now Paul adds what God did to the man whom he lifted into Paradise. **In order that by the exceeding greatness of the revelations I may not be lifting myself up unduly, there was given to me a thorn for the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to fisticuff me, in order that I may not be lifting myself up unduly**. Although Paul has the plural: "revelations," the reference is mainly to this rapture into Paradise, for this was intended for Paul alone, it was a most exalted gift to him personally. Thus he might lift himself up unduly because he had been exceptionally distinguished by the Lord.

To keep him in proper humility, there was given to him by the Lord "a thorn for the flesh." Σκόλοφ is "thorn." The word constantly has this meaning in the papyri. Hence it should here not be translated "stake." We

should not speak of impalement or of crucifixion or of allusion to Christ's cross. "Flesh" denotes Paul's body. The figure of the thorn points to the sharp pain which a thorn causes when it is driven into the flesh. When driven into the body, a thorn remains and causes continual pain.

Paul adds the apposition: "a messenger of Satan, to fisticuff me," i.e. to beat me with his clenched fists. Whatever causes the severe pain acts as a messenger sent by Satan himself to maltreat Paul, a helpless victim. It seems incredible that the man whom the Lord lifted into Paradise should be given over to Satan for such frightful infliction. As far as Satan is concerned, Job 2:7 reveals that the Lord and Satan at times concur. God permits Satan to act, but God has his own blessed purposes. Here this purpose of the Lord is expressed in two clauses, the one a repetition of the other: Paul is not to lift himself up unduly.

What was this "thorn"? Some think that the Corinthians knew. I disagree. They heard about it for the first time when they read this letter. Paul uses figures when he writes the word "thorn" and "fisticuff" and these indicate only symptoms. This is a question for medical diagnosis. At once it should be apparent that the data for a diagnosis are altogether insufficient. No acceptable diagnosis is possible. This too appears to have been Paul's intention. Now the making of a medical diagnosis is the business of medical men. A few have examined the case, still fewer have ventured even as much as an unauthoritative opinion. But what have a number of theologians done? They have rushed in and have made a complete diagnosis. They have acted like a lot of quacks. I should not permit even one of them to examine me for as little as a headache. Turn Paul's case over to men who know nothing about medicine? Never. Even a dictionary like Moulton and Milligan's *Vocabulary* cannot resist the folly of citing one quack who diagnoses Paul's ailment as epilepsy.

Here is a partial list of what the quacks have found: Satanic suggestions, — blasphemous thoughts. — tortures of conscience, — sexual temptations (after meeting the beautiful Thekla, recently also worked into a story by a novelist). The pathological filthy monkish imagination loves the latter. Next: attacks on Paul by a vicious opponent — in general all the afflictions and the hardships due to Paul's work — some disease of the eye like trachoma — headaches — malaria — ear trouble — sciatica — rheumatism — Malta fever — leprosy, a nervous ailment — hysteria or melancholia —



epilepsy. Some of the commentators select something that badly disfigured Paul. This list betrays itself as being a lot of guessing of which no sensible person should be guilty.

[8] Paul continues: **Concerning this I urged the Lord three times that it might stand** (permanently, — aorist) **away from me, [9] and he has told me: “Sufficient for thee is my grace! For the power is brought to its finish in weakness.”** Three times Paul urgently prayed the Lord to remove this severe infliction. When he prayed the third time, he received the answer he records. It is wrong to say that Paul’s prayers were not heard or that they were denied. There was no denial, for Paul’s prayers contained the Christian readiness expressed in the words: “if it be thy will.”

[9] “Sufficient for thee” == for all thy life, thy work, thy suffering, and in particular also for this “thorn.” “My grace” is to be understood in the full sense of the word, the Lord’s undeserved favor to the sinner who is worthy only of punishment. Within that favor is included every gift we need in life and in death. It is so sufficient that it will attain its τέλος or goal also in Paul, and even Satan’s messenger must aid in attaining this goal. This word concerning God’s sufficient grace has been of untold value to countless saints of God. It is my conclusion that the thorn came not long after the exaltation into Paradise, and that Paul speaks of it here for the first time. So long a time had he borne it in silence by God’s grace.

The Lord adds another word: “For the power is brought to its finish in weakness.” Τελεῖται is a form of the same verb that has given us τετέλεσται, the cry of Jesus: “It is finished!” John 19:28 and 30. Our versions should not translate: “is made perfect,” for this sounds as if the Greek word were τελειοῦται, which it is not. The two are to be kept distinct. “It is finished” == the last stroke is done; the other verb == the goal is reached. The Lord says that in our weakness his power comes to its end and finds nothing more to do. This is the Lord’s power of grace, which must exert so much effort in us as long as we think that we still amount to something. When we come to be really nothing and the power of grace really becomes everything in us, then the task of grace is done in us. The wonderful instrument for the Lord which Paul was he became by his utter weakness.

**Very gladly, then, I will boast the more in my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may spread its tent over me.** Since Paul had received this word from the Lord, he more than ever before most gladly boasted of his weaknesses. All boasting in anything of his own utterly disappeared from his soul. All that Paul has hitherto said about his weaknesses thus becomes clear. The figure found in the purpose clause “that the power of Christ may spread its tent over me” is very beautiful. The Lord’s power covers up and hides Paul amid all his weaknesses. It cannot spread itself over those who think themselves strong. The aorist means “may spread once for all, effectively.” Not that this has not already been achieved. Paul will ever boast as he does, that the tent once spread over him may definitely remain over him. Here is no reference to the Shekinah or Khabod, which never was a tent. “The power of Christ” is not an hypostasis, an independent personification. Paul is not another Simon Magus (Acts 8:10), “an incarnation of the power of Christ.” Such exegesis is distressing.

## **Homiletical Aid**

The seed that bore a hundred-fold. What is the seed of the Word producing in you? At what percent does the Lord list you? Here is one who must be rated

### **One Hundred Percent.**

- I. You may think this means in his work, suffering, and glimpse of Paradise.
  1. Rate these things as high as you please, and they are high, far beyond the false apostles in Corinth, they do not form the one hundred per cent for St. Paul.
  2. They call on us to follow the apostle’s example in our station in life and to come as near to him as we possibly can, yet even if we came as near as possible, or even equaled him, this would not make the Lord rate us one hundred percent.

3. For St. Paul says that he feels like a fool to be compelled to boast of all these things to the Corinthians. His feeling thus is part of the one hundred percent of his rating. And so it must be with you.

II. You must learn that this means in his weaknesses.

1. St. Paul began with such weaknesses, — he had to flee by night as a fugitive from Damascus.

2. Ever in all his labors, hardships, dangers, he knew he was nothing, the Lord was everything.

3. Although the only man to see Paradise, he was also given a thorn for the flesh to keep him humble and ever conscious of his weaknesses.

4. When we are no percent at all then the Lord's grace and power of grace produces such great things in and through our nothingness that we can be rated at thirty, at sixty, yea, even at one hundred percent. '

Conclusion: In the world you score high by bragging of what you are and of what you have done. Before the Lord he who does the opposite scores high.

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What a lot of boasters in the world! All of them blowing their own horn. All their proud boasts are blown away like chaff before the wind. — Yes, we too are to boast. But in the opposite way. Learn from

### **The Man Who Really Knew How to Boast.**

I. See all the grand things for which he takes no credit at all.

Parentage, office, sufferings, mortal dangers, heavy responsibilities, glimpse of Paradise.

He takes so little credit that he feels like a fool to be compelled to mention them and only skims the surface.

Consider of what you have boasted and perhaps still boast. You brag and take great credit for the few dollars that you give, a bit of work that you do. Foolish funeral sermons encourage you in that.

Learn from St. Paul.

II. See all the weaknesses for which he does take the fullest credit.

Of weakness he speaks in v. 21, 29, 30; 12:5, 9, that he himself despite all that he had done and had undergone and despite the fact that he saw Paradise, is utterly nothing.

The sample of his flight from Damascus, a defenseless fugitive, his weakness exposed.

But this weakness made fullest room for the Lord's power of grace.

When we think that we are something, then we close the door to the Lord's power of grace. Then we never will be anything. But when we realize that we really are nothing, grace can do something for and make something of us.

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John Theodore Mueller has the following in *Magazin fuer Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, vol. 35:

The epistle is a confession... Paul is extolling not himself, but the grace of God. The conditions at Corinth (describe them briefly) made it imperative for him to establish himself as a true messenger and servant of the Lord.

### **St. Paul's Confession a Most Valuable Lesson for Us.**

I. In our work. II. In our blessed experiences as children of God. III. In our trials and afflictions.

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From the same magazine vol. 8 I translate and alter the outline by G.:

Paul boasts of his weaknesses. How could he do this? Because of the word the Lord spoke to him. This word pertains to all of us.

### **The Lord's Word of Comfort to Every Bearer of the Cross.**

#### I. Sufficient is my grace unto thee!

1. This told Paul that he had the Lord's grace, and that all his sufferings and the thorn in his flesh were not signs of wrath, but evidences of love and grace.
2. That Paul should not be discouraged but should bear his suffering and commit the end of the hour of suffering to his gracious Lord.

#### II. The Power is brought to its finish in weakness.

1. This told Paul that here it can not be otherwise, the Lord can show his power only in our weakness. Luther: "Christ is not mighty in us, his Word and faith can also not be strong in us, when our body is not sticking in weakness." "With this word Christ comforts all who are in weakness or suffering; for he cannot prove his power in us, unless we are weak and suffer."
2. This told Paul it was good for him to suffer. Osiander: "I preserve thee not only that thou mayest not perish, but I also work in thee mightily such things as redound to my honor and for the welfare of thyself and many others... . And we are to consider certain that then God works in us most mightily for our salvation when we most weakly need him and imagine that we are actually crushed by the affliction."

# Quinquagesima. 1 Cor. 13

## The Love of Comprehension and Purpose

This epistle was chosen because it was a companion piece to the gospel in which Jesus announces his Passion and restores the sight of Bartimeus and of his companion, Luke 18:31-43. In this gospel text Jesus reveals his wondrous love on the threshold of Lent. Our answer should be the same kind of a love to our brethren. It is Paul, the great preacher of justification, who penned this immortal chapter on love. Let us think of that. This description of love flowed out of Paul's own heart, for this love sustained him amid all his labors, burdens, trials, sufferings, persecutions. This is what made him superior to hunger and hardship, false friends and bitter foes, bodily infirmity and dangers of death. His love was the fruit of his faith. The greatness of love is governed by the strength and the intelligence of faith.

The Corinthians admired the gift of tongues above all else. Paul tells them about the other gifts and about their distribution among the church members and now adds that all gifts are valueless unless they are animated by Christian love, — unfortunately translated “charity” in the A.V.

**[1] If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, yet have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.** Paul passes this judgment on himself. The first three conditions have ἔάν, but not because Paul expects them to be fulfilled; they make vivid the supposition they contain. The Corinthians admired the gift of tongues, the ability by the Spirit's aid to speak the praise of God in human languages never learned by the speaker, as was done at Pentecost. Paul surpasses all that the Corinthians knew in this respect by adding the tongues of angels, such languages as the angels in heaven may use. Suppose, says Paul, that I had all these tongues at my command. How you would admire and envy me!

Yet if I had not “love,” with all of this ability I should be nothing but a raucous sound, as when one hammers brass or as when one strikes brass cymbals. What does such a sound amount to? Nothing. Do you want to be only an unpleasant noise?

It is essential that we understand well what ἀγάπη signifies, the more so since in English we have only one word for love, while the Greek has also Φιλία. The latter is the love of mere affection; a φίλος is a friend, and a φίλημα is a kiss. On the distinction see John 21:15-17. I have found few satisfactory and serviceable definitions of ἀγάπη. Warfield’s long essay wants us to think that when manifesting this love the lover sees value in the loved object. But what value did God see in the foul world when he loved it, or what value am I to see in my enemy when I am to love him? Not to distinguish between ἀγάπη and φιλία, as some refuse to do, is blindness. My definition is: the love of intelligence, understanding, and comprehension coupled with a purpose that corresponds and is to be carried out. For love is always transitive, active, never a mere otiose quality.

God understood all the foulness of the world and purposed by the mission of the Son to remove it. You are to understand all that your enemy does to himself by his hatred, and are to treat him so that you may rid him of all his animosity. Publican loves publican. There is full understanding between them and thus the purpose of the one to stand by the other. Apply this definition to any passage in the New Testament, and I think you will find that it serves. In the LXX the word was still used for lower, even erotic, forms of love; it attained its full nobleness in the New Testament. The word plays no role in secular Greek.

Love is the supreme requirement for the use of all Christian gifts, and this love is born of faith.

[2] The ἐάν clauses are cumulative. **And if I have prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to transfer mountains, yet have not love, I am nothing.** Here are two more vivid (ἐάν) suppositions. As we had a superlative in tongues of men and of angels, so we again have superlatives. “Prophecy” was a gift. Here we need not think of the great prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc., or like apostles, nor even of minor ones like Agabus. The gift of prophecy, as ch. 14 shows, was one that all should desire and consisted in the ability to transmit the

Word given through the inspired prophets and now recorded in Scripture. But Paul adds to this gift “all mysteries and all knowledge,” which like the tongues of angels no man ever possessed. Suppose the impossible, Paul says, and let me have all this knowledge. Yet if I were without love I would be nothing. As far as God and his Kingdom are concerned I might just as well not exist.

From. speech (v. 1) Paul advances to knowledge, and then to deeds, these also superlatives, faith that is able to transfer mountains, i.e. perform seeming impossibilities. We call this miracle-working faith and distinguish it from saving, justifying faith. Matt. 7:22 shows us that the former may be possessed Without the latter, for the Lord rejects these people who have done such wonderful works and have even driven out devils. We may not understand how one can have miracle-working faith without saving faith, and thus also love, but the Scriptures assert the fact. The anomaly is the basis of all Paul’s suppositions; it only strikes us at this point because of the mention of “faith.” “To transfer mountains” is proverbial for accomplishing seeming impossibilities, overcoming mountains of obstacles, winning astounding victories like Gideon’s. Men may praise and admire, but when love is absent, not the Lord.

[3] Paul goes beyond gifts. He comes to deeds of unselfishness and of self-sacrifice. **And if I feed all my possessions away, and if I deliver my body over in order that I may be burned, yet have not love, I profit nothing,** I might as well have done neither. Φωμίζω means to place morsels into someone’s mouth, and then to parcel out. Sweet charity may be imitated. Ananias and Sapphira are examples. Again the superlative is used: “all my possessions.” Here too we have the companion piece which is superlative even in comparison with its mate. Possessions are dear, but one’s own body is far dearer. To give the body to be burned is the climax of self-sacrifice. We know of no instances when men did this or when men were forced to perish by fire. Hence we conclude that Paul is speaking hypothetically: if one should do such a thing, whether one ever did it or not.

Note how the illustrations narrow down. One may easily speak with tongues etc., and be without love. One may have worlds of knowledge and do magnificent deeds, and yet be without love. Yet to feed all one’s possessions to the poor and to give one’s life in self-sacrifice, this, one would suppose, should include the motive of love. Note the refrain: “and



have not love.” It rings through the sentences like a funeral bell. In the last statement the clause: “I profit nothing,” reveals the hollowness of these otherwise apparently supreme acts.

The subject of these verses is: *Love’s Supreme Value*. Without it nothing avails.

[4] First love absent, now love present, hence also three times ἡ ἀγάπη, like the German idiom *die Liebe*, the article with the abstract noun. Instead of a definition of “love” Paul offers us a description.

**Love suffers long, is benignant; love envies not; love vaunts not itself, is not puffed up, [5] acts not unseemly, seeks not its own, is not provoked, takes no account of the bad; [6] rejoices not over unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; [7] suffers all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

“Love suffers long.” This takes us right into the world of sinful men. Christian love has to suffer a great deal, but it does not let the ignorant, mean, or malicious actions arouse the resentment and the anger they deserve. Paul does not say that love suffers endlessly. For the time may come when love requires that we call for justice, lest the evil prevail. God is longsuffering toward us, and this prompts our longsuffering.

Love is “benignant,” full of kind and beneficent intentions and deeds, bent on doing good to all with whom it comes into contact. Longsuffering and benignty form a pair.

Now follows a list of negatives, the last of which is paired with its opposite. “Love envies not.” When it sees another person prosperous, fortunate, honored, it does not begrudge him his blessings, but rejoices to see him so favored. Love does not in envy detract and then praise itself. So love also does not boast and brag: “love vaunts not itself,” and in its very feelings “is not puffed up” with pride. The psychology of lovelessness proceeds from envy to boasting to haughtiness. He who exalts himself shall be abased.

[5] Love “acts not unseemly.” It always teaches you your proper place and the appropriate bearing. Paul is the example: “Who taught this tentmaker such noble and beautiful manners, such perfect tact in all his bearing, that even the great of this world were compelled to respect him?”

Besser. Paul did not cringe before governors and kings, nor did he lord it over lesser men.

Love “seeks not its own,” be it money, honor, pleasure, advantage of any kind. This is true unselfishness. Selfishness rules the world. To find true unselfishness is an anomaly. Could we but remove selfishness from the church, it would probably make the church seem strange to us. Cure selfishness and you plant a Garden of Eden.

“Is not provoked,” made angry or embittered by the selfishness of others, who perhaps reward our kindness with the very opposite. Paul’s life was full of such experiences with his brethren in the flesh. Rom. 12:14. What then does love do: it “takes no account of the bad,” τὸ κακόν, the morally base or mean. It keeps no ledger to charge and to reckon up the bad for future settlement. Not that love is indifferent and shuts an eye to the bad. “As a spark falls into the sea and does not harm the sea, so harm may be done to a loving soul and is soon quenched without disturbing the soul.”

In fact, love has no pleasure at all in wrong; it “rejoices not in unrighteousness,” in what is contrary to God’s δίκη or norm of right. To see anything of this sort grieves love. Love “rejoices with the truth” (not “in the truth,” A.V.). “The truth” is the Gospel verity, the divine saving reality, — ἀλήθεια == reality. Where unrighteousness prevails, “the truth” is absent. Σύν in the verb does not personify “the truth,” as if the truth rejoices and we rejoice with it. The preposition is associative: love rejoices in sympathy with the truth. Its joy inclines only in the direction of the truth and its works and its victories.

[7] After the negatives which cry: “Nothing of this! Nothing of this!” come the positives and cry: “All of this! All of this!” Love “suffers all things.” The idea expressed in μένυ is that love does not complain and rebel, it quietly endures inflictions. Remember all that Jesus bore uncomplainingly.

Love “believes all things,” refuses to yield to suspicion and to doubt. Loveless hearts believe all possible, and sometimes all impossible, bad things about others; love believes all the good it possibly can, until it is forced to credit the opposite. Luther: “Excuse him, speak well of him, and put the best construction on everything.”

“Hopes all things” == hopes everything good from others. Love is that kind of an optimist. Yet it entertains no mere human optimism which the reality may soon shatter, spoiling all its smiles. This is Christian love and hope and its basis is the grace of God in the Gospel. Love expects that efficient grace to win its way.

“Endures all things,” ὑπομένει, bravely remains under the load and does not flee from it. This verb applies to things, while longsuffering applies to persons.

These verses present *The Inner Power of Love*. Not while doing mighty and astounding works on some grand, exceptional occasion does Paul describe the inner power of love, but in the common life of every day among our fellow men. Learn love there, and when the hour for heroism comes, you will most likely be ready.

[8] First: love lends value to gifts and to works. Second: love has value in itself. Third: love in value outranks all else.

First: The value of love shown from its absence; second, from its presence; third, by comparison. Love is **Permanent**, all else passes away.

**Love never falls: but whether prophecies, they shall be done away; whether tongues, they shall cease; whether knowledge, it shall be done away.** “Never falls” == you never get done with love so that you may drop it and let it fall as being no longer needed. In this regard love outranks for instance “prophecies,” for eventually we shall have all the fulfillment, and even the need of comparing prophecies with their fulfillment, as we now do with the Old and the New Testament, will have passed. “Shall be done away,” lit. shall be put out of commission or service. This is also true with regard to “tongues,” they shall cease, no longer being needed in heaven. This is also true with regard to “knowledge” as we have it and attain it with great labor in this life. No more schools and no more teachers, no more books, no more thinking in our slow way. All such γνῶσις shall also be put out of service, for something far superior takes its place.

**[9] For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; [10] but when the complete shall come that in part shall be done away.** The tongues are not mentioned, they belong to an inferior class. Despite all our science and our knowledge, we never penetrate to the bottom of things. The ocean of truth

is deep and our plumbing line is only about six fathoms long, — how can we touch the bottom? Concerning so many things even in nature we must say in the words of a notable scientist: *Ignoramus, ignorabimus*. “We do not know, we never shall know.” Ἐκ μέρους does not mean “in fragments,” i.e. a piece here and one there, which we cannot correlate. The phrase means “in part,” partially, not completely, as we really should know. Original sin has damaged our minds. This lack of completeness, this partial character applies also to our knowledge of the Word and thus to our prophesying. No theologian has penetrated the body of Scripture truth.

[10] But τὸ τέλειον, “the complete,” shall eventually come, and then naturally τὸ ἔκ μέρους, “the partial,” shall be put out of service. A thing is τέλειον when it has reached the τέλος or goal. Our versions use “perfect,” but this is inexact and in some contexts misleads. The glorious day is coming when we shall no longer know and preach and teach the Gospel in such a halting way as we now do.

[11] Paul uses a beautiful analogy: **When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I had the interests of a child, I reasoned as a child; now that I have become a man, I have put away the things of the child.** The imperfect tenses picture the conditions; the two perfect tenses refer also to the present which Paul describes. What would you expect of a child, except that it should speak as a child, have the interest of a child in playing its games, in studying its lessons, in reasoning in its childlike way. We see that Paul is not disparaging the knowledge and the prophesying which we have at present. It would be unnatural for little children to talk and to act like grown men. Yet the childhood stage is a passing one. It would be equally unnatural for the child never to grow up, to remain a runt. Eventually we shall grow up, i.e. we shall pass into another world. That will be our maturity.

[12] From the individualizing “I” Paul changes to the generalizing “we.” **For we see now by means of a mirror in a dark saying, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully, even as also I have been known fully.** Paul dwells at length on knowledge because this is so important for us in our present life. Yet it is only like “seeing by means of a mirror in a dark saying.” The ancient mirrors were made of polished metal, yet they were clear enough and we must not leap to the conclusion that here the point of comparison is their dimness, reflecting no clear image.

No, the point is that a mirror only reflects an image and can do no more. The opposite is to see “face to face.” Paul weaves in the reality when he inserts “in a dark saying,” ἐν ἀλνίγματι. This interprets what he means by the reflecting mirror. All our means of knowledge leave us with unanswered questions, we do not here attain to complete clarity.

Yet God himself in his Word has supplied us a mirror. In it he speaks of heavenly realities in human, earthly, imperfect words, thus condescending to us. How many men have misunderstood and misinterpreted! Yet the Word is infinitely precious to us. We have it in its human form “in a dark saying” because our eyes and our minds could not here endure the truth in its direct reality. If God spoke in heavenly language, whom would it profit? So “now I know in part” and I must be content with knowing in no more complete a manner. But a “then” is coming, in a new world, when the last trace of the darkening which original sin has brought upon us shall be removed: “then I shall know fully, even as also I have been known fully,” lit. “was known fully,” by God in the present life. The image of God, to which knowledge belongs, shall be restored in us: we shall know, not discursively and by painful groping effort as now, but directly, as it were intuitively, without the least effort. Note γινώσκω and the strengthened ἐπιγινώσκω, *kennen* and *erkennen*, — for the latter we can only say “to know fully.”

[13] The conclusion is as perfect as is all that precedes: **And now remains faith, hope, love, these three; yet the greatest of these love.** The Simplicity of the words, united with the loftiest meaning, is the height of beauty. The last word is ἡ ἀγάπη, — yes, that should be the final note.

“Now” is logical and draws the conclusion. When it comes to love, what is the final word? Not this that while all else fades and passes and is outward, love continues for ever. No; there abide three: faith, hope, love. This is what Paul says beyond question. The singular verb μένει is intended for each of the three subjects as this is often the case, and, in fact the neuter plural τὰ τρία ταῦτα demands a singular verb in the Greek.

Only in a certain way will there be a change in regard to faith. It will no longer need or have the Word. This will be replaced by sight and by direct, complete knowledge. But as *fiducia*, as trust, faith remains and as now connects us with Christ. This is equally true of hope. It would be a mistake

to imagine that once we enter heaven all hope is for ever fulfilled and that we have nothing more to expect. The angels sing ever new songs of praise. The infinitude of God has blessings, the end of which can never be reached. We can speak of all this only in a poor earthly way, but hope shall meet ever new realization. Heaven will be infinitely grander than your poor earthly mind is able to conceive.

Paul's sentence is so constructed that if you make faith and hope cease at the moment of entry into heaven, you will have to make love cease likewise; for he ties the three together as remaining. "These three (emphatic) remain." Where then is the preeminence of love? "Yet the greatest of these love." While *μείζων* is comparative in the Greek, it is best rendered as a superlative in English, even as it compares love with two others, faith and love.

Paul leaves it to his readers to state how love comes to be the greatest of the three that we shall take with us into heaven. It is not that love outlasts, but that love outranks the other two. How does it outrank them? Bengel's answer is best: *Ac Deus non dicitur fides aut spes absolute, amor dicitur.* God is not called faith or hope in an absolute sense, he is called love. 1 John 4:7, also 12, also 16. Love brings us into the fullest union and communion with God. Faith's nature is to receive, but love gives, and giving is greater than receiving. Hope expects to receive, and thus also comes second. To every new joy we receive in heaven, love will be the response on our part. When we come to rest on the bosom of God it will be by love.

## Homiletical Aid

The Christian is bought by the blood of Christ. That blood was shed by Christ in his infinite love. Faith embraces Christ, his love and his blood, and is thus justified from all sin and guilt. Then from faith there springs up love in his heart. It is directed toward Christ, but for that very reason toward men whom he loved and for whom he shed his blood. The apostle who preached faith and justification so mightily, preached also love in the most glorious way.

### The Supreme Value of Christian Love.

- I. Love lends value to the greatest gifts and works, v. 1-3.
  - II. Love itself abounds in value (v. 4-7).
  - III. Love outranks all else (v. 8-13).
- 

Love, a much used word. Ill understood. St. Paul's praise of love intends to make us understand. Love in the world; Christian love the fruit of faith in Christ.

### **St. Paul's Praise of Christian Love. Love's Dimensions.**

- I. Love's depth (unfathomable).
  1. Each and every gift, deed, emotion of man valued with God according to its love.
  2. Examples: The highest form of speech, like that of an angel; all mysteries, the greatest theology; the greatest offering, all goods to the poor; the supreme sacrifice, life itself, — without love valueless.
  3. Deductions. If the highest gifts and deeds are nought without love, then what about all your lesser gifts, deeds, etc.? Then what about your bad and questionable deeds?
- II. Love's breadth (immeasurable).
  1. Longsuffering.
  2. Benignant.
  3. Without envy.
  4. Without pride.
  5. Not unseemly.
  6. Not selfish.
  7. Not provoked.
  8. Takes no account of the bad.

9. Rejoices only with the truth.
10. Suffers, believes, hopes, endures all things.

III. Love's length (eternal).

1. The great things that shall end. The last prophecy shall be fulfilled. The last earthly speech shall be silent. All the knowledge we now have shall be superseded. But love remains.
2. Two comparisons: the child when it becomes a man — love is not discarded as a child's ways. The mirror and the face, not as when we see face to face, — love shall see heaven and God as they are.

IV. Love's height (the greatest of all).

1. Great is faith, it embraces Christ, forgiveness, heaven. Yet faith takes, love gives. Faith too remains, but love makes us like God, who is love.
2. Great is hope, it grasps the future, but love now already is in communion with God. God does not believe or hope, yet he loves. Love rises on the shoulders of faith and hope. Love is the greatest.

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*Exempla docent.*

**St. Paul: A Life Governed by Christian Love.**

- I. All his gifts were consecrated by it.
  1. He speaks hypothetically here, but think of the gifts he really had.
  2. Love put them all into the highest possible service, with the most wonderful devotion.
  3. The results as we see them in his labors, as we enjoy them in his writings.



4. God's estimate of such a life. You are not an apostle, yet in your place how much love shines in your heart and your life?

II. All his actions were ennobled by it.

1. Not merely in the great, but also in the little things of life. St. Paul thinks of what the Corinthians lacked and could and should have, and thus lets them look at the motives he fosters in his own heart. How about our hearts?

2. He shows them his own heart: when he prospered — when he lacked and suffered — when others ill-treated him — when others went wrong.

3. What encouragement this example is for us.

III. All his future was made glorious by it.

1. The things he expected to outgrow and leave behind like a child coming to manhood.

2. The permanent things he will take with him (faith, hope, love).

3. The crowning possession, love in the presence of divine love above.

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### **Love, the True Measure of a Man.**

It measures

I. Even his greatest gifts and achievements.

1. How St. Paul measured his.

2. How he reckoned their value.

II. As well the smallest details of daily conduct.

1. The details as St. Paul enumerates them from his own daily life.

2. A man's measure when in these details he lacks love.

3. A man's measure when in these details he has love.

III. Finally the eternal sum of his life.

1. The things that fall away when God at last measures your life.

2. The possessions that count in that final measuring (faith, hope, love).

3. The one that will count as the crown of all.

# Invocavit. 2 Cor. 6:1-10

## “Receive Not the Grace of God in Vain”

This is the first Sunday in Lent. The gospel, Matt. 4:1-11, records the victories of Jesus when tempted. This temptation was a part of the Passion of Christ. The epistle is not a counterpart that records something about the Christian's temptation. The theme of the epistles for the Sundays in Lent is the blood-bought Christian. Thus bought by Christ's blood, this holy season is to recall to him the temptation of Jesus and all the Passion of Jesus in order that all this grace may not be in vain. The text thus bears its theme at the head of it in v. 1: “*Receive Not the Grace of God in Vain!*” Paul and his assistants are offered as examples which we may follow.

As ambassadors of Christ (5:20) Paul and his assistants keep doing two things: calling on men everywhere to be reconciled, then admonishing those who, like the Corinthians, have been reconciled to receive God's grace “not in vain.” While doing this double work, Paul and his assistants by their own example at the same time illustrate what it means not to receive the grace of God in vain (V. 3-10). To be sure, the Corinthians are not ambassadors of Christ, apostles or the assistants of apostles. But the thought is not mechanical at all. Each in whatever station God has placed him or her is to be as zealous in using the grace of God as Paul and his assistants were in their station. “Like priest, like people.”

**Moreover, as jointly working (with God) we also keep admonishing for you not in vain to accept the grace of God. [2] For the word is: “At an acceptable season I gave thee favorable hearing, And in salvation's day I came to thy aid.” Lo, now is a season highly acceptable; lo, now (is) salvation's day!**

Δέ adds something else to the preaching of reconciliation and καί, “also,” states that this is the admonition not to accept the grace of God in vain. This Paul and his assistants do “as jointly working.” In the Greek it is

not necessary to add the phrase “with God” since Paul has already said that God gave them the ministry (5:18) and deposited the Word with them (5:19), and that they are ambassadors of God (5:20). In the Greek the emphasis is beautifully distributed: first on “not in vain,” thrust far forward; next on “the grace of God,” the object before its verb; finally on ὑμεῖς, “you,” the pronoun being written out in the Greek and placed in the emphatic position at the end of the sentence after the verb. In English we cannot arrange so many points of emphasis. Placing “you” at the end affords this sense: we keep admonishing in general all who have been reconciled to God, and this our admonition applies in particular also to you Corinthians.

“The grace of God” is the undeserved *favor Dei*, extended to sinners who are under sentence of condemnation, remitting their sin, guilt, and penalty for the sake of Christ who died for them (5:15). Here the word grace and accepting the grace are given the specific meaning of the divine reconciliation, which we receive by being reconciled to God. It is bad not to be reconciled to God by faith in Christ who wrought the great work of reconciliation; but it is worse to accept this grace and then to let it be in vain. That is to be like the man in the parable whose huge debt was remitted, but who would not even be patient with a small debtor indebted to him. That is to be like the seed that fell on stony soil, Matt. 13:20-21; to be only a hearer and not a doer of the Word, James 1:22, a man with “dead” works, James 2:17 and 20. Εἰς κενόν == for emptiness, i.e. in an empty, hollow way. When the test of tribulation or any other test comes, no real substance is found.

[2] The formula λέγει is the German *es heisst*, and it is not elliptical. We do not have this idiom and translate: “the word is.” In the lines of Is. 49:8 Paul clothes his own thought. The two lines are synonymous. “An acceptable time” == “salvation’s day.” The καιρός or season marked by something is in this case marked by salvation. God provided a day of grace for Israel, when he listened to their cries of distress and helped them; that was their day of salvation when God came to their aid. Paul interprets and applies to his readers when he explains: . “Lo, now is a season highly acceptable; lo, now (is) salvation’s day.” He even has two poetic lines in Hebrew fashion. For the Corinthians the present time was so highly acceptable because the full tide of the Gospel had been poured out upon

them. Note the two words δεκτός and εὐπρόσδεκτος, “acceptable — highly acceptable.” Both refer to God.

He it is who both in the lives of individuals and in the history of nations so guides affairs and the course of the Gospel as to bring about periods and occasions for easily receiving his grace. Luther pointed this out to the German nation of his day, when he stated that the pure Gospel ran through all of Germany and beat down upon the land like a great shower of rain. He bade the Germans recognize their day of grace and warned them that another day might come when they would seek grace in vain. He pointed them to Asia Minor, Where once the Gospel flowed freely, where now the Turk rules and the Gospel has disappeared. This is also true with regard to individuals. Providence lets everything transpire to bring grace to them, but if grace is accepted only in a hollow way the acceptable season passes, perhaps never to return. There is such a thing as “too late.” Israel’s rejection and abiding curse is the warning for all time.

[3] Paul continues with two participles in the nominative, followed by many phrases, until in v. 9- 10 he again uses both adjectives and participles in the nominative case. All this is perfectly lucid in Greek, where the participles and also the adjectives have number, case, and gender. These nominatives automatically refer to the writers as does συνεργοῦντες, the participle in v. 1. We thus have no patience with grammatical and critical tinkering. Verse 2 is not a parenthesis, as our versions suppose.

We act as ambassadors (5:20) and thus also admonish (6:1), exemplifying our admonition by ourselves, and thus drawing you Corinthians to our hearts, that you may follow us in using God’s grace in the same way: **giving no reason for stumbling in anything, in order that the ministry be not blamed; [4] on the contrary, as God’s ministers commending ourselves in everything, in etc., etc.** Negative and positive assertions are placed side by side for greater effect. In the Greek the negatives are doubled and thus made stronger: “no reason in nothing” or “in no respect.”

Paul and his assistants were ministers and thus exemplify the possession and the power of grace in their lives by the way in which they conduct their office. We who are not such ministers nevertheless have our position in the Church and should therefore in our position and in our capacity show that

grace lives and rules in our hearts. Thus, Paul says, we are most careful not to give προσκοπήν in any way, i.e. a cause for stumbling (the word found only here in the New Testament), “offense” in this sense (A.V.). Distinguish the word from σκάνδαλον. One stumbles and hurts himself, but not fatally; but the trap with its trigger-stick kills its victim. Paul says, we avoid even cause for stumbling in the faith.

This they do so that the ministry may not be blamed, for when ministers are rightly blamed for their selfish, worldly, careless, offensive conduct, this reflects on the Gospel, and men close their hearts and perhaps imagine that their whole preaching is insincere.

[4] Διάκονοι is nominative and modifies the subject, hence we must change the order of the Greek words. Read not: “ourselves as ministers,” but “we as ministers commend ourselves.” The thought is: we want people always to see in us true ministers of God, Whose one recommendation is that in every respect they act as such. They let their conduct speak for them. People always listen to what the conduct says. Ministers should cease fooling themselves on that score. Play cards and people will call you worldly; fail to pay your debts and people will call you dishonest; play much golf and extend your vacations and people will not praise you as diligent ministers of God.

Paul elaborates ἐν παντί, “in everything”: \_\_“in much perseverance, — in tribulation, in necessities, in anxieties, — [5] in stripes, in prisons, in tumults, — in labors, in sleeplessnesses, in fastings, etc.\_\_ Stop with these ten. Ten is the number of greatest rhetorical completeness. The first of the ten is singular, a virtue and has a modifier, the remaining nine are unmodified plurals. Blind criticism finds silly fault. The thought of “much perseverance” runs through all of the following nine, every one of which demands perseverance and much of it. So in the life of every Christian all the hard things demand “much perseverance.” Paul thus has ten composed of  $1 + 3 + 3 + 3 = 10$ . Each three is again a unit group, and the three groups are in their proper sequence: 1) three that must be endured; 2) three that denote violent mistreatment; 3) three that are burdens of the office.

Ὑπομονή == brave holding out, remaining under a burden without murmur or complaint, — the cardinal Christian virtue. Next “tribulation,” pressure from all sides; “necessities,” when one is forced against his will;

third, “anxieties,” as when one is in a tight place, and full of anxiety to get out where he can breathe again. Note the climax in the three, and the fact that this group is composed of abstract nouns. Did these three call for perseverance?

[5] Do you wish for something a little more concrete and definite? Well, here are “stripes,” angry and often bloody welts made by rods or whip cords, — very concrete indeed. Add “prisons,” when the scourged apostles are thrown into foul dungeons, — yes, quite definite. Finally, “tumults,” as when the mob stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city thinking him to be dead (Acts 14:19). Yes, it would take some perseverance to go on in the face of the repetition of these abuses.

The third trio begins with “labors,” hard, tiring work, and as a reward the laborers have “sleeplessnesses” and “fastings,” a poor place to rest at night, or no place, hence little sleep, and no food on many a day. When Paul and his assistants took some of those long journeys on foot, they slept on no downy beds of ease and they carried what little food they could.

Well, these are the men who bid the Corinthians not to receive God’s grace in vain.

[6] **In purity, in knowledge, in longsuffering, in kindness.** Four singulars, virtues, four the number of minor rhetorical completeness. The ἔν is thus different. In the list of ten it means: “in the midst of tribulation,” etc.; now it is “in connection with,” for these virtues are in the heart.

First there is “purity” in the motive that prompts them to work and to suffer. Yet purity of motive and intent must be enlightened, must have real “knowledge” as its guide. These two form a natural pair, — the lack of either would be fatal.

So also “longsuffering” and “kindness” constitute a pair. Equipped with purity and with knowledge the heart will not be quick to resent wrong, but will hold out for a long time in silent patience, and yet it will have only a desire to be kind and to exercise benignity, to help and to benefit others.

The four should fill every minister’s heart, and should make him an example to his flock.

Now another rhetorical four, again in pairs: **in the Holy Spirit, in love unhyprocritical, [7] in truth's Word, in God's power.** It puzzles many as to how and why the Holy Spirit should appear here. Of course, if we ruin Paul's grouping as does the A.V. by making a group of six in v. 6, the puzzle remains. The moment we divide properly all is clear. In this last group of four the Holy Spirit belongs first. These last four rise above the preceding fourteen, and not in a slow glide with the Spirit last, but in a bound with him first. We do not regard the four as being on the same level; no, just as "perseverance" in v. 4 stands out in its relation to the nine items following, so the Holy Spirit is the ultimate source in relation to the following three. Thus we also see why this group is not composed only of three but of four and includes "love unhyprocritical." Ἐν here too == "in connection with."

The Holy Spirit produces all of this noble conduct which Paul is sketching. He stands at the one end. This conduct can develop only from genuine "love," about which there is no hyprocrisy. This is at the other end, namely in our hearts.

[7] But how about the space between, how does the Spirit produce this love in us and thus such conduct? He uses "truth's Word," the Word that goes with truth and thus produces faith, the fount of love. "God's power" completes the last pair, for this mentions that which is efficacious in the Word, "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16), which is the power of grace (not of omnipotence).

The three διά phrases should form one verse: **between the aids of the (true) righteousness on the right and on the left; [8] between acknowledgment and despising; between bad report and good report.** Διά should not worry the commentators, for it is here used in its original meaning "between," even as two extremes are here mentioned "between" which the apostles go. So ὄπλα are not "armor" (our versions) or "weapons." In this entire list everything is literal and it would be curious to find one highly metaphorical term in it. Besides, "weapons" is only the derived meaning of ὄπλα when soldiers are named; the word itself means any kind of equipment, tool, to aid one in his task. So here. This righteousness, made ours by the Word of truth and God's power of grace, is not helpless and does not leave us helpless. It has its aids for us and keeps us between them, aids both on the right and on the left. We may say these



“aids” or *hopla* are the acknowledgment and the good report on the right and the despising and the bad report on the left. Both act as aids in keeping us on the right and the narrow path.

[8] Some acknowledge us, some despise us. So some when acknowledging us give us a good report, and those who despise us spread an evil report. Here δόξα is not “glory,” but “acknowledgment,” as its opposite shows. This trio of “between” phrases states in three forms what is one thought.

[9] From ἐν and διὰ Paul advances to ὡς, “as.” The “between” idea is developed in the seven opposites, which close the long list in a group of three and one of four. Thus: **as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and yet 10, we go on living.** The opposites are paradoxes.

“As” indicates the superficial judgment of men, and mi has adversative force and indicates the facts. We are decried “as deceivers” who by their teaching lead men astray. And yet the fact is, we are “true,” all that we teach is true, fact, reality, “truth’s Word.” We are called “unknown,” men of no standing in the world, upstarts, unworthy of attention. And yet the fact is, we are “well known” to all the believers, and even to our enemies whose very slanders show that they know us. The climax is: “as dying,” soon to disappear and to be forgotten, and yet “lo,” note the strange fact, “we go on living,” the expectation of our enemies is not fulfilled. By “lo” this group of three is divided from the following four.

**As being chastised, and yet not made to die; [10] as grieved, but always rejoicing; as poor, but making many rich; as having nothing, and yet thoroughly having everything.** The first contrast connects with the preceding one, for it speaks of not being made to die. Chastised so often and so severely, it would seem that their enemies must have caused them to die long ago; but no, they are not killed, God has preserved them.

[10] Being chastised and being grieved form a pair. The enemies aim at least to cause them great grief and unhappiness. Now Paul has δέ, which conveys the idea that in reality they are not grieved at all but ever only rejoice. So he writes in Rom. 5:3: “Let us also glory in tribulation,” and in Matt. 5:12 Jesus himself calls upon us to rejoice and be exceeding glad when thus grieved.

The last two contrasts also form a pair: “as poor,” able to give nothing, beggars in fact; “as having nothing,” as poor as that. A δέ denies the poverty: “but making many rich,” — that does not seem as if the Gospel preachers were poor. Earthly wealth is no real riches, but spiritual wealth is. With it you make many rich, yet remain as rich as you are and even grow richer. “As having nothing” and thus dependent on those who have something, is denied by καί, “and yet thoroughly having all things.” Note ἔχοντες exceeded by κατέχοντες, “having in the most thorough way,” and not merely this or that but πάντα, “everything.” This indeed is the ultimate climax, and thus the list reaches its natural and proper end. “The Kingdom ours remaineth,” Luther. We literally and most decidedly have everything, for God makes all things work together for our good, Rom. 8:28. All things are our slaves, doing their utmost to serve us. Can any man possess more while here on earth?

These last contrasts Paul is supposed to have appropriated from the Cynic and the Stoic philosophers, although not a single one of these philosophers has used κατέχειν or its thought. One sighs when he reads this newer exegetical wisdom which is happy only when it can send the apostle borrowing from poor pagans.

## Homiletical Aid

The blood-bought Christian must not forget the price at which he was bought (see v. 14 to 21) . In other words, as Paul here admonishes us:

### **“Receive Not the Grace of God in Vain!”**

#### I. How blessed, — receiving God’s grace!

His pardoning love — through Christ who died for us — through the preaching of the Gospel which brings Christ to us — through faith kindled in us by the Gospel. How blessed all this possession of grace.

Equally blessed the life this grace produces in us. Paul sketches the life which he and his assistants lived by God’s grace. Repeat the main details. Blessed indeed these fruits of grace.

#### II. How sad, — receiving God’s grace in vain!

That Christ should have died in vain for you — that the Gospel, the Church, the ministry should after all mean nothing to you — that the acceptable time and blessed opportunity should pass and leave nothing in you. Can anything be sadder? That the noble examples of true ministers and Christians should fail to attract you. That you should begin well, and not continue, or fail in the end. What can be sadder? Repent, if you have been neglecting God's grace in any way. Lent is the season for repentance.

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The sacred seasons of the Church and their blessed purpose. We live our lives so easily in a careless way, thinking only of our earthly work, pleasure, gain. Lent is one of the seasons that should draw us nearer to God through the blood and the cross of our Savior.

### **“Now is the Day of Salvation.” Mark well**

#### I. The golden opportunity.

Here is all God's grace, Christ and his blood, the Gospel preached and taught, many believers, — what a day of opportunity for your soul!

Receive the grace of God, and if you have received it, then receive it anew in stronger faith and fuller knowledge. God grants opportunities in order to have them used in full.

Heed also

#### II. The finger of warning.

Many, alas, receive the grace of God in vain. They let the opportunity God makes for them slip by Unused, or indifferently used. They imagine they are able to have the day of grace whenever they are ready for it. Christians grow careless in repentance, faith, prayer, worship, and careful living, and the grace they have received slips away from them, perhaps unnoticed. “In vain” is the finger of warning.

Calamity, tragedy, if at last your verdict must be: “In vain.” Worse than crepe at the door. A repetition of “It might have been.” Worse

than if you had neVer had and tasted the grace of God.

Consider carefully

III. The stimulating examples.

They braved every danger, defied every foe, did the hardest work, with pure and noble hearts, even helped to make you and me rich for eternity. Preachers, yes, but ensamples to the flock, like priest, like people.

The examples of the grace of God received with rich — est results call to us to join the noble multitude that have followed the cross.

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Lent a call to self-examination and repentance. We need to be told a few plain facts. Thus

**When God’s Grace is Received in Vain:**

I. Then the fault is wholly yours.

God provides his grace (details as in the previous outline), sends the day of salvation, etc. There is no possible fault in him.

But the blame is yours to count his grace cheap, the acceptable day of no import, or to neglect what grace and faith you have. Do you want to be guilty?

II. Then you cannot possibly answer for it.

The very grace that now wants to save and bless you will cry out against you and any excuse you may try to make.

The very day of grace you neglected which would have secured heaven for you eternally will testify to what you did with it. Do you want to be silenced thus on the day of judgment?

III. Then the consequences will be fatal.

Here in time one may repair a loss, recover an opportunity, but not always. The tragedy of “too late.” Final loss in earthly things serious enough.

“In vain” for the soul is fatal throughout eternity. Well to ponder that. Let it drive out all spiritual sloth, indifference, etc. Let Lent thus supply a real blessing.

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Lent and this Sunday a call to repentance. We need it indeed.

### **Let Us Repeat!**

as we enter Lent and confess

- I. That we have often received the grace of God in vain.
- II. That we have often neglected our day of salvation.
- III. That the noble examples of faith have often left as cold.
- IV. That it is high time for us to amend.

# Reminiscere. 1 Thess. 4:1-7

## “Abound More and More”

The blood-bought Christian cannot receive the grace of God in vain (Invocavit); on the contrary, he must abound more and more. God’s will is his sanctification, he has called us to holiness. Bought with a great price, we are not to be slaves of sin and uncleanness. This is the Lenten text on *the Christian’s Sanctification*. It is not intended in any way to be a close parallel to the gospel for the day (Matt. 15:21-28). There is no more than this connection which runs through all the Lenten texts: if Christ were not the Christ who inspired faith in the Canaanite woman and justified that faith, the hope that we might be free from sins and grow in sanctification would be utterly in vain.

Our text begins the hortatory portion of Paul’s letter. We must remember that Paul and Silvanus had worked only about four weeks in founding the congregation in Thessalonica. Great things had indeed been accomplished during this short time, yet certainly much remained to be added. Paul now begins to take up the main things.

**As for the rest then, brethren, we request and admonish you in the Lord Jesus that, as you received from us how it is necessary for you to walk and to be pleasing to God, as also you are walking, that you abound more and more.** Δοιπόν is the adverbial accusative and refers to all that remains to be said. Thus the affectionate “brethren” is in place, matched by the fraternal verbs “we request and admonish you in the Lord,” two verbs instead of just one, in order to impress the more. To add ἐρωτῶμεν to παρακαλοῦμεν is to make the fraternal appeal prominent. The writers speak as the dearest friends of the Thessalonians. Of course, what they ask is ἐν Κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ, “in connection with the Lord Jesus,” whom the writers and the readers mutually acknowledge as the Lord who bought

them as his own with his blood, to whom they are thus devoted with heart and soul.

The readers have already received from the writers “how it is necessary for you to walk and to be pleasing to God.” Asi may express any type of necessity. Here it is the necessity involved in the relation to God through Christ, the point of which is that the Thessalonians be well pleasing to God and ever have his divine approval. Not that the writers have reason to think that the readers have already become indifferent to the Lord Jesus and thus care not whether they truly please God; the clause “as also you are walking” cuts off such an implication.

To be pleasing to God implies the Gospel motive, not the law motive. Let us preachers note that and preach accordingly. The law is to kill the old man, the flesh. Do not beat the new man with the club of the law. The Gospel stimulates the new man, the spirit. For this reason Gospel admonitions are always in place, and for this reason also true Christians never tire of hearing them. To please God is to be drawn upward to him, to please ourselves in sin is to be drawn downward into guilt and doom.

But because they received past admonitions there lies in their present repetition the thought of advancement: “that you abound more and more,” —  $\mu\tilde{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\omicron\nu$  rendered thus in our idiom.  $\iota\nu\alpha$  is repeated and is non-final, introducing an object clause. The Christian life is like a living plant, — it must unfold more and more. Even a standstill is dangerous. New converts must advance. To retrograde may mean spiritual death. This appeal to the Thessalonians is psychologically perfect. It touches the right springs of motive and does it in the right way. Paul was indeed master in this field.

[2] “For” means to explain. **For you know what orders we gave to you through the Lord Jesus.** “We gave” explains “you received.” The point, that the orders about which Paul here writes are not new, is thus emphasized. The readers “know what orders.” In the first place, there had been no omission of an order, so that now some order had to be added about which the readers had not heard before. In the second place, the readers had not forgotten an order given them. Moreover, these orders stand and cannot be changed. Progressive theologians and preachers talk about advancing in religion, but their advance is backward, not progress but a retrogression.

The writers speak about παραγγελίαι, using the word that signifies military orders that are passed on from the general through the lower commanders to the troops. We see the eminent fitness of the word. The writers only pass on what their Commander Jesus has ordered. Yet this does not mean law in place of Gospel, for Jesus himself speaks of his ἔντολαί and how our doing them shows our love to him (John 15:10:12:17). The writers gave the orders “through the Lord Jesus.” Διά does not mean ἐν. We might expect the reverse: the Lord Jesus gave them through Paul and Silas, which also would be true. Paul’s phrase does not speak about the origin of the orders, but about The medium. All these orders, some of which are now to be specified, come to us only when Jesus is preached to us and when we have been brought to believe in him. Where this has not occurred, there no orders are given or received, nor would there be sense in transmitting them. Thus the orders were given “through the Lord Jesus” as the medium.

[3] “For” now specifies. **For this is God’s will, your sanctification, that you hold yourselves away from the fornication, [4] that each of you know to acquire his own vessel in sanctification and honor, [5] not in passion of lust, like also the pagans who do not know God; etc.** The subject is “this,” and the lack of the article marks “God’s will” as the predicate. What God wants (θέλημα) is “your sanctification.” Yet the word for this is not ἁγιωσύνη, the quality of “holiness,” but ἁγιασμός (the word found only in biblical and later in ecclesiastical Greek), “sanctification,” in the passive sense; the condition brought about when one is sanctified or set apart by God, with “your” a possessive genitive. The readers please God when this condition is brought about in them by God. Paganism contained nothing even faintly comparable, nor does the world today. While ἅγιοι, “saints,” covers both our justification and our holy living as setting us apart for God, ἁγιασμός covers only the latter, often spoken of by us as “sanctification in the narrower sense,” meaning the life in good works.

The expegetical infinitives specify and state what features the writers especially have in mind: “that you hold yourselves away from the fornication, that each of you acquire his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like also the pagans who do not know God,” — all this is one thought. The present infinitive == ever to hold yourselves away, durative. “The fornication” with the article == everything that this term includes in the way of sexual impurity. The pagan world was rotten



with these vices, even as the irreligious world of today is. Hence these warnings to keep away, to flee, to be pure and clean. The old pagan views regarding sex are being spread anew.

[4] The negative thought that lies in the first infinitive is followed by the positive thought lying in the second. The translation already presents the simple meaning. The second perfect εἰδέναι is used with the sense of the present, and the thought of this infinitive as also that in κτᾶσθαι is iterative, in agreement with “each one.” The sense is that every man is to have his own wife, every woman her own husband, as Paul says in so many words in 1 Cor. 7:2. Σκεῦος, “vessel,” is a reference to a wife; so also in 1 Pet. 3:7. Κτᾶσθαι == to acquire, not to possess. Marriage is God’s institution and one of its purposes is to obviate all fornication. The writers indicate how the readers are to enter upon marriage; each person is to acquire his own vessel (the wife or the husband) “in sanctification and honor,” ἁγιασμός again, now plus τιμή. The former refers to God, the latter to men.

The objection that this direction would refer only to the unmarried and the marriageable and that most of the readers had been married for some time, is met by the fact that the writers are here opposing all fornication, are insisting on monogamic marriage entered into in the Christian way, sanctified by God and honorable in the sight of men. That marriage entered upon in this manner is to be continued accordingly the writers feel they do not need to say, nor that marriages once entered upon in the pagan manner and then conducted in that manner are to be purified by Christian sanctification and honor. The writers credit their readers with enough understanding to see these evident implications. We pass by the strange and the untenable interpretations which this passage has received, noting only that “vessel” cannot mean the person’s own body or the sexual organ, for neither of these can be “acquired.”

[5] Beside the two positives “sanctification and honor” two negatives are placed: “not in passion of lust, like also the pagans who do not know God,” and whose religion offers no restraint. The genitive is qualitative, and we may translate: “not in lustful passion.” Ἐπιθυμία is always used in the evil sense in the New Testament, and hence is translated “lust”; πάθος is a wider term and signifies “passion” in general. The objection that all pagan marriages were not prompted by lustful passion forgets that exceptions

break no rule and that Paul knew paganism rather well. To this day the ungodly world makes the love of passion the magnet for entering marriage. Our American pagans and pagan moralists know nothing higher and purer. As long as the fire of this sexual passion, misnamed “love,” burns, the marriage lasts; when this fire dies, a divorce is resorted to, also when the fire of passion finds some other object. The very entrance upon marriage is wrong, no wonder that what follows cannot be right. Even “honor” in the sight of decent men is absent.

[6] The writers continue: **that (he) do not go too far and overreach his brother in the matter of business; because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, even as also we told you in advance and testified.** From sexual sin the writers turn to the sin of dishonesty. As a linguistical feature note that the infinitive now has τό, which bars out any other but the appositional construction. In other words, we now have a second infinitive as an apposition to “your sanctification” (V. 3). Secondly, the subject is no longer finds, which is the subject of ἀπέχεσθαι, the first appositional infinitive. The subject now is an implied singular, as we see from the object “his brother.”

Robertson is one of those who maintain that adultery is here forbidden. He is bold enough to regard the infinitive with τό as denoting purpose: “in order that one do not go too far” etc., yet τό excludes purpose, and to what would the purpose be attached? And why mention “his brother,” when seducing the wife would make her break the marriage tie. Others have done much better than Robertson. They make the infinitives parallel εἰδέναι and like this infinitive appositional to ἀπέχεσθαι. But they leave τό unexplained and all the incongruities of their conception remain as incongruous as ever.

The readers are warned against this thing [τό] of going too far, of going beyond proper bounds. Epexegetical καί explains by means of a second infinitive: “and overreach his brother in the matter of business.” It is this going too far that is meant. Πράγμα is here used in the sense of a regular commercial term: “business” or “matter of business.” We may render: “in the business deal” (generic article). The whole matter of business-dealing is referred to. In πλεονεκτεῖν we have the verb derived from the noun πλεονεξία, “covetousness.” This too is never used with regard to sex.

Covetous greed in any matter of business is referred to. This applies not only to merchants, but to all who sell or buy, who hire and who work for hire, to any deal in which money changes hands. The Christian will ever be scrupulously honest and fair. By saying “his brother” Paul does not advocate the Jewish ethics which cheerfully cheats the Gentile and is honest only toward the fellow Jew. The force of this statement is the same as when we are told to love the brethren, — which never means only the brethren. This does not advocate a double standard of honesty. All Christian virtues are exercised toward the brethren, but they never stop with them. “The brother” is an example of how we are to treat all people. The Jew, the Mohammedan, and the Free Mason have their self-made ethics. That of the Mason shields only the wife and the daughter of a fellow Mason, and only when known to be such; no other woman is shielded. As for cheating, my observation is that the oath taken by a member of this lodge is not much of a protection against a rapacious fellow Mason.

This time the writers stress the law motive. They mean to place this beside the Gospel motive of v. 1. The Gospel prompts to all good, the law keeps from sin. The law with its threat is needed to crush the flesh. When the Gospel motive of love fails, there is one more motive, the terror of the law: “because the Lord is the avenger in all these things,” the ones mentioned and all others in this great class. As the 325%; he exacts justice. He does not do this in order to avenge you or me, but in order to exact justice for his own sake, since he is a holy, righteous, just Lord. This is not a quotation from the Old Testament, hence “the Lord” denotes Christ as the Judge.

All that is here stated belongs to the elementary instruction which is given to converts at the very time of their conversion. Hence the statement: “even as also we told you in advance,” namely during the four weeks in which we worked to found your congregation. “And testified” is a strong compound verb in the Greek. The teaching had been more than a mere correct telling; it had the full impressiveness of personal conviction and concern. So the true Christian teachers make their teaching a testimony of their own hearts. We thus see why this teaching is now repeated. No decline had set in in Thessalonica. But the teaching once heard is to be more deeply impressed by the repetition, is to be carefully considered and received a

second time, is to fortify us more than ever against temptation. We need constant reminding in regard even to the elementary parts of the Gospel.

[7] It is thus that the thought of v. 3 a is repeated and amplified: **For God called you not on the basis of uncleanness, but in connection with sanctification.** Therefore these reminders are necessary. Here is the Gospel motive in all its effectiveness. “God called you,” with its aorist states the fact. In the epistles καλεῖν always denotes the successful call. The readers were won to Christ by this call of God. They are in a new and blessed relation to God in consequence of this call.

But God called you “not on the basis of uncleanness, but in connection with sanctification.” The A.V. wipes out these prepositions and translates as though we had two εἰς. But οὐκ ἐπί == “not on the basis of” uncleanness == not with this understanding that your uncleanness continue. On the contrary (ἀλλά), he called you “in connection with sanctification.” Uncleanness is the opposite of sanctification, and thus is not to be restricted to sexual sins; it describes the entire pagan life. More must be said, and this in line with the difference in the prepositions. “Uncleanness” is the state of the pagan life, but “sanctification” (*hagiasmos* for the third time) is the work of God. Hence, you were called not on the basis of that old filthy state, as if the call could possibly condone that state, but you were called in connection with (ἐν) this work that God wants to do in you, setting you apart from all the filthiness of the world to be his very own. Every word is most exact, and when read as written the thought is impressive indeed.

## Homiletical Aid

The Christian is blood-bought. Free from the guilt and damnation of sin, he must be free from its hold on him. Sanctification is the theme for Lent. We must

### “Abound More and More.”

- I. We have made a beginning
  1. “Brethren.”
  2. “You have received how you ought to walk.”

3. "You know what commandments."
  4. "God hath called you."
  5. The foundation has been well laid.
- II. We must steadily progress.
1. The beginning demands progress and completion.
  2. We were called not to remain in the old state ("uncleanness"), but to submit to God's work ("sanctification").
  3. In pleasing God we must abound more and more.
- III. Nothing dare hinder or stop us.
1. No sexual sins. Lent is the season to warn us against the worldly practices that foster them, the dance, the salacious films. Youth and wedding in purity, not in shame and blame.
  2. No sins of dishonesty. Greed, overreaching, taking advantage of, and worse sins in this respect.
  3. The Lord the Avenger, if we fail to hear and heed.
- IV. We must reach the goal.
1. God's work of sanctification completed at our death. We enter heaven perfectly holy.
  2. He alone reaches this goal who lets God keep him in faith and sanctify him now more and more.

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Lent and sanctification. Look at the cross and see how God hates sin. There the price to buy us free from the guilt of sin; and there too the power to keep us free from sinning.

### **The Lenten Call to Sanctification.**

- I. Under the cross see the abominableness of the old sins. They are still all around us in the world. Turn from them in disgust!
- II. Under the cross remember the threat against the flesh. God's vengeance. This to crush our flesh.

- III. Under the cross thank God for his Gospel call. It made you his own by faith in Christ and his cross, and took you out of the vileness of the world. Realize it fully.
  - IV. Under the cross let God sanctify you more and more. Fill you with all that pleases him, free you from all that displeases him and would ruin you.
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I note that various outlines speak about sanctifying ourselves, about our being slack in the work of sanctification. Yet *hagiasmos*, found three times in the text, is not to be regarded as a middle, it does not speak about self-consecration, but speaks about what God does in us. We would be wretched sanctifiers indeed. No man ever pulled himself up by the straps of his boots.

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Reminiscere! — “Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy loving kindnesses: for they have been ever of old.” The Introit for this Sunday.

### **Remembrance Sunday.**

- I. Remember the call that has started you!
  - II. Remember the Gospel that should move you!
  - III. Remember the vengeance that means to deter you!
  - IV. Remember the instruction you have received!
  - V. Remember the work God wants to do in you (*hagiasmos*)!
  - VI. Remember your heavenly goal!
- 

### **What does the Apostolic Admonition to Abound More and More in Holiness Teach Us?**

- I. That he alone is a Christian who has made a beginning in holiness.

II. That he alone remains a Christian who seeks ever to abound more and more in holiness.

C. F. W. Walther, *Epistel Postille*.

# Oculi. Eph. 5:1-9

## “Walk as Children of Light”

This text has been fittingly chosen for the Lenten season, referring as it does to Christ who “did love you and gave himself for us as an offering and a slaughter-sacrifice to God for an odor of sweet smell.” Yet we remember that the Sundays occurring during the Lenten season are not counted as a part of Lent, but remain little Easter festivals. Hence we do not center on the Passion and preach a Lenten sermon; we let this reference to Christ’s sacrifice recall to us that we Christians are bought by the holy blood of Christ and must live accordingly, namely also as the children of light who have escaped from the darkness and the deeds of the darkness. We are God’s dear children.

The gospel for the day, Luke 11:14-28, seems to be in sharp contrast with the epistle. Jesus is slandered as working in conjunction with Beelzebub and he himself speaks about the devil and the demons. Yet here too we see that close correspondence is unnecessary. If Christ were not what the gospels show him to be, (in the gospel for this day “the Stronger One”) we ’could not be what the epistles ask us to be.

Our text contains the major part of Paul’s admonition against filthiness (v. 1-14). The apostle does more than to name and to forbid the sins against the Sixth. Commandment. He places them into a setting of thought that should make them utterly impossible for Christians. **Be therefore imitators of God as beloved children! [2] And be walking in love, even as also Christ did love you, and gave himself for us as an offering and a slaughter-sacrifice to God for an odor of sweet smell.**

In 4:32 we are told to forgive as God forgives, i.e. we are to imitate him. Now the apostle bids us generally to imitate God. The admonition is a natural one. Children imitate their father, and we are God’s children. The image of God is to be restored in us, and that means that we shall become



more and more like God. We can be only “imitators,” we can produce only copies in ourselves, for God is perfection, and not only perfection, his perfection is coup-led with infinitude, and we shall always be finite. Μιμηταί suggests likeness and similarity, not complete duplication. We shall always be dependent on God for our character and our conduct, he depends on no one.

Be God’s imitators “as beloved children” states both the reason for our imitating God and the motive for doing so. The verbal has the passive sense: we are beloved of God, — he loves us because he is our Father. This close relation to him underlies the admonition. God’s love to his children is different in manifestation from his love to men generally, for he is able to bestow a large number of gifts upon his children which he could not think of offering to others. “Children,” τέκνα, is the right word, since it connotes dearness, immaturity, and the natural bent of little ones to imitate; “sons” would connote maturity and conscious activity. Being “beloved children,” the very love we receive from our Father should move us to please him by doing as he does.

[2] Being beloved of our Father, we will respond with love toward him. Our imitation will take the form of love: “And be walking in love, even also” etc. To walk in love means to have the love toward God in the background of all our thoughts, our motives, our words, and our deeds. Love is most strongly emphasized: it recurs in the verbal “beloved,” in the noun “love,” and in the verb “did love.” Ἀγάπη is the love of understanding and comprehension coupled with corresponding purpose, — see the explanations in Rom. 12:9, Second Sunday after Epiphany and in Rom. 13:8, Fourth Sunday after Epiphany. Unless we understand what “love” signifies, Paul’s meaning will not be clear to us. We are truly to know God and our relation to him, — there is to be no fiction about this knowledge; and corresponding with this knowledge we are to purpose regarding our lives what agrees with this knowledge. This is to be our *agape*.

The model for this love of ours is the love of Christ, who walked as man here on earth and manifested perfect love: “even as also Christ did love you, and gave himself for us as an offering and a slaughter sacrifice to God for an odor of sweet smell.” The similarity between our love and Christ’s lies in the love, not in the nature of the act by which Christ manifested his love. We cannot die in Christ’s stead, we cannot ransom him. He needs no

deeds like this on our part. Yet we can love him as 1 John 4:19 states: “We love, because he first loved us.” The aorist ἠγάπησεν is historical and refers to the act of love manifested when Jesus laid down his life for us. This love of Jesus is the same as God’s love to us, because God gave his Son to die for us, John 3:16.

“And” is explicative; “he gave himself” expounds “he loved you.” Read as constituting one thought: “he gave himself for us as an offering and a slaughter sacrifice,” and “to God” belongs to this unit. We see the deliberate act of giving himself in Gethsemane when Jesus literally placed himself into the hands of his enemies. He there gave himself to God as the sacrifice to be slain according to God’s determinate counsel and foreknowledge (Acts 2:23). Here is the voluntariness of Christ’s sacrifice, and it was this that made it such ’a sweet odor. The rationalistic objection that it is wrong to make one man die for others recoils upon the heads of the rationalists, for they pervert Christ’s act. No one made him give up his life. Freely to die for others is ever a noble act, and in all the world none nobler ever was done than when Jesus died for us abominable sinners.

Ἐν ἡμῶν ἵκεν == “in our stead,” no matter how you may translate: “for us,” “in our behalf,” “for our sake or benefit.” The phrase occurs a number of times. Rationalists of former days always denied this meaning and eliminated the idea of substitution. But all the papyri now cry out against them. Ἐν is the very preposition for the idea of substitution. Read Robertson’s grammar and his little volume *The minister and his Greek New Testament* 35 etc. Ἐν itself does not mean “instead of,” but means “over.” “Instead of” is the resultant meaning in all of the many instances in which an action could not benefit another unless it were done in his stead. Whoever still denies this meaning stultifies himself and deserves no reply.

The double predication emphasizes: “as an offering and a slaughter-sacrifice.” “Offering” is derived from φέρω, “to bring,” and thus points out the fact that when Christ “gave himself” he brought the offering. “Slaughter-sacrifice” is derived from φύω, “to make go up in smoke” and conveys the idea that the offering referred to involved the victim’s death. Either word is at times used in the general sense of sacrifice, but when they are used together as here the words retain their first meaning. Christ died on the cross (“blood,” 1:7; 2:13; “cross,” 2:16). We reproduce the idea by translating θυσία with “slaughter-sacrifice.”

“For an odor of sweet smell” may be an instance of the adjectival genitive: “a sweet-odored odor” (A.V.: “a sweet-smelling savor”). Both nouns are derived from ὀσμή, “to emit an odor,” in fact our word “odor” is a derivative. Paul has this combination also in Phil. 4:18. The Hebrew is *reach nichoach*, “odor of soothing,” and Koenig, *Woertb.* 276 states that “soothing” is *ein Ersatz von* “*versoehrend*,” “*angenehm*.” An odor that pleases, reconciling us to God. Thus incense was burned and the burning of the sacrifice also sent up smoke and an odor. Not these physical odors of the Jewish sacrifices pleased God, but the spiritual condition of the persons bringing the sacrifices. On this matter the language of the Old Testament is very strong: Lev. 26:31; Amos v. 21-22; Ps. 51:16-17. The climax of the evidence of Christ’s love is his sacrificial, voluntary, substitutional, expiatory death.

Here we meet “the theories” of the atonement, and we may be asked to which theory we subscribe. As the very word “theory” indicates, all “theories of inspiration” as well as all “theories of the atonement” are uncertain human ideas. The old Socinians (the original rationalists) were determined to eliminate the expiation and the substitution, and thus made Christ’s suffering and death a noble example and an instance of martyrdom, — our modernists have not advanced beyond this fossilized idea. Von Hofmann is the man who has contaminated many theological writers in many ways. He makes Christ our representative with God, but his death was endured only in order to make him an acceptable and well-pleasing representative. So the substitution is again removed. Discard everything that comes as “a theory” and invent no “theory.” Abide by the facts as they are recorded in Scripture: the death was voluntary, sacrificial, expiatory, substitutional, and thus sufficient, as attested by God’s raising Jesus from the dead.

It is not accidental that Paul here writes about the supreme sweetness of the odor of Christ’s sacrifice when he warns us against filthiness on our part. The love of God brought forth such a pure, sweet sacrifice for us, — can we, who by this sacrifice were made God’s beloved children, on our part return a life reeking and stinking with vile odor? It is thus that the idea of *agape* or love is colored and individualized by the context into which it is here placed for the apostle’s purpose.

[3] The apostles generally lay a broad, massive foundation on Which to rest some individual and specific admonition. It is well to copy them in this respect. The particular admonitions now follow. **Now fornication, and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as befits saints; [4] also indecency, and silly talk or wittiness, things not proper; on the contrary, rather giving of thanks.**

Δέ is continuative. “Fornication” == prostitution in all its forms. “All uncleanness or covetousness” form a pair often placed together in Scripture. “All uncleanness,” used in connection with “fornication” refers to sexual impurity of every type or form. The ancient and the modern world are full of this filth, and thousands find the smell of it sweeter than the smell of roses and orange blossoms. Covetousness is at times treated as a form of idolatry, but here it is listed among the filthy sins, even as we still speak of “filthy lucre.”

“Let it not even be named among you, as befits saints” does not forbid the mention of these sins and vices by Christians, for Paul here mentions them himself. Nor is the meaning that Christians are not to speak of these vices with pleasure and avidity, for this idea alters the thought. Paul means that none of these vices is ever to occur among Christians, necessitating our speaking of them. “As befits saints,” ἄγιοι, persons separated unto God by justification and sanctification, repeats the idea of “beloved children.” Christ died to deliver us out of this filth, — how then can we ever return to it?

[4] Paul follows a descending scale. The three following terms are rare Greek words, and in the New Testament *hapaxlegomena*. The first is “indecency,” nastiness, *Scheusslichkeit*, probably referring to speech. The second is “silly or vapid talk,” coupled here with wittiness, *elegante Witzelei*, salacious jokes and quirks. Worldly men love nasty stories, and keep throwing out silly, vile, disgusting remarks.

The translation: “things not proper,” assumes the reading: τὰ οὐκ ἀνήκοντα, the substantivized neuter participle, this neuter an apposition to the preceding feminine nouns. Οὐκ negates the one term and is quite proper in Greek. Some read: ἃ οὐκ ἀνῆκεν, a relative clause with the imperfect to indicate an obligation and a propriety that have not been met, a construction

a little difficult for the English and the German mind. The sense is practically the same.

Instead of lascivious and loose talk and jests, the words and the thoughts that ought to come most readily to the lips of the Christian are words of thanksgiving. In other words, the consciousness of being “beloved children” of God, surrounded by his love, wholly separated unto him as “saints,” should never leave us. We walk amid countless blessings, should not our hearts overflow with gratitude? We are thus lifted far above the filth which delights the world. Some would make εὐχαριστία mean “graciousness of speech,” in order to get a direct opposite to the unfitting speech which we are to avoid. Paul’s thought runs much deeper than such a verbal opposite would indicate.

**[5] For this you know, realizing that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor coveter, which means idolater, has inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and God.**

We regard ἵστε as an Attic indicative: “you know,” and the participle γινώσκοντες as making this knowledge personal: “realizing.” The knowledge is so elementary that Paul merely appeals to it, and does not impart it by an imperative: “Know!” Regarding the grammatical difficulties see my Interpretation of this letter. It takes little Christian knowledge indeed to know intellectually (οἶδα), and to realize personally (γινώσκω) that not a single one of the sinners here named has any part in the inheritance of the Kingdom. All of them are outside, Rev. 22:15.

Ὁ ἐστιν == the word “coveter” means “idolater,” therefore ὅ is neuter. The coveter is like a pagan, he gives his heart to another god, Mammon. Matt. 6:24. On the Kingdom as the rule of Christ’s grace, wholly unlike earthly kingdoms, see Gal. v. 21, Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity. We inherit this Kingdom because we are the children of God. Thus we are princes and kings in this Kingdom, not subjects. We rule with Christ. Eventually we shall rule with him in glory. See my *Kings and Priests* on the entire subject.

Paul mentions the King of this Kingdom with the genitive: τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ Θεοῦ. Does this refer to one Person or does it refer to two? The answer cannot be drawn from our English translation, we must know the Greek. Then too we must know the *a priori* conviction of the rationalists and

modernists whose dogmatic denies the deity of Christ at any cost. As far as we are concerned it makes no difference whatever whether Christ is here called “God” or not, for the Scriptures everywhere proclaim his deity. Yet when men insist that linguistically Christ is here not called “God,” we too look at the linguistics. Linguistically two designations following one article denote one person. Even if we had a second article only one person might be meant. The linguistics are here against the modernists. Their claim to being scientific and scholarly is not borne out at this point, where the question is one of simple Greek. The subject is discussed more fully in my *Interpretation of Ephesians*.

**[6] Let no one deceive you with empty words! For because of these things comes the wrath of God upon the sons of the disobedience.** Here lies the danger. These sins have their apologists, even their defenders among “the sons of the disobedience.” In the ancient Gentile world sexual vices were considered natural and blameless, and the modern worldly world follows the same deception, — nature requires these indulgences, they are innocent pleasures, at the worst pardonable weaknesses. But these are “empty words,” there is not a word of truth in them. To believe such words and to act on them is to build on a shadow.

What is the fact? “Because of these things comes the wrath of God upon the sons of the disobedience.” So innocent are these vices. The verb has the emphasis: “comes the wrath,” blazing forth at last in awful judgment, here in this life already, and especially at the final day of judgment. While terms like “wrath” are anthropomorphic and anthropopathic, they express realities in God. His wrath is the punitive reaction of his holiness and righteousness against sin. Considerations of longsuffering grace and mercy hold back God’s wrath. But when sin overflows and literally challenges God, his holy and righteous hand strikes the sinner down. “The sons of the disobedience” refers to the definite disobedience of Adam and Eve, of which these “sons” are the product and as such “sons” they take their stand on this disobedience by repeating it. While unbelief is also called disobedience, here “the disobedience” is historical and its sons perpetuate it.

**[7] Therefore he not their partners!** Their συμμέτοχοι, supporting and abetting them; μετά, in company with them; ἔχω, adhering and holding to them. To be their partners is to suffer the wrath that they call down upon

themselves. This negative involves a positive: remain away from them. If they had some disease like the smallpox, we would readily shun infecting association with them. Being moral and spiritual, their disobedience is a thousand times worse.

[8] Why complete separation? **For you were at one time darkness, however (you are) light in the Lord. As children of light (ever) walk! [9] For the fruit of this light (is) in all goodness and righteousness and truth.** The emphasis is on the words that are placed forward, ἦτε... νῦν, “you were... now,” hence in the Greek no copula is needed in the second clause. How can the Ephesians turn back to what they have forsaken? Once they were “darkness” (no article, qualitative). Darkness was their nature. This is not mere ignorance, it is hostility to light. We are darkness when “the darkness,” this dread power of hell controls us. Now the Ephesians are “light” (again-qualitative). Light is their nature, Matt. 5:14. They are also called the children of light. It is “the light,” the divine, saving power that comes from Christ, “the Light,” which has made them what they are. Light “in the Lord” means “light in union and communion with the Lord, ‘the Light.’” Not to be partakers of the sons of the disobedience is (positive) ever to keep walking as the children of light, born of light. 2 Cor. 4:6.

[9] We may place the “for” clause in parenthesis. In the articulated τοῦ φωτός the article is that of previous reference. Yes, the light of which Paul speaks is a power, hence it has products which figuratively may be called fruit. “The fruit of this light,” (not “of the Spirit,” A.V.) is manifested in three fields, “in all (forms of) goodness and (in all forms of) righteousness, and (in all forms of) truth.” These three are not exclusive, for the deeds to which they refer are marked by goodness, and at the same time by righteousness, and again by truth. “Goodness” is more than benignity, *Guetigkeit* (Luther), for it includes all genuine moral excellence whether in relation to God or to men. “Righteousness” adds the forensic quality, when God passes judgment and pronounces our deeds of light right and free from all blame.

These qualities are the reverse of those emphasized by the modern moralists who teach that what is good for the herd, the herd has in its evolutionary progress come to approve as “right,” and what damages the herd, the herd condemns and punishes. This herd-morality knows no divine

Judge and, of course, no divine and unchangeable standards of right and wrong. Like a mass of cattle the herd decides.

Paul's circle is closed by "truth," verity, reality, namely moral and spiritual reality as offered in God's Word, the opposite of all lies, deceit, pretense, ignorance. Men go wrong morally because "truth" is not in them, hence their fruit is not "in all truth." It is astounding to note how all moral obliquity and impurity lacks truth, just as it forms the opposite of goodness and righteousness. Can the standards of morality progress? Many contend that they can and actually do progress. At times this judgment is due to illusion, confusing the standards themselves with our conception of what they really are. For one age may know these standards more perfectly than another age. Not that the later ages always mark an advance in this regard. The standards are divine and in themselves can change no more than goodness, righteousness, and truth.

## **Homiletical Aid**

Christ — Christian; joined to Christ and made one with him; possessing the fruits of his work; shaping our whole life accordingly.

### **The Central Power in the Christian's Life.**

- I. The power that shapes your life as a Christian. This is Christ and the sacrifice he has made for us.
  1. The greatness of his love.
  2. The sacrifice of himself on the cross.
  3. The substitution for us, saving us.
  4. A sweet-smelling savor, satisfying God and reconciling us.
  5. This power at the basis of our lives, changing us from what we were or otherwise would be to what by the grace of God we now are.
- II. The life as shaped by this power.



1. In the first place we ourselves are completely changed. Once the sons of the disobedience (of Adam), now God's beloved children — saints — light in the Lord and children of light. We are saved from sin, -cleansed, made pure like light and placed in the Kingdom of light. Rejoice in your glorious position!
2. All this manifests itself in the conduct and the life.
  - a. Imitators of God as his beloved children — walk in love — doing what befits us as saints — walking as children of light — giving thanks to God. This effect must follow. The folly of trying to have Christ and his sacrifice without this effect.
  - b. Fornication, etc., not once occurring in our congregation — neither filthiness, etc. — all of us recognizing the true character of this group of sins, which serve here as samples of the life of darkness and disobedience.
  - c. We refuse to be deceived — or to be made partakers of the sons of the disobedient, to share their guilt and punishment. We have no illusions about the wrath of God and about its terrors for the ungodly.

Conclusion: The life we should attain by the blessed power of Christ is one in which no gross or known sin appears, in which the Christian virtues are apparent as fruits of Christ's love.

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The blood theology spurned. Yet the cross bears the noblest sacrifice ever made.

### **The Sweet-Smelling Odor of Christ's Sacrifice.**

- I. It rose to heaven. From Golgotha.
  1. Christ's love made it so sweet.
  2. His voluntary sacrifice.
  3. His substitution for us.

4. His expiation for our sins.
  5. Its sufficiency with God for all men.
- II. It fills our hearts. We are now
1. Beloved children of God.
  2. Saints separated unto God.
  3. Heirs of Christ's Kingdom.
  4. Light in the Lord and the children of light.
- III. It makes sweet our lives.
1. Freed from the stench of sins. Examples from the Sixth and the Ninth Commandments. Fornication gross and fine, but they smell alike. Covetousness as idolatry. We are not deceived. We flee from participation. We want no connection with the sons of the disobedience and the wrath awaiting them.
  2. We want the fruit of the light: goodness, not evil; righteousness, not condemnation; truth, not the lies of deception.

Let your life ever exhale this heavenly odor!

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### **Walk as Children of Light!**

- I. What must be done?
- II. What must we shun? From M. Loy, — brief and neat.

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### **The Great Cleavage, Made by the Sacrifice of Christ.**

- I. A sweet-smelling savor — a foul stench. Does the one attract, the other repel you?
- II. Imitators of God — imitators of the world. Do you want to be like the crowd about you, or like the God of love above you?

- III. Sons of the disobedience — children of light. These challenge God, those are pure as light.
- IV. Fornication and covetousness — goodness, righteousness, truth. Samples of the wickedness — the field of all good works.
- V. Wrath — love. The terrors of the one, against which no deception avails, and the blessedness of the other which no tongue can fully describe.

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### **The Children of Light**

- I. Have escaped the darkness and its deadly power through God's love and Christ's sacrifice.
- II. Are enlightened and undeceived by the light of the Word, knowing both the love of God and his wrath, and the emptiness of all defense of sin.
- III. Made pure, they keep unstained, avoiding the filth of the world and the partnership with the disobedient, cultivating the fruit of the light in all goodness etc.
- IV. Abide in the Kingdom of Christ, as children and heirs, rich, happy, blessed.

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Introduction: Our supreme need the expiation for our sins, forgiveness of sins, and by no means only a perfect example to copy. — When we are justified and made God's children, then indeed comes the call:

#### **“Be Followers of God!”**

- I. Be followers of God and walk in Love!
- II. Be followers of God and shun impurity and covetousness!
- III. Be followers of God and let no man deceive you with vain words.

G. S. in \_Magazin\_etc. vol. 8.

# Laetare. Gal. 4:21-31

## “Children of the Free”

By means of the history of Sarah and Hagar Paul illustrates the fact that “we are children of promise,” “not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.” Paul presents the fact and wants all of us, whom Christ has purchased with his blood, to realize the full import of this fact. The cross of Christ is of no avail for us if we are still “under law,” not free from its claims, demands, curse, and penalty. “Children of the Free,” as such we comply with the name of the Sunday: Laetare! “Rejoice!”

Our text regarding the Children of the Free is quite fitting after the text regarding the Children of the Light. Next follows the text on “His Own Blood,” which with the Palm Sunday text on Christ’s Humiliation and his Exaltation dominates the Passion Season. The gospel for the day is John 6:1-15, the feeding of the five thousand, the substance of which is that Jesus is the Bread of Life. There is no direct connection between the gospel and the epistle. Each is a link in its own chain, as we saw this in the case of the texts for the Epiphany season. The essential connection is this: if Christ were not what the texts for the Lenten season reveal him to be, we who are Christians could never be what these Lenten epistle texts say concerning us.

Paul’s use of the history of Hagar has been attacked as “rabbinical.” Yet the attack shows that it is made without understanding what the rabbinical method of treating Scripture really is. Paul’s presentation of this historical illustration is not merely negative, for the appeal is powerfully positive. He does not convert the history into allegory. The history remains history, for only as historical fact has it the power of conviction which the apostle needs. But this Paul does, he brings out God’s own thoughts, embedded in the history, as they teach and instruct us Christians for all time. This is entirely beyond both the old and the new rabbis. It is divine reality. How the Old Testament histories ought to be read, not superficially for their mere

externals, but for their real, inner content, Paul shows in various places, notably in Rom. 4 (Abraham), Rom 5:12 etc. (Adam and the patriarchs before Moses), also Gal. 3:16 (Abraham's having the covenant hundreds of years before Moses and the law).

**Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not hear the Law?** Paul never addresses the Judaizers who have invaded Galatia; he disdains to do so. Here he addresses such of the Galatians as have been partially persuaded by the Judaizers. Paul calls them “you who want to be under law,” who are beginning to think that “law” is a means of grace that will gain salvation. Our versions darken the sense by not distinguishing νόμος, “law” in general, from ὁ Νόμος, “the Law” in the sense of the Torah, the Pentateuch, “Moses” (2 Cor. 3:15; John v. 46). The question is not whether these people meant to be under the law and have read this same law. The question is how they can possibly want to be under anything whatever in the nature of law after they have read the Pentateuch with its illuminating histories.

Of course, these people all hear “the Law.” The books of Moses were constantly read in the synagogues, where these people had heard them before their conversion. The Pentateuch was divided into regular lections called *parashas* and the other Old Testament books, chiefly the Prophets, were divided into lections called *haphthamoth*. Until the New Testament canon was formed, the early Christian churches adopted this style of Scripture reading for their services. Our present gospel and epistle lections for each Sunday and each Church festival continue this ancient Jewish practice.

[22] With γάρ Paul introduces one of the lections Which he had in mind. **For it has been written** (perfect tense: and is thus permanently on record), **Abraham got two sons, one from the slave-woman, and one from the free.** Paul sketches briefly the well known facts. Ἔσχεν is an aorist, punctiliar: “he got two sons,” not “he had.” A παιδίσκη was always a slave girl or woman. Such was Hagar. The point indicated is not that the one mother was not a wife, while the other was, which is quite true, but that the one was a slave whose son therefore was born into slavery, while the other woman was free, her son also free, — the mother in each case, not the father, determining the status of the children.

[23] Continuative ἄλλά carries the sketch forward: **Now the one from the slave-woman has been born in (mere) flesh-fashion, but the one from the free by way of promise.** In v. 22 Paul states the difference between the status of the two mothers; now, still more important, he adds the difference between the births themselves. The one birth followed the common ordinary norm, there was ordinary sexual cohabitation, consequent conception, and in due course the birth. It was all κατὰ σάρκα, κατὰ indicating the norm. In the case of the other birth there was an intervention. It was brought about δι' ἐπαγγελίας, “through promise.” It could not have occurred κατὰ σάρκα because of the age of the parents and the sterility of the mother, Abraham being 100 years old, Sarah 90. What was humanly impossible, the birth of a child, God’s promise made possible. We must note the tense of γεγέννηται. It is not a simple aorist to indicate two historical facts, but a perfect “has been born,” the two births remaining thus to this day, each with its peculiar significance, which also Paul now brings out.

[24] **Things of this character have been spoken as conveying another meaning.** ἄτινα == “things Of this nature or character,” and signifies more than the mere ἃ, “which thing” (our versions). There is an entire class of such exceptional things, and all of them are spoken about in the same way. We have the periphrastic perfect tense ἐστὶν ἀλληγορούμενα. This verb contains ἄλλο, the adjective “other thing,” not something “different” or heterogeneous, but something analogous and homogeneous. We reproduce the meaning of the verb: “have been spoken as conveying another meaning,” — remember ἄτινα, not the *words* of Moses have been so spoken, but *the things themselves* which he has recorded, have been most properly expressed in such a way. These things are like a shell which shelters its natural richer kernel. The perfect tense conveys the truth that all things of this nature carry their additional significance permanently. Once stated, the additional meaning remains for all future time.

It is not Paul who invents this added meaning, nor does God invent it. According to their very nature (ἄτινα) all such things bear in themselves their ἄλλο, their “other thing,” namely their corresponding significance. The events are not merely an illustration of something else. There is nothing accidental, fortuitous, adventitious about the correspondence. The other thing is not an abstraction of the original events. The only difference is the fact that the original events happened first, and thus may be viewed entirely

by themselves, just as we view events devoid of further content. But when the ἄλλο comes to be, one can see that it is indeed of the very same nature, and can speak of it accordingly. Luther translates the sense very adequately: *die Worte bedeuten etwas*, which might better be changed to: *solche Sachen bedenten etwas*.

We cannot approve the translation: “Which things are an allegory” (A.V.), and: “Which things contain an allegory” (R.V.). Nor can we say that Paul “allegorizes.” The ancient Rabbis were awful allegorizers, so was Philo. To them nothing in Scripture meant what the words state. Everything meant what the allegorizers imagined it to mean. Their allegories dissipated the sense of Scripture. What the fancy of these men distilled from the Scriptures, that they taught as the true meaning. No man could guess what this would be. The ordinary man finds that he cannot begin to understand what the Bible says; he must wait till the allegorizer tells him. This procedure has about it an air of mystery, of profound learning, of deep spirituality; but it is nearly altogether fancy, mostly unwholesome. Solid Scripture is turned into curling vapor. Paul does not here use the verb ἀλληγορεῖν with such a meaning.

Some preachers of the present day do the same, only on a smaller scale, because they take only scraps of texts and allegorize some expression found in them. Thus Matt. 8:1: “When he was come down from the mountain” has been allegorized into the call: “Come down from the mountain!” and Seminary graduates were told \_to come down from the mountain top of theology when they preach. Yet compare Matt. v. 1: “He went up into a mountain” to preach the famous Sermon on the Mount. Instead of Scripture the hearer gets this empty chaff of allegory. Paul is not using such an allegory. Nor is he using type and antitype. All types are prophetic. Paul simply states the Scripture facts, the one set of facts reflected in the other set, because they are of the same nature: mere flesh in the case of the birth from Hagar, and thus slavery — the same slavery in all’ those whose birth is no better; divine promise in the case of the birth from Sarah, and thus liberty — the same liberty in all Whose birth is connected with divine promise.

How this is to be understood Paul begins to explain. The two mothers, the one the slave-woman who has given birth only in fleshly fashion, the other the free woman who has given birth by way of promise alone, present



an *allo* or “something else.” **For these are two covenants, the one from Mount Sinai, giving birth into slavery, which as such is Hagar.** Αὐταὶ means the two women as mothers. To say that they “are” two covenants is to speak intensively, yet Hagar could bring forth only slave-children and none other, and any child of Sarah was free because of its birth from her. The two covenants are also mothers and they bring forth children, and in the same way, the one covenant cannot possibly produce anything but slaves, the other produces free children. Paul describes only the one covenant; he lets his readers describe the other.

When the word διαθήκη, here used in the sense of “covenant,” is applied to Mount Sinai and to the law brought from the Mount to Israel by Moses, this is using the word “covenant” in a wider and a looser sense, for the covenant made with Abraham was in the full sense a covenant filled with promise, while the Sinaitic law was only a divine “disposition” or requirement intended for the Jews (see. 3:19, Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity). The promise and the disposition are paired, because they both bring forth children. But the law-dispensation came much later than the covenant promise (3:17), was only temporary, only stirred up sin, and was thus quite inferior. Ἦτις like ἄτινα is qualitative: “Which as such” is Hagar. Not Mt. Sinai in general, nor even the Sinaitic law as law is Hagar; but this system of bringing forth only “for slavery.” On this point and on this alone the identification is made, — as we have said, Hagar and Sinai as mothers are of the same nature, both producing and able to produce only slaves.

[25] The correct text reads: τὸ γὰρ Σινᾶ ὄρος ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ. **For the Sinai mountain is in Arabia.** This is far more than a geographical remark. After Abraham expelled Hagar and Ishmael they went south to Beersheba, and when he was grown Ishmael dwelt in Paran, the territory of Sinai. Sinai is thus connected with Hagar’s son and her descendants, and Arabia, in which Sinai lies, is *not connected with the promise*, as all Bible readers know. The very place where the law was given, Arabia, Sinai, connected it with the slave-woman Hagar and with her son Ishmael, born “to slavery.” The identification of Hagar with Sinai, with the law and slavery, is thus justified.

Our versions have τὸ Ἄγαρ: “For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia.” The sense is that the word Hagar == Mt. Sinai. Yet the word Hagar means *separavit, reliquit*, “flight,” and Sinai means “connected with the coast-

strip Sin,” and the name is used to designate the peak Musa. Paul is not playing on the etymological meaning or on the sound of words. This reading must be dropped.

Paul continues: **and is in one row (or line) with the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery together with her children.** In our idiom we should say: Sinai-mountain is on a level with the present Jerusalem, — namely as a producer of slaves. Paul speaks historically: “this present Jerusalem.” Although it lay in the land of promise, it had rejected Christ, it clung to the law and to legalism as the way to salvation, and was thus on the level with, or in one row with Sinai. The equality between them is the fact that both are “in slavery,” each “with her children.” This applies to all present legalists and to all present legalism. Ever the product is slaves.

Yet there is this to say: Hagar and Ishmael came from Abraham’s house. Abraham circumcised the boy. I would not say that he and his mother disbelieved the promise they heard in Abraham’s house. Later the Ishmaelites lost it. Sinai had Moses who wrote about Christ (John 5:46-47), who himself was a type of Christ (Deut. 18:15 and 18). So also the Jerusalem of Paul’s day had and that of our own day has Moses’ writings about Christ and the entire Old and New Testament. Still Jerusalem bears the stamp of Hagar and of slavery, not of Sarah and of liberty. She is entirely for law, not for the promise. In this connection distinguish, first the line of Christ’s ancestors (Matt. 1), a line of individuals only, next the line of saints or believers in the promise, in the promise lately duly fulfilled. Yet the promise was not attached to Sinai-mountain. Paul is dealing with simple historical facts and with nothing else, yet he is also giving us the *allo*, the real inwardness embedded in these facts.

[26] Instead of writing out the parallel to Sarah etc., Paul at once takes us to “the Jerusalem above”: **But the Jerusalem above is free, who as such is mother of us,** — another qualitative ἡτις. The present Jerusalem implies another Jerusalem in a higher sense; it is “the Jerusalem above.” Let it be noted that no other city has had its name used in this way. Jerusalem == City of Peace. This city, the capital of the Holy Land, was to be the center and the source of peace and salvation for the whole world, a type and a symbol of heaven itself, which is thus called “the new Jerusalem.” But the earthly Jerusalem failed miserably. Hear the cry of Jesus: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!” Matt. 23:37-38. Soon the city was to sink into ruin. Its own

name “Jerusalem” testifies against it. For almost two millenniums a curse has rested upon it. This present Jerusalem has lost the promise and clings to law. Hence her place is taken by “the Jerusalem above,” where the fulfiller of the Abrahamic promise himself dwells in glory.

Motherhood is the thought connected with both Jerusalems, the one giving birth to nothing but slaves of the law, the other free and giving birth to free sons and free daughters. The latter is our mother. We are heaven-born and yet for a time dwell on earth. As our mother “above” she is heavenly, and yet she also dwells on earth with us. The Jerusalem above is the *Una Sancta*. We must note the appeal lying in Μητηρ ἡμῶν. Would you desert your mother, this free and noble mother, and adopt Hagar and Sinai as your mother?

[27] Γάρ corroborates what has just been said about “the Jerusalem above” as “our mother.” In Is. 54:1 the prophet addresses Israel after the Messiah, the great *Ebed Yahveh*, has died and risen again (ch. 53). **For it has been written** (perfect tense: and remains thus on record): **“Rejoice, thou sterile that dost not bear! Break forth and shout, thou that dost not travail! For many more the children of the desolate than of her having the husband.”** The prophet is addressing the Christian Church, after Christ has redeemed it and has been exalted. He bids her be happy and shout because of her many children. All of the imagery is taken from Sarah and Hagar, the very two here used by Paul, and the chief point in the imagery is stressed by Paul, namely the motherhood.

“Thou sterile” == Sarah, and “that dost not bear” emphasizes Sarah’s long sterility. So does “thou that dost not travail.” Hers seemed a hopeless case. Yet she is to rejoice because she shall have many more children than the one having the husband, namely Hagar. Not that Hagar had Abraham as her husband. She had Abraham only for the purpose of copulation which was arranged by Sarah when the latter despaired of an heir. Hagar was to serve as Sarah’s proxy. In spite of such interference God’s promise was fulfilled.

All believers in Christ are Sarah’s spiritual children. She bore only Isaac, Hagar only Ishmael, yet count Sarah’s family today, all these many believers. The legalistic sons of Sinai and of the present Jerusalem cannot

compare with them in number. From Isaiah's words we see where Paul obtained his insight into the history of Hagar.

[28] The statement that "the Jerusalem above is our mother" receives its complement. **Now we on our part, brethren, are, in accord with Isaac, children of promise,** and thus not born into Ishmael's slavery. Ἡμεῖς, ἀδελφοὶ is emphatic and draws all the Galatians and Paul together as "brethren" of one blessed family. The apostle advances from Sarah to Isaac, and κατὰ, "in accord with Isaac," means more than "like Isaac" or "as brothers of Isaac." Isaac is not only one of many free sons; he is the progenitor of Christ next in this line after Abraham. Kurd means in accord with all that Isaac represents. Thus are we "children of promise," of the blessed promise that was carried forward in Isaac and fulfilled in Christ. This is what the Galatians must realize, and we with them, that we may ever remain far above all legalism.

[29] What about Ishmael? A word needs to be said regarding him. **But even as then the one born in accord with flesh kept persecuting the one (born) according to spirit, so (it is) also now.** Paul omits mention of the names and stresses the point of birth: one born in accord with mere flesh (comp. v. 23); one born in accord with spirit (i.e. Abraham's spirit which believed the promise, hence in v. 23: "in accord with promise"). This is not "Spirit" for the reason that "flesh" and the Holy Spirit cannot be placed in contrast. The Scriptures do not speak of the Spirit's agency in the birth of Isaac.

Paul's reference is to Gen. 21:9. When Isaac had been weaned Ishmael made sport of him, *lachte ihn aus*. This was done in derision because Isaac was the heir. Such action, it seems, was inspired by Hagar. When Paul uses the durative "kept persecuting" he interprets Ishmael's action and states what it really signified, selecting this verb because of what the legalists and the Judaizers later did to Paul and to the faithful Galatians. One need not think of outright physical violence in either case. The Judaizers certainly attacked Paul's character and his teaching and the entire Gospel of promise most violently. The legendary stories about Ishmael shooting arrows at Isaac receive no credence on the part of Paul. Sarah had abundant cause to send Hagar and her son away.

[30] Summing up the history of Hagar, Paul asks: **Now what says the Scripture?** Ἀλλά is copulative, not adversative. Paul quotes the answer from Gen. 21:10, which records what Sarah demanded of Abraham: **“Cast out the slave-woman and her son! For the son of the slave-woman shall in no way inherit together with the son of the free woman.”** The change from “with my son, with Isaac” to the third person is quite natural and in place.

At first Sarah wanted an heir by proxy from her maid Hagar. Then came the fulfillment of God’s promise in Isaac, and also the hostile attitude of Hagar and of Ishmael. This brought from Sarah the demand to cast these two out. They were cast out. But there is an ἄλλο in these words as in the entire history of these mothers. Whoever forsakes the promise that centers in Isaac and is consummated in Christ, whoever reverts from the Gospel to the law, thereby joins himself spiritually with Hagar and Ishmael as against Sarah and Isaac, and for all such slaves of law Sarah’s demand becomes the verdict of God: “Cast them out! they shall not inherit with Isaac and the heirs of promise!”

[31] Summing up the application Paul puts down what he wants all of his readers to say with him: **Wherefore, brethren, we are not children of a slavewoman, but of the free woman.** Could we wish to draw any other conclusion than that here stated by δῖό? No slave-mother for us, — no such mother of any kind (article absent); only the one free mother (article in place). “For freedom Christ set us free” (5:1), for nothing less.

## Homiletical Aid

You cannot hope to change your natural birth by means of a second natural birth. But spiritually a new birth can take place and change you completely. All blood-bought Christians must know about this that they may walk as twice-born men.

They must know more, namely that all legalism, all effort to get to heaven by something that we do instead of by the Gospel and by what God has done and still does, is not part of a spiritual rebirth, but only an expression and an evidence of the unregenerate man. It is of this that our text speaks when it impresses upon us that

## **Birth Decides.**

I. This is shown us in Hagar and Ishmael, in the significance of the latter's birth as a slave.

1. Hagar a slave, Ishmael thus born into slavery, not a son and an heir of Abraham's promise. The mother's status decisive for the child in the days of American slavery.
2. Hagar illustrates Sinai in Arabia, where God gave the law of Moses, not the promise and the inheritance in Christ Jesus. Some men cling to Sinai, to the law, and seek heaven by doing the law. They remain slaves like Hagar and Ishmael.
3. Ishmael persecuted the genuine heir Isaac and in this respect also illustrates how to this day the slaves of the law like Ishmael vent their opposition upon the free-born sons of God.
4. The fate of Hagar and Ishmael was that they were cast out, that it was impossible for the slave to inherit together with the free son. Sinai and the law produces no heirs.

II. We see all this again in Sarah and Isaac, and in what the birth of the latter signifies in regard to our spiritual freedom.

1. Sarah was a free woman and no slave. Isaac was thus born free. His birth was more. He was born by God's promise, when for his parents all hope of a child was passed. He was born to be one of Christ's ancestors, the next after Abraham.
2. Sarah illustrates the Gospel and the birth of Isaac points us to Christ on Calvary where God fulfilled the great promise and sealed the inheritance.
3. Isaac suffered Ishmael's persecution, even as we, the sons of the Jerusalem above, must suffer the opposition of those who have only the law and the birth from Hagar.
4. But Isaac was the heir, an illustration of us, the sons of the Jerusalem above. All the Gospel blessings of Christ we inherit, and the glory will follow!

Yes, birth decides!

- III. Most important of all, we can obtain Isaac's birth.
1. See what "the Law" (the Scriptures) say. You have a notable history in this text.
  2. See how "the present Jerusalem" lost the promise and the inheritance.
  3. The decisive new birth consists of repentance and faith in the Gospel. It is the opposite of all law, law-works, etc.
  4. God's grace, Word and Sacrament bring forth the new birth.
- 

This morning

### **We Want to Get Rid of All Ishmaelites.**

- I. Ishmael was born a slave from his slave mother Hagar, and thus is an illustration of all who have the old Pharisaic, the later Roman Catholic, and the present rationalistic idea that law and doing what the law says saves a man.

If there is such an opinion among us, we want to get rid of it, root and branch. That opinion would make Hagar your mother and would make you an Ishmaelite. In natural life no man is able to exchange his mother for another. But any Ishmaelite among us is forthwith to exchange his mother Hagar, the slave-woman, for Sarah, the free woman.

- II. Hagar stands for Sinai in Arabia to which God attached no Gospel promise. Such a promise was attached to Jerusalem, but the present Jerusalem lost faith in the promise, rejected its fulfillment in Christ and made Sinai and the law of Moses its means of salvation.

Is there anyone among us who thinks more of Sinai than of Calvary, who thinks that doing what God's law commands will net him much more than believing what is promised in the Gospel? Then he is an Ishmaelite, and the only hope for any Ishmaelite among us is to exchange his Sinai for Calvary.

III. No, you cannot do these radical things your own self. No Ishmaelite ever exchanged his mother, — he never even desired to do so. No Ishmaelite ever changed from Sinai and its commandments to Calvary and its promise of free salvation in the blood of Christ, — never even wanted to.

Only God's grace can bring about such a change. In this alone we hope when we say we want to get rid of any Ishmaelite among us. By the help of the Word of God (V. 21, the *Nomos*, "the Law," the Bible) we want him to cease being an Ishmaelite. We want any Ishmaelite among us to repent and to believe and thus to be truly saved through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Note: In this sketch each part is summarized and the formulation of the summary is stated near the end of the elaboration. This is a good method to produce variation, although few preachers use it. See my New Gospel Selections for some sermons constructed according to this pattern.

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Are you like Ishmael or like Isaac?

### **Sons, not Slaves.**

- I. In birth.
  1. Ishmael's birth, and Isaac's.
  2. The birth according to flesh, the birth according to spirit.
- II. In life.
  1. Ishmael's life and character; Isaac's.
  2. Life of the slaves under sin and the law. Life of the sons under grace and the Gospel.
- III. In inheritance.
  1. Ishmael cast out. Isaac, the heir of the promise.
  2. No inheritance for the slaves of sin and of the law. The inheritance of the sons.



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Besides the Jerusalem which now is our text knows of another, Jerusalem which is above. The two are of vital importance to us, one or the other of the two is our mother.

### **Which Jerusalem is your Mother?**

#### I. The Jerusalem that now is?

That had the promise and the Gospel and the faith that leads to eternal salvation; that became a killer of the prophets and crucified the Son; that is no better than Sinai, Arabia, Moses and the law, if as good; has no birth save according to flesh, and no life except that of slaves; that at best knows only works, self-righteousness, and human claims upon heaven; that will ever be cast out and never inherit? Is this your mother? Or is it

#### II. The Jerusalem that is above?

Is it the *Una Sancta*, the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of saints, the Church of the pure Gospel of grace; the Church of Abraham's and of Isaac's promise fulfilled in Christ; the Church of liberty from all curses, threats, and penalties of the law; the Church that suffers persecution for its faith; the Church that has come to have many children to our great joy (*Laetare*); the Church of the eternal inheritance? Is this Church really your mother?

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All false teachers in Christendom are bent on bringing Christians under the law. They expect more from the law than from the Gospel, more from works than from faith. And even when they cry: Faith alone justifies! they are not in earnest. Always they mix human doing into God's work. Such deceivers were the false teachers among the Galatians. They probably said: Paul makes it too easy, he makes you secure, he abolishes the law; not faith alone but also works save.

As the false teachers are intent on bringing the Christians under the law, so the true teachers are anxious to lead the Christians under the heaven of the Gospel.

### **Not the Law but the Gospel Saves.**

- I. Not out of the law but out of the Gospel comes our childhood.
- II. Not the law but the Gospel gives us liberty.
- III. Not the law but the Gospel leads to the inheritance.

G. L. in Magazin\_etc. vol. 8.

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### **Not the Law but the Gospel Brings Salvation.**

- I. Not the law but the Gospel makes as children of God.
- II. Not the law but the Gospel makes us free.
- III. Not the law but the Gospel makes us heirs of eternal life.

Henry Sieck, Sermons on the Epistles etc.

# Judica. Heb. 9:11-15

## “His Own Blood”

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am!” Thus the gospel (John 8:46-59) presents the deity of him who died for us. In harmony with his deity the epistle presents “his own blood,” and the “eternal redemption,” and “the Mediator of the New Testament.” *The blood-bought Christian here sees the Price of his Ransoming.*

The writer of Hebrews — I am certain this was Apollos, see my *Interpretation* — discusses the two tabernacles. He has shown us the earthly tabernacle (v. 1-10), he now proceeds to the heavenly tabernacle. **Christ, however, arrived as High Priest of the good things about to come, by means of the greater and more complete Tabernacle, not hand-made, that is, not of this creation, [12] nor by means of blood of goats and calves, but by means of his own blood, went in once for all into the Holy Place, obtaining an eternal ransoming.**

The writer often uses the name “Jesus,” but here, where the Master’s work is described, he properly writes the official name “Christ.” The structure of the sentence is simple: “arrived — he went in — obtaining.” The relation of the two participles to the main verb is less that of time than that of mere sequence. So we need not seek for a special date for the arrival, say the Incarnation.

As between μελλόντων and the reading γενομένων (aorist) we unhesitatingly choose the former, the more so since the expression “of the good things to come” occurs again in 10:1, and Christ never was “High Priest of good things that had come” and thus lay in the past. The good things here referred to are μέλλοντα, “about to come.” They belong to “the eon about to come” about which we are told so much, the world to come. They constitute our hope. By faith and by hope we embrace them already in this life, tasting the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come

(6:5). Christ as High Priest entered heaven; the good things to come are there.

We part company with those who make the first *διά* local and the other two *διά* instrumental, a lead followed by the R.V. in the face of the correct A.V. We cannot translate that Christ went in through the greater and more complete Tabernacle, and went in not by means of blood of goats and calves, but by means of his own blood. Into what did Christ go after he went through that Tabernacle? Oh, we are told, into the Holy of Holies in heaven, (“into the Holy Place,” v. 12). What then is this Tabernacle through which he passed? The notion that it is Christ’s body or his human nature is now commonly rejected, and properly so. The created heaven cannot be the place through which he went. So nothing remains but heaven itself, and these commentators make heaven a duplicate of the earthly Tabernacle in the wilderness, with two chambers, one the Holy, — Christ merely went through this; the other the Holy of Holies, the place into which he went. But the advocates of this View forget that in the case of the earthly Tabernacle the presence of the Holy Place in front of the Holy of Holies is the sign of imperfection, namely that the real Holy of Holies had not yet come (v. 8). No, heaven has no such anteroom. To say that it has, and that the anteroom in v. 8 means one thing and now in v. 11 another thing is self-contradictory.

This “greater and more complete Tabernacle, not hand-made, that is, not of this creation,” is the means which Christ used. As High Priest he had to have these two, a Tabernacle and blood, just as did the Jewish high priest. He needs the Tabernacle in order there to offer up the blood. The wonderful Tabernacle which alone could serve Christ as the means for the blood which he brought is the uncreated heaven itself, the eternal abode of God. *Σκηνή* designates it a “Tent” (Tabernacle) in allusion to the Tabernacle of Moses in the wilderness; in v. 12 it is called *τὰ ἅγια* because of its sacredness. The two are the same, — not two places, but one.

Yes, this Tabernacle is far greater than that of Moses, also it is “more complete” (*τελειότερος*) in the sense in which the writer so frequently uses this word, — it brings us to the goal, which the Tabernacle of Moses could not do. So great was it, so far above the old Tabernacle, that it was not hand-made, not even made by the creative hand of God. This letter is addressed to the great mass of Jewish Christians at Rome who were thinking of turning back to Judaism, because since the burning of Rome and

the martyrdom of Peter, followed by that of Paul, Christianity had become a *religio illicita*, an illicit, illegal, a proscribed religion. Hence Apollos shows these people what they would give up and to what they would return, — Christ and his heavenly expiation, complete for ever — the imperfect types and symbols of Moses, now superseded for ever.

[12] As the one means, the Tabernacle, is greater, so is the other means, the blood: “neither by means of blood of goats (such blood, no article, offered for the sins of the people, v. 7; Lev. 16:9) and of calves (offered for the high priest himself, v. 7; Lev. 16:11) . See also 7:27. Christ does not need two kinds of blood, as did the Jewish high priest who was himself a sinner, —”but by means of his own blood," this one most holy and precious blood, which atoned with eternal completeness for all the sins of all sinners from Adam onward to the last one who shall be born. Christ’s own blood is called that of the Lamb of God, — all the τράγοι, μόσχοι, and ταῦροι, he-goats, young bulls (bullocks), and bulls left behind for ever.

Thus by means of his own blood, this most efficacious blood, Christ “went in once for all.” This repeats the adverb used in 7:27 where it is shown that no repetition is necessary or even possible. In 7:27 Christ offered himself, in John 10:17-18 it is his life that he lays down, here we have the means, “his own blood.”

We must realize all that is here conveyed by the great term “blood.” A lengthy dissertation could be written on the subject. The Bible is built around this blood, all our devotional and our hymnological literature is dyed with this blood. This blood theology is severely attacked, and ugly names are applied to it. Yet, take away the blood, and the Scriptures are without substance. The connotation of blood is far more precise and far richer than the connotation of death, although both refer to the same sacrifice. The word “death” does not itself imply a certain kind of death, — one may die of disease, by accident, in anyone of many ways. But blood is shed, poured out, in a death brought on by wounds. And so blood more directly refers to a sacrificial death. Blood is shed in expiation, and that makes blood a ransom price. This adds the connotation of substitution. Blood is shed in place of another, in his stead (ὑπέρ) to save him from death. Thus the blood is connected with the altar, the sanctuary, the mercy seat, i.e. it is brought before God, in the way in which he has indicated, so that he may accept it. This blood cleanses from all sin, and in the whole

universe there is no other means that is able to remove even a single stain of sin. Yet it is not the blood as a substance, nor the blood made to flow from a mortal wound that is here referred to. If you are shot or stabbed and lose all your blood it effects nothing. It is the blood of Jesus Christ his Son (1 John 1:7), shed by him as the Great High Priest and as the Lamb of God, that expiates, cleanses, saves.

It is his blood, so shed when the time came, that lent efficacy to all the Old Testament sacrifices, so that they removed sin and guilt and saved. But for his blood all those sacrifices would have been meaningless. Just as the efficacy of Christ's blood reaches forward to the last day, so also it reached backward to Adam, yea to eternity (Rev. 13:8).

“By means of his own blood” must not crassly be taken to mean that Jesus took some of his blood in his hands or carried it in some other way when he entered the heavenly Sanctuary, somewhat as the high priest carried blood in a vessel. It is painful to read Bengel, Stier, Delitzsch and others, who write such things as that the blood shed was received back into his body; that it was received up into heaven; that the small amount of blood that was left in Christ's veins was increased and his blood renewed. Some of these ideas are carried over into the Lord's Supper. It has become common to hear that we receive “the glorified blood.” Where does Scripture say that? It says: “my blood in the act of being shed for you,” just as it says: “my body in the act of being given for you.” Stop any and all rationalizing such as that the shed blood clotted and dried on Christ's body, fell into the dirt and dried and remained there, etc. I am sorry that a man like Riegenbach makes “blood” as it is used in this letter *bildlich* (figurative), only signifying death. The opposite is true, blood is real, and death gets its full meaning from blood.

The second aorist middle εὐράμενος retains the first aorist α. The middle is Attic and means *erlangen*, “obtain.” The aorist designates the one great act of obtaining. What Christ obtained was αἰωνίαν λύτρωσιν (v. 15 ἀπολύτρωσις), “an eternal ransoming,” one effective for all time. “Ransoming” is better than “redemption,” because the latter by constant use has lost much of its distinctiveness. A ransom buys free (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23), hence the verbs ἄγορω, ἔξαγοράζω are used. Expiation and ransoming are in substance the same, and in connotation closely akin, hence the blood is the means for both. See further my *Interpretation of Romans*, 3:24.

[13] Great is the difference between the two Tabernacles. Now compare the two kinds of blood. **For if the blood of goats and of bulls and a heifer's ashes sprinkling those defiled sanctifies as regards the cleanness of the flesh, [14] by how much more shall the blood of Christ, who by the eternal spirit offered himself blemishless to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works for serving the living God?** No proof is offered by γάρ, only an explanation by a fuller and richer restatement. The blood of all types of animals is now included, and the personal effect of Christ's blood is shown. This makes the thought clearer, and the readers themselves are to answer the question which the writer asks.

In v. 12 "blood of goats and calves" refers to the great Day of Atonement, to the sacrifice for the people and to the separate sacrifice for the high priest. Hence the comparison is made with the great act of Christ when entering the heavenly Sanctuary and obtaining an eternal ransoming. In v. 13 "the blood of goats" still refers to the Day of Atonement, but the addition of "bulls" takes us beyond that Day to other bloody sacrifices, and "a heifer's ashes sprinkling those having been defiled" shows how far beyond the Day of Atonement the writer now goes. The comparison advances to all the Jewish sacrifices, and to the personal cleansing from defilement.

The heifer's ashes are well chosen for the purpose in hand. The heifer's blood was used for the Tabernacle and for the whole congregation. The ashes of the entire animal, skin, flesh, blood, and even dung, plus cedar wood, hyssop, scarlet (Num. 19:4-6), were used not only for the Tabernacle, but also for individual persons who were ceremonially defiled or unclean to cleanse them individually (Num. 19:18-22). The point thus is the effect of the blood upon an individual when applied to him according to the prescribed ritual.

The blood "sanctifies as regards the cleanness of the flesh," — the present tense as used in all general statements. This much the blood did. It cleansed only "the flesh," the body, removing ceremonially the bodily defilement. Take Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea as illustrations. When they helped to bury the dead body of Jesus they were ceremonially unclean. As conscientious Jews they would have themselves ceremonially cleansed. The whole matter pertained only to the body. Not that the conscience was not involved; for no defiled Jew was easy in conscience

until he had obtained the ritual cleansing. Yet this cleansing went no farther than the body.

But take the example of Peter who had denied Christ. No ritual cleansing could avail in his case. His conscience smote him so that he wept in bitter contrition. The Lord absolved him from his dead work; the Lord died to provide for him. this cleansing absolution. There would and could have been no absolution for Peter if Christ had not died and shed his expiating blood. There would be no absolution for you this day, save for that blood and that death.

[14] “The blood of Christ” is

“A sacrifice of nobler name,  
And richer blood than they.”

This the relative clause states: “Who by the eternal spirit offered himself blemishless to God.” Christ was sinless, his spirit eternal, his blood innocent, his sacrifice voluntary. Christ used his own blood, he was High Priest and Lamb in one; the Jewish high priest used the blood of others (V. 25), of mere animals. The animals did not even know what was being done. But Christ gave himself to death. “The eternal spirit” is not the Holy Spirit. To think so is to invent and to inject an unbiblical thought. It is Christ’s own spirit, his own eternal ego. By this spirit “he offered himself to God” in voluntary sacrifice. No act was ever more ethical and more noble. Yet voluntariness was not enough, the offering itself had to be “blemishless,” else it could not be accepted by God. The Old Testament sacrifices pictured this: the sacrificial animals had to be flawless. We must combine Calvary and the heavenly Tabernacle. The Jewish sacrifice was slain on the altar outside of the Holy of Holies, and the blood was then brought in by the high priest. So Christ’s blood shed on Calvary was brought as the sacrifice to God in heaven. By how much the blood of Christ exceeds all the bloody sacrifices ordained even by God himself, is at once apparent.

Thus Apollos asks his readers: “by how much more shall the blood of Christ cleanse your conscience from dead works for serving the living God?” By infinitely more! “Dead works” (6:1) are the fruit of spiritual deadness, springing from no spiritual life, no life through Christ from the living God. “Dead” is not just “sinful.” All formal, empty, false law



observance is included, and all self-invented works whereby men seek to please God. Christ's blood removes all this uncleanness which is far worse than the ceremonial defilement of touching a dead body. These works are themselves dead things, foul things.

Dead works are in contrast to the living God. He cannot be served by means of dead works. Christ's death removes the dead works and thus sets our conscience free (Rom. 8:11) . Christ's death fills us with life, and by this life we indeed serve the living God. By λατρεύειν is meant the service which we all owe to God, while λειτουργεῖν is the official service of public agents.

[15] We must see the value of Christ's blood, its complete efficacy, and now also its necessity. The Jewish Christians who thought of forsaking Jesus and returning to Judaism are halted by these mighty considerations. Do they want only the blood of animals? only ceremonial bodily cleansing? not the death which put the testament into force?

**And because of this is he Mediator of a new testament, in order that, since a death has occurred for ransoming from the transgressions at the time of the first testament, they who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.**

It is the very death that enables us to receive our inheritance. No death, no testament in force, no inheritance. In this way Apollos meets these Jewish Christians who were thinking that perhaps a dead Messiah was no Messiah at all. Construe: διὰ τοῦτο... ὅπως... λάβωσιν κτλ. "Because of this" does not look backward, but forward: because of this that now the called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. The writer advances beyond what he has said in 8:6-13.

Christ is "Mediator of a new testament" (in 8:6 "a better testament"). This new and better testament is the Abrahamitic testament in the newness which Christ gave to it. The old testament here implied is the Mosaic testament which came more than 430 years later than Abraham; this promised Canaan to Israel, but through their transgression they lost Canaan for ever, as we see today. We must not think that the testament which God gave to Abraham is old and done away with; we are now sons and heirs of Abraham. His testament stands for ever. The death of Christ has put it into force. The word "testament," διαθήκη, conveys the idea of a one-sided

promise, one entirely from God to Abraham, and not something mutual. “Mediator,” μεσίτης, == middleman; but in what capacity a mediator operates, the context must show. Moses only represented the nation as a mediator. They, being many, needed a representative; God, being one, needed none. Christ is a Mediator in a different sense, he mediates by means of his death, for his death put the Abrahamitic testament into force.

For the enforcement of a testament a death is necessary (v. 16 etc.). And so “a death has occurred,” Christ’s death. This put the testament into effect. For this was no ordinary death, as the testament too was by no means an ordinary testament. Christ did not merely die because of this or that; he died the death of expiation, “for ransoming from the transgressions at the time of the first testament,” i.e. the Mosaic testament. Here the compound is used: ἀπολύτρωσις (see v. 12 for the simplex); in English we are obliged to use “ransoming” for both Greek words. Ἐπί is temporal: “at the time of.” The law came in by Moses because of transgression (Gal. 3:17 and 19). Throughout those past centuries the transgressions of the Jews accumulated. This fact finally lost them what the law promised, namely Canaan. Even these transgressions Jesus’ death paid for. These transgressions are not mentioned with the idea of limiting the ransoming, but in order to bring home to the Jewish Christian readers the great guilt of their own nation, the guilt from which they ought to be glad to be free through Christ’s blood, — or do they wish to reject this blood and drop back again into that old Jewish guilt?

Jews were saved during the Old Testament times, but only like Abraham who saw Christ’s day and was glad (John 8:56). But if he did not believe in the coming Messiah, no Jew was saved. The ceremonial and ritual law was thus full of types, all pointing to Christ in order to induce faith in him. All of the past, all of the present, all of the future rest on the death that occurred on Calvary, on the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). The Messiah who died is the absolute necessity, no matter in what direction we look.

Without him and his death as “Mediator of a new testament” all that God gave to Abraham and thus to Israel would be a hollow mockery. Without him and his death no “eternal inheritance,” no people called at any time to receive it. Absolutely everything hinges on this Mediator and on the

mediation of his bloody, sacrificial, expiatory, voluntary, innocent, all-sufficient death.

The perfect οἱ κεκλημένοι, “they that have been called,” denotes a state, — they are still such. All who received and followed the Gospel call of grace at any time are meant, — we must not restrict the term to the Jews only. Still worse is the idea that those called in past ages are now at last to receive the heavenly inheritance. The tenses cry out against such misinterpretation. In “the promise of the eternal inheritance” the genitive is appositional. The inheritance is the thing promised, i.e. “the good things to come,” v. 11. The called are the heirs named as such in the testament, no matter when they lived or live and when the call reaches and wins them. One by one, as they pass from this life, they receive the promise, the eternal inheritance. They have the earnest and the pledge of it now (Eph. 1:13-14) and thus taste the powers of the world to come, and then joyfully enter heaven. Christ’s blood is the key to it all.

## Homiletical Aid

What think ye of Christ? Of Christ the High Priest and his sacrifice? Some deny the atonement, some regard it as insufficient and add their own works, some put it into the background and preach Christ as the moral example, and some of us, blood-bought as we are, prize Christ and his sacrifice in our inmost hearts far less than we should. Thank God for all who do prize it as they should.

### **The Excellence of Christ Our High Priest.**

- I. The excellence of the sacrifice he made.
  1. Far exceeding all Jewish sacrifices. What these could and could not do.
  2. His own blood, — all-sufficient.
  3. Through the eternal spirit, — voluntary, supremely noble, accepted of God.
  4. Entered into the holy place, the heavenly presence of God.

5. Once for all, needing no repetition and no addition on our part.
- II. The excellence of the ransoming he obtained.
1. What other sacrifices only pictured and promised.
  2. An eternal ransoming.
  3. Purging the conscience from dead works, giving power to serve the living God.
  4. The heavenly inheritance.

Conclusion: The holiest theme in our religion. The cornerstone of our faith and hope. Lent calls us to believe and prize.

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The Catechism: “with his holy precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death, that I may be his own” etc. The Bible speaks so much about Christ’s blood, and we sing so much in our hymns about “Christ’s blood and righteousness.” Twice our text mentions

### **“His Own Blood.”**

What lies in this brief expression? I. Deity (1 John 1:7). II. Sinlessness. III. Expiation. IV. Substitution. V. Ransoming. VI. Cleansing. VII. Testament inheritance.

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### **The Mediator of the New Testament.**

- I. The testament, the promise made to Abraham.
  - II. The death, which put the testament into effect.
  - III. The heirs, they who have been called.
  - IV. The inheritance, heaven.
-

Lent is the season for true repentance. Our spiritual life is to shake off the old sins, and the new testament newness is to take their place. Our High Priest, Jesus Christ, is our one help, so we turn to him and pray:

**“O Great High Priest, Forget Not Me!”**

*American Lutheran Hymnal 547*

- I. Purge my conscience from dead works!
  1. Dead works, that do not spring from faith and love. Among them our empty and merely formal worship. The omissions of our lifelessness. Then our many sins of one kind or another. Our stained conscience, crying out to condemn us. No true peace and rest.
  2. The purging. The blood of Christ, holy, expiating, an eternal ransoming. Applied to my soul by repentance and faith.
- II. Make me to serve the living God!
  1. By faith embracing the High Priest’s sacrifice and so drawing nigh to God.
  2. Doing the living works of faith and love that please God.
  3. Remaining among those that are called till the heavenly inheritance is received.

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“Our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.” The blood-bought Christian cannot rest with a stained conscience. We ask:

**Has Christ Purged Your Conscience?**

We must know about

- I. Conscience.

The monitor regarding right and wrong, accusing, excusing. Conscience asleep, unenlightened, seared.

Then does not function or functions in a wrong way. The transgressions. The aroused and enlightened conscience condemns. Bad if this is delayed until we die. The terrors of such a conscience.

Only one hope and help:

II. The blood.

The High Priest. The supreme ransom price and ransoming. The atonement for all sins. The purging of conscience when this blood is applied to you and to me in true repentance. Every accusation stilled, peace in the soul, because the conscience is cleansed.

III. The service of the living God.

The dead works are buried. The new life and the approval of the enlightened conscience, the joy of this state. We are called, and the promise of eternal inheritance awaits us.

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**Jesus Christ, Our One and Eternal High Priest.**

We consider I. His Coming. II. His Sacrifice. III. The power and efficacy of his sacrifice.

G. S. in Magazin\_etc. vol. 8.

# Palm Sunday. Phil. 2:5-11

## The Humiliation and the Exaltation of Our Savior

The gospel for Palm Sunday presents Jesus as the divine Savior making his Messianic entry into Jerusalem while on his way to the cross. We see him in his lowliness, and yet his divine attributes and his majesty are manifest. The Son of man and the Son of God are one. He is so lowly because he comes to die for our ransoming.

No better epistle text could be placed beside this Palm Sunday gospel text, Matt. 21:1-9, than this great *sedes doctrinae*, Phil. 2:5-11, on the *status exinanitionis et exaltationis Christi*, which constitutes one of the greatest texts in all Scripture. As we enter Holy Week both the Humiliation and the Exaltation of our Savior's human nature are placed before us, even as the Passion leads to the Resurrection, Ascension, and 8933730 at God's right hand. Here is the lowest depth and the supreme height. Beside the awful death on the accursed tree appears the Name that is above every name.

Meyer says that from v. 6 onward the language is like an epic in its calmly exalted objectivity, even the epic circumstantiality is not omitted. The dignity and the rhythm of the parallel clauses are impressive. The style matches the grandness of the subject matter. Because of the Kenoticists we are compelled to study Paul's words most carefully, but it would be a pity if on this account the preacher should lose any of the grandness of this text. Though used in support of hortation, this text is doctrine, in fact a great *sedes doctrinae*. Do you realize what biblical doctrine is? It is an inspired statement of saving facts. In the sermon these facts are to be adequately restated for the full apprehension of the hearers. It is a cheap falsehood that our people do not care for doctrine in sermons. Our faith rests on the divine facts, can truly rest on nothing but these facts. The preacher must present them and he must know how to do so in such a way that they go home to the hearts of his hearers. These facts are far from being dry or tiresome.

They are in fact stunning, astounding, dramatic and full of the highest saving power. Preach on this text accordingly. As far as the Kenoticists, the rationalists, and the modernists are concerned, certainly the preacher must know all about their ugly perversions of this most sacred text, otherwise his exposition would not be entirely safe, but his sermon ignores these errorists either entirely or nearly so.

Paul is exhorting his readers. He is placing the Savior before them as the great example they are to follow. It is typical of the apostles that they rest their ethical admonitions on some of the supreme gospel facts (doctrines), so that at times these facts appear to be only incidentally introduced. This must not mislead us as to the full significance of these facts. Apart from the ethical use to which they may be put, these facts stand with all their saving power for our faith. Because they so stand in the consciousness of the apostles, they automatically come to their minds also when they appeal to their readers in ethical admonition. For our present text for Palm Sunday this means that the exhortation in v. 5 is secondary as regards the burden of the sermon, and Christ's humiliation and his exaltation are primary. Our eyes are riveted upon the cross and upon the infinitely supreme Name.

**[5] This keep minding in your case, (the thing) which (appears) also in Christ Jesus' case, [6] — he who, existing in God's form, did not consider his being equal with God a thing of snatching, [7] but emptied himself in that he took slave's form when he got to be in men's likeness, [8] and, in fashion found as man, lowered himself in that he got to be obedient as far as death, yea, death of a cross.**

“This thing keep minding” means “the one thing” Paul tells us to mind in v. 2 and then describes in v. 3-4, the keyword of which is ταπεινοφροσύνη, “lowly mindedness.” Paul now shows us this thing “also in Christ Jesus,” and thus presents it as it was in Christ as our model or example. The two phrases ἐν ὑμῖν and ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ are evidently parallel; we have ἐν with persons meaning “in the person or in the case of”: “be minding in your case” the thing which appears “in Christ Jesus' case.” The balance and the emphasis are not on the verb, which also is not repeated, but on “this thing” and on the two phrases “in your case — in Christ Jesus' case.” What we supply in the relative clause, whether “is,” or “was,” or “appears,” is immaterial.



To be sure, the difference between Christ and us is and remains very great. He is God himself, we are mere creatures, sinful at that. Yet there is a connection between him and us, his spirit is lodged in us and seeks to make us like him. Moreover, this is a case not of rising to great heights, but of getting down as low as possible. That is indeed our proper place in this life. If Christ who was very God himself could lower himself down to the obedience of the cross, it ought not to be so difficult for us to drop our sinful pride and our high pretensions and to take our place in the lowly-mindedness which in a humble way makes us like him.

[6] Paul does not continue the sentence in ordinary fashion by adding an appositional clause, say with ὅτι, stating what τοῦτο, “this thing” in the case of Jesus was; he continues with the personal relative ὃς, and we must feel its full dramatic, demonstrative effect. This is not the mere common relative “who,” but the deictic and thus the dramatic relative, which we may circumscribe by: “He, he the One who,” with something great and impressive following regarding this person “who.” Here it is “Christ Jesus,” he the One who is supreme in the thing (τοῦτο) which Paul is urging upon his readers. Paul fixes our eyes upon this Person as a person.

This ὃς inaugurates the battle with the Kenoticists and with all who derive support from the Kenoticists. “He who” is said to signify the Logos asarkos, the Son before his incarnation. The Son in his deity, we are told, emptied his deity either of some or of all of its divine attributes, or even of the ego of the deity itself. The aim of all Kenoticists is to get a Jesus who is divine only in a modified sense, or altogether merely human, or, as the Germans have it, with only one nature (*Einnaturenlehre*). Those who claim that Jesus dropped some of his attributes are the semi-Kenoticists; those who assert that he dropped all of them or even the deity itself are the pan-Kenoticists. Their name is derived from the verb which is here used by Paul ἐκένωσε. “he emptied himself.” The issue regarding this relative is the same as that with which Jesus confronted the Pharisees: “What think ye of Christ?” is he really God’s Son, or only partly God’s Son, or only a man and not even partly God’s Son? Kenoticism revives the old Arianism. What is at stake is the heart of Christianity, your salvation and mine. If Christ is not the Son of God, then we are not saved.

All grades of Kenoticism are crushed by the fact of the immutability of God, of the One Essence, which is identical in the Father, in the Son, and in

the Holy Spirit. Whoever subtracts a single attribute from the deity thereby cancels the entire deity. A God who is no longer omnipotent is no longer God. The whole revelation of Scripture regarding God is the truth that his every attribute is his Essence or Being itself, revealing one side of his Being. All that we call attributes of God is not a plurality at all, is not divisible in its reality, but is the One Unity — God. Since our minds are finite and cannot possibly grasp God's Infinity, our thinking divides, looks at God now from one side, then from another, and again from still another. Only in this imperfect fashion, darkly as in a glass, can our minds apprehend God. The Scriptures, too, are compelled to condescend to this our limitation when speaking to us about God. Even what we call an "attribute" of God is incomprehensible to our mind, for we cannot think in terms of infinity.

All Kenoticists virtually deny the immutability of God and thereby condemn themselves. The difference between the various types of Kenoticists is really illusory, for the removal of one attribute from the deity cancels the deity as completely as the removal of all the attributes or of the ego of the deity itself would do.

The entire contention of the Kenoticists that the Son *asarkos* emptied out his attributes from his deity is beside the mark, for Paul here speaks of the Humiliation and the Exaltation of Christ Jesus, and the two pertain not to the divine nature, but to the human nature. The question is not about what Jesus emptied out of his deity, but what he emptied out of his human nature. At the Incarnation the Son communicated all the attributes of his deity to his human nature. What his deity possessed in its own nature from eternity his human nature received as a gift, when it was joined to the deity. This is what the dogmatists call the *genus majesticum* of the *communicatio idiomatum*, taught throughout Scripture.

This, however, brings us once more to the immutability of deity. The attributes of the deity of the Son, communicated by means of the personal union to his human nature, are just as immutable as these same attributes in his divine nature. You cannot take away this, that, or the other attribute, nor can you reduce any of them by cutting them in half or down to lower proportions. Of not a single divine, communicated attribute did Christ empty his human nature, — an impossible thought. The immutability stands ever immutably. What Christ laid aside was the plenary and unrestricted use

of his divine attributes according to his human nature during the days he wrought out our redemption on earth. This is the Humiliation or Exinanition. The assumption of the plenary, unrestricted use of the communicated divine attributes on the part of the human nature is the Exaltation.

The antecedent of ὅς is “Christ Jesus,” which no one dares to deny. “Christ Jesus” (office, person) is similar to many other designations, such as King David, President Washington, General Grant, etc. The Scriptures name the Savior most freely, now according to his person and office, now according to one of his natures, now according to the other, and, no matter how he is named, they freely predicate of him what is native to the one or to the other nature, or, for that matter, to both. Knowing this common fact, we should pass quietly on when Paul writes: “Christ Jesus, he who, existing in God’s form,” etc. The disturbance is raised wholly by the Kenoticists and their relatives, and what their interest is we know only too well.

Often ὑπάρχειν, “to exist,” and εἶναι, “to be,” are used with quite the same sense; yet here, where the two are employed side by side, a distinction is to be observed: “existing in God’s form” — “to be equal to God.” Once we have existence as such, next we have being in a condition which comports with that existence. Even in English the distinction can be made. Luther makes the participle concessive: Ob, “although” existing in God’s form, a relation not indicated; the temporal idea is also out of place: “While existing,” for Christ Jesus never existed in any other save God’s form. Μορφή == the form native to the essence (see Trench). To suppose that Paul uses “God’s form” because presently he intends to say “slave’s form” is a mistake, because God’s form cannot be changed, while a slave’s form can. “Form” applies to each term, “God” — “slave,” according to what it is, the one immutable, the other mutable. The German has perhaps the best rendering for μορφή, as it is found in Luther’s Christmas hymn: *Der Sohn des Vaters, Gott von Art*, namely *die spezifische Eigenart*, the specific individuality in the one case of God, in the other of a slave.

We are sorry to note that Zahn and the dictionary of Cremer-Koegel imagine that Christ Jesus “exchanged” the form of God for the form of a slave. This even seems to be a popular interpretation, but it is utterly false. Not one word does Paul use that might even suggest an exchange. As God cannot possibly lose or alter the form of deity, so Christ Jesus cannot. Deity

would not be deity if it could be exchanged for something else. When Paul writes “Christ Jesus” he refers to both natures of the Savior, and the point to be noted here is especially his human nature. For the statement that the Son in his deity exists in God’s form is saying very little, but the fact that also the human nature of the Son exists in God’s form (by virtue of the personal union and the communication of attributes), this indeed forms the basis for all that follows, without which it would be entirely unintelligible.

Described thus as existing in God’s form in both of his natures, Paul writes that Christ Jesus “did not consider his being equal with God a thing of snatching,” as he might have done if he had considered only himself. The predicate is placed forward for emphasis: “a thing of snatching” he did not consider this thing “to be equal with God,” Iva, neuter plural in the adverbial sense. How Christ considered it, his great act of emptying and lowering himself shows. “To be equal with God” adds the thought of condition to that of existence, even as the latter goes naturally with the former.

What does it mean to consider something as ἄρπαγμός? The Greek word is rare and there is much debate concerning it. In brief, the word here means *res rapta*, *Gegenstand des Raubens*, viewed concretely: something involving an ἄρπάζειν and characterized thereby. Christ did not consider the condition resulting from his form of existence, involving also his human nature, to be a *harpagmos*, a prize (R.V.) snatched and eagerly grasped, to be used for dazzling display. No; then the incarnation itself would have been entirely in vain. So displaying his equality with God, the work of redemption at the price of the cross would have been impossible. Christ acted in accord with entirely different considerations.

Note carefully, that Christ’s possession of the form of God remains and is not changed, and so also that the possession of the corresponding condition of equality with God is not changed. What Christ did was not to make full use of this condition of equality with God. When performing miracles he made only a limited use, such a use as aided his great redemptive work.

[7] “He did not consider etc., on the contrary ( ἄλλά), himself he emptied in that he took slave’s form when he got to be in men’s likeness.” Pieper writes in his *Dogmatik* II, 324: “To be sure, this is a remarkable

outfitting and form. The earthly warrior, who means to gain the Victory, girds his sword to his side and strives to be high. Christ's equipment for the victory to be gained develops in the opposite direction. Christ ἑαυτὸν ἕκένωσεν, divested, emptied himself to naught, became lowly, altogether lowly. But this strange equipment accords with the nature of the work to be done. It was not to conquer cities. It was also not to hurl by a divine word of power him into hell who by God's permission (*Verhaengnis*) held men captive. It was — in the execution of the divine redemption method — by substitution, through being obedient, suffering, and dying, to pay the sin-guilt of men. That, to be sure, could not be effected by laying aside his deity partly or completely. He could not do without his deity in his state of Humiliation. He had to attach the full weight of his deity to his being obedient and to his suffering and dying. Even in the midst of his death he had to be the mighty God, in order by his death to conquer death, to raise up again the temple of his body (John 2:19:21), to take up his life again (John 10:18)." Again [325]: "This conquering 'second Adam' is not only man, but the Lord from heaven (1 Cor. 15:47). He is God, and therefore also according to his human nature in God's form."

It is typically Pauline not to follow "he did not consider," with "but he did consider," but rather to state at once the great acts which best of all reveal what Christ did actually consider, namely the mission and work for which he came into the world. The words of Paul are perfectly clear. He does not leave us with the words ἑαυτὸν ἕκένωσε, "he emptied himself," to guess of what he thus emptied himself, whether of himself, so that we get the wild idea that there was no more self in Jesus, or of all the attributes of his deity or of some of them, so that the immutability of ., God is violated in thoughtless fashion. "Himself he emptied" is an incomplete thought, therefore it is at once completed by the addition: "in that he took slave's form when he got in men's likeness." Nor is this enough, for Paul adds the rest, the humiliation to the death on the cross (v. 8). When Christ following his Incarnation stooped to assume "slave's form" and thus to lower himself to the death of the curse on the cross, he certainly "emptied himself" of the high use Of his divine attributes. He had God's form and the likeness with God, communicated even to his human nature, but he left both form and likeness unused that he might shed his blood for our guilt. Yet this non-use was not absolutely complete, for throughout the Exinanition we see a partial

use, which makes certain the presence of God's form and of the likeness with God.

Not one of the following ideas does Paul utter: 1) that Christ gave up "the form of God"; 2) that he exchanged God's form for slave's form; 3) that he exchanged the equality with God for the equality with a slave.

The slave's form was taken "when he got to be in men's likeness" which was at the time of the Incarnation. Yet the two are not identical. The Humiliation or slave's form is not the human nature. The slave's form is a separate addition. The human nature of Christ is now in heaven, glorified, and it is just as human as ever although no longer in slave's form. Properly Paul inserts ὁμοίωμα, "likeness," because in the Incarnation Christ did not cease to be God. When Christ assumed our human nature and bestowed upon it God's form and equality with God, he did this astounding thing, he assumed in addition slave's form and the lowliness that ended in the death on the cross.

Luther aptly calls the "slave's form" *die dienstliche Gestalt Christi*. The idea of δοῦλος, "slave," is not excessive labor, but complete obedience. Jesus came to do his Father's will for our redemption, hence Paul adds in v. 9 "got to be obedient" and states down to what point.

[8] Paul continues the construction: ὃς... ἐκένωσε... καὶ ἔταπείνωσεν, "who \_ , emptied himself... and lowered himself." With the explicative *mi* Paul specifies and tells us precisely what he means by the general expression that Christ Jesus took "slave's form" when emptying himself. First, a subsidiary fact: "in fashion found as man," as real, true man, "found" so by all other men who came in contact with him. Σχήματι is the dative of relation: "as regards fashion" (*habitus*). We have the full record in the gospels: born of a human mother, developed from babe to manhood, he ate, drank, slept, labored, etc., etc., as a true human being. The statement that Christ Jesus was found in fashion as man is preliminary to the main statement that he "lowered himself in that he got to be obedient as far as death," etc.

Here is the picture of Christ the slave, drawn perfectly with a few strokes. The old secular idea of ταπεινῶω, "to abase," is still present: Christ "abased himself." But secular Greek knew only the utter disgrace and the despicable idea of this debasement. The New Testament ennobled the word

by means of its moral use: the Godman abased himself for our salvation. To lower oneself for high moral ends is noble indeed. Paul has the active with the reflexive pronoun, which is stronger than the middle. This pronoun is not placed forward as in v. 7; it therefore has no emphasis. Not by force was Jesus brought to the cross, but he voluntarily lowered himself to that terrible death.

It was an act of obedience: “in that he got to be obedient,” γενόμενος ὑπήκοος. The voluntary obedience refers to the human nature of Christ. In this nature he came to carry out the mission of the Father, his great Sender (ὁ πέμψας με, so often found in John’s gospel). The Father’s will was that his incarnate Son should by means of his human nature die on the cross as the sacrifice for our sin (the Lamb of God), as our substitute under the curse, as our expiation by means of his blood. Thus he willingly lowered himself “as far as death, yea, death of a cross.” Note that “slave” matches “cross,” for when slaves were executed they were crucified. “Slave” is the proper translation here, not “servant” as in our versions. Dramatically Paul introduces the cross. He does not write “as far as the cross,” but: “as far as death, yea death of a cross,” δέ emphasizing the latter.

Paul makes us linger at the death. Yes, it was “death — death,” no less than that: the Godman died. The old rationalists Paulus, Gesenius, Wegschneider invented a *Scheintod*, a mere appearance of death. He who also by his human nature was in God’s form and thus equal with God — died a slave’s death on the cross. We agree with all the rationalists that this is incomprehensible. How could one so high descend so low! But you are not asked to comprehend, you are asked to believe and to worship. Yet, this cannot be called incomprehensible, that he who possessed also human nature and all its fashion should use it to die. And this he did, — the fact stands unchallenged. In θανάτου σταυποῦ note the qualitative genitive and the absence of the articles, leaving them purely qualitative, Kreuzes tod.

To speak here only about the lowest point of the Humiliation, and of the pain and the shame of crucifixion, does not go far enough. Here is what the Scriptures call “the offense” of the cross, its *skandalon* (death-trap, Gal. v. 11) especially for the Jews, 1 Cor. 1:23. It is not the suffering and dying Messiah that made him a death-trap to unbelief but his dying accursed of God, suspended on wood, the cross (Deut, 21:23; Gal. 3:13; also 2 Cor. 5:21). How can one who ends as one accursed of God on the cross be the

Savior of the sinners who are accursed? How can one so accursed be God's Son? The Scripture answer to this apparently extreme contradiction is equally tremendous and perfectly complete: Christ was our Substitute, he bore our curse and its penalty (Is. 53:4 etc.). By no less a death could we escape the curse.

And this death could be undergone by no less a person than the one existing in the form of God and one who thus was equal with God, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9). When he stooped to the curse of the cross, his death could indeed be the expiation for the sins of the world. Luther has well said: "If I permit myself to be persuaded that only the human nature has suffered for me, then Christ is to me a poor Savior, then he himself indeed needs a Savior." *Concordia Triglotta*, 1029, 40; see also 1015 etc. F. Pieper, *Dogmatik* II, 311 etc., has a masterly refutation of all forms of deviation from the Scriptures.

[9] The mighty basis on which Paul's admonition (v. 1-5) rests includes both Christ's Humiliation and his Exaltation, even as these two naturally go together. The Greek continues the sentence: **wherefore also God highly exalted him, and granted to him the Name above every name, [10] that in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow of (such as are) in heaven and (such as are) on earth and (such as are) under the earth, [11] and that every tongue should confess that "Lord (is) Jesus Christ" for glory to God Father.**

Only the human nature could undergo the Humiliation and then also the Exaltation. The Logos was not Withdrawn and then restored. No attributes were emptied out either from the divine or from the human nature, and were then replaced. The plenary use of the divine attributes communicated to the human nature was laid aside while Jesus assumed and bore slave's form; when he dropped slave's form he entered upon the plenary, unrestricted use of his communicated attributes. This was his exaltation. Christ lowered himself, his abasement had to be voluntary; on the other hand, God exalted Christ, for it was God who had to accept the obedience of Christ's self-abasement for our sin, guilt, and curse. Matt. 23:12 was fulfilled in Christ. Paul uses two finite verbs to designate Christ's action: "he emptied himself — he lowered himself"; so now he also uses two finite verbs to describe what God did: "God highly exalted him, and granted to him." In v. 7 and v. 8 the participles are subsidiary.



Many take διό, “wherefore,” in the sense of indicating merit, as though Christ by his Humiliation earned his Exaltation. We indeed speak of “the merits of Christ,” although the word is not found in the Scriptures; we use this expression in an entirely different sense, namely in the sense of the pardon and righteousness which he earned for us, not in the sense of the Exaltation which he earned for himself. Paul goes far beyond merit when he writes: “wherefore also God highly exalted him and granted to him the Name above every name,” etc. This entire Humiliation and this Exaltation were God’s own plan. God sent his Son on the redemptive mission, and the Son carried it out in perfect obedience down to the cross. When, “therefore,” this mission was accomplished, God crowned it by exalting Christ in his human nature for the fullest fruition of his redemptive work. That is more than just to save the believers; see my exposition of Eph. 1:9-10 and of 1:20-24. Jesus lowered himself, because obedience must be voluntary; but God granted him the Name to crown his obedience. Note the second article: “the Name, the one above every name.”

The verb ὑπερύψωσε is to be taken in the superlative sense: “most highly exalted him.” Deity cannot be exalted, the exaltation was that of the human nature. This nature, made partaker of the attributes of the deity in the Incarnation, received in the Exaltation the full plenary use of these attributes in the glory at God’s right hand of majesty. So many fail to understand what is meant by the “Name,” and here we have both the granting of the Name and the phrase which recurs so frequently “in the Name of Jesus.” Even Robertson thinks the latter means “on the authority of,” which it never does. Some even suppose the Name to be higher than “God’s form” and equality with God (v. 6), as if God could grant something higher than himself. The **ONOMA** is soteriological. It is that by which God or Christ or the Spirit makes himself known and is apprehended and known. We must not restrict “Name” to terms like “Jesus,” “Lord,” “Savior,” and the like, for “Name” includes all that makes him known. God’s exaltation let the glorious light of revelation fall upon him who once lowered himself to the cross and its curse. This showed his Name to be above every name, transcending every name “named in this eon or in the one to come” (Eph. 1:21).

There is no mortal with a human nature whose Name reveals him as possessing in this nature the divine attributes and as now granted the full

use of these attributes in the glorious plan of God to save the world. In Jesus there is displayed “the Name above every name.” When we call **ONOMA** soteriological this is to be understood in the wider sense. This “Name” (revelation of who and what Jesus is) saves sinners for the glory of God, saves them through the redemption accomplished by the Bearer of the Name by means of his human nature and its humiliation. But the Name does this saving, because on the other hand it for ever crushes all opposing, hostile forces. See Mark 16:16 as far as men are concerned; and Col. 2:15 as far as the devils are concerned. The two activities involve each other, the saving could not be accomplished without the crushing. Both shine forth in the Name, as the One Name above every other. All other names reveal that their owners either look up with adoration to the Bearer of this Name with its revelation of who and what he is, or that they are compelled to look up to his revealing Name in consternation, having fought this revelation and him whom it reveals.

[10] The purpose in granting this supreme Name is: “in order that in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow of (such as are) in heaven and (such as are) on earth and (such as are) under the earth” etc. The bowing of the knee and the confessing of the tongue are concrete expressions. Hence it is pointless to urge that only beings with bodily knees and tongues can be referred to. The anarthrous genitives are qualitative: “heavenly ones, earthly ones, subterranean ones,” not neuters: “Things in heaven,” etc., (our versions), but masculine, persons. The first are all the blessed angels and the saints in heaven; the second are all the men on earth; the third are all the demons and the damned in hell. The three groups include all created personal beings. All shall bow in submission and make confession, either with joy and bliss or with dismay. Shall those hostile to Jesus be forced to kneel and to confess? I do not think so. Remember that *Onoma* == revelation. When at the last day the revelation of the glory of Jesus shall be made not even the hellish demons will think of denying the Lordship of the Godman Jesus Christ.

The subjunctive “should bow” like all subjunctives has a future sense. The texts vary between the aorist subjunctive “should confess” and the future indicative “shall confess.” This variation in the second verb after Eva is frequent and needs no comment; both verbs have the same construction. The question is asked when every knee shall bow and every tongue shall

confess. At the Parousia, at the final Judgment. Heaven now rings with the Name, Ps. 24:7-10; Heb. 1:6; 1 Pet. 3:22. Earth faintly, in the confession of the saints. At that day the universe of angelic beings and men shall stand before the throne of Christ. All his majesty and his power, all his grace, his righteousness and his justice will be revealed (“the Name”) in absolute finality. Then no knee will remain unbowed, no tongue without acknowledgment.

With great exactness Paul writes: “in the Name of Jesus,” and again that the confession will be that “Jesus Christ” is Lord. This is he who hung on the accursed cross, he whom they mocked and spit upon, — in a word, he who in his human nature had slave’s form, and in that nature descended to this depth. In that nature, by God’s own grant, this “Jesus” now has this Name, this “Jesus Christ” is Lord, — all the universe will not only see it, but see it so that the confession and the acknowledgment of it cannot, will not be withheld. The idea of an apokatastasis is as absent here as elsewhere in Scripture.

The confession of the universe that Jesus Christ is “Lord” (Κύριος) means divine Lord, all that we have said regarding “God’s form” and “to be equal with God” in v. 6, not only as inherent in Jesus’ divine nature but also as shared through the *communicatio idiomatum* by the human nature, — yet more than this, “Lord” as now evidenced by what this Godman did in his Humiliation and by what God did in his Exaltation, — thus the Messiah-Lord, the Savior-Lord, the blessed reliance of all his saints, the joy of all the heavenly angels, the Judge of the demons and the damned, — in the whole universe “for glory to God Father” (objective genitive). “Father” is added appositionally to mark the First Person, and needs no article in the Greek. Why does the glory, i.e. the credit, praise, honor, always ultimately revert to the First Person? The answer of many is subordinationism, which in trying to solve one point in Scripture clashes with many others. In the unity of the one divine essence the economy of the Three Persons binds them together in their order: Father — Son — Spirit. Hence there is no subtraction either from the Son or from the Spirit when the Father sends the Son and the Spirit and they return the glory to him. In the case of Jesus with his human nature this is even more easily apparent.

After all this that is so effective when properly seen “in the case of Christ Jesus” (v. 5) has been placed before them by Paul, the Philippians

will be moved ever to mind “this one thing” which he asks them to mind (v. 2), namely to cultivate in heart and in life “lowly-mindedness” (v. 3).

## **Homiletical Aid**

The preacher must be warned against all erroneous exegesis and the resultant outlines. Both Nebe and Sommer should be used with care. Nor do we expect anything better from the Calvinistic expositors, their entire doctrine of the Person and the work of Christ being tainted by Nestorianism in opposition to the Lutheran Confessions.

Analytically the text falls into two parts, introduced by the admonition in v. 5: first, the Savior’s Humiliation (v. 6-8); secondly, the Savior’s Exaltation (v. 9-11). The sermon may utilize this simple division.

The royal entry into Jerusalem — the Hosanna that still rings through the Church on Palm Sunday. The confirmation class; sometimes the communicants. Our epistle text fixes our eyes upon all the essential features of the person and of the work of our Redeemer. Here is the glorious Savior in whom we believe, and whom in our faith we follow as our example.

### **The Lord Jesus Christ Our Redeemer**

#### **I. On the Cross.**

1. As man he was in the form of God, as man it was no robbery for him to be equal with God. When the Son of God was born a human being of the Virgin Mary he gave to his human nature all that belonged-to his deity from eternity. So great, so mighty, so exalted the Redeemer had to be who came to rescue and to deliver the world of sinners. If he had been less even as man, redeeming the world would have been impossible.
2. Yet to redeem us our Redeemer had to die, and not merely to die in one or the other way but to die on the cross, that means under the curse of all the world’s guilt, as the world’s substitute, as the expiation and the sacrifice for atonement. He had to be the lamb to take away the sin of the world.

3. How could he who as man had all God's qualities of deity and the fullest right to use them die thus on the accursed cross? We know the answer. As man he laid aside the use of all that was his and as man became obedient to his Father, as if he were a slave without a will of his own. Thus he lowered himself down to the cross.
4. By this act, so astounding that many refuse to regard it possible despite all the attestation of Scripture, the Lord Jesus Christ became our Redeemer. This death of his is the basis of our faith and our hope. For this we sing today:

“All hail the power of Jesus' Name! Let angels prostrate fall!”

From the Cross Jesus our Redeemer stepped to the Throne.

## II. On the Throne.

1. God crowned his work of redemption. He exalted our Redeemer in the divine glory and majesty of heaven, far above all principality, etc. (Eph. 1:21). He whom once as man they spit upon, cursed, and reviled, sits now at God's right hand and rules the universe in majesty, in the interest of the redemption which he wrought by his death.
2. More than this. To crown his redemption, God also granted to our Redeemer a Name that is above every name (Eph. 1:21), that means a revelation to make our Redeemer known and acknowledged in his glory as man in all the universe. Incomparable is his name.
3. In all his glory our Redeemer shall return as man at the last day. Then will every knee bow before him, and every tongue confess etc.
4. This Palm Sunday declares that we are not waiting until Judgment day, but are now bowing our knees in adoration of our Redeemer and are confessing him as our Lord in faith. And this we do to the glory of God the Father.

If desired the preacher may also refer to v. 5 that we should imitate the mind of Christ in lowliness, as one of the fruits of our faith.

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Jerusalem. Our repetition. True Hosanna.

### **Come, Follow the King of Salvation!**

- I. See that he is the King of Salvation!
  1. In his astounding humiliation. — As man possessing the qualities of deity, yet foregoing their use, that he might die as a slave on the accursed cross for our redemption. No nobler, greater deed ever done. None with such wondrous effect.
  2. In his infinite exaltation. — Once crucified, now at God's right hand, exercising also as man infinite power and majesty, his Name above every name in the universe, none with such glory, none with such grace and salvation. We too must exalt him, either in faith, or in despair when it is too late for faith.
- II. Then follow him as the King of Salvation for ever!
  1. You have this King. You know his Name (revelation). Believe, trust, cling to him, let his cross remove your sin and curse.
  2. Confess his Name as your Lord. Stand with his confessors against all who still reject him. A word to the confirmation class.
  3. Let him enrich you (the Church, the means of grace, the answer to prayer).
  4. Let his mind be in you (v. 5). Copy his lowliness, his obedience. Let him at last exalt you.

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On Palm Sunday Jesus made a royal entry into Jerusalem, so that on Good Friday he might there be condemned to the cross.

### **Our Savior's Obedience to the Death of the Cross.**

- I. The cross and the curse. What the cross really means. To endure it == expiation, substitution, sacrifice, atonement.

- II. The man Christ Jesus in the form of God. Made partaker of the divine attributes in his incarnation, how was it possible for him to be crucified?
- III. The form of a slave. As man he did not use the attributes of which his human nature was made partaker, but like a slave gave up his will to do his Father's will and die in our stead.
- IV. The Name above every name. The name that is his from the cross and the bearing of its curse when he entered the full use of the attributes by his human nature.
- V. The cross with its salvation. For the penitent and believing. Our joy and glory on this Palm Sunday.
- VI. The cross with its judgment. For the demons and the unbelievers. Our warning.

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### **The Name that is Above Every Name.**

- I. Its exaltation rests on the cross.

As man Christ Jesus shared the possession of the divine attributes, but for a time did not use them, in order that he might stoop down to the curse of the cross for the expiation of our sin and curse. In all the universe there is no act comparable to this act of Jesus, and thus no name comparable to the name of our crucified Lord.

- II. Its exaltation dispenses salvation and judgment.

The adoration and the confession of the blessed angels and the saints, now and at the last day. The demons and the unbelievers, overwhelmed by the Lord, will bend the knee and confess him as Lord in their just damnation.

# Thursday Of Holy Week. Maundy Thursday. 1 Cor. 11:23- 32

## “Showing Forth the Lord’s Death Till He Come”

The Lord’s Supper was instituted on the night in which he was betrayed. This was Thursday night. For the Jews it was already Friday, for they closed Thursday at the setting of the sun and began the new day with the appearance of the first star. The gospel for Maundy (== mournful) Thursday is a part of the Passion History. We rejoice that this epistle text on the Sacrament of the Altar was selected for the very day that is commemorative of its institution.

The apostle severely rebukes the Corinthians for the abuses that had crept in in connection with the *agape* or love feast, which are so bad as to render the celebration of the Lord’s Supper either altogether impossible or nearly so. Our text begins at the point where the apostle sets to work with calm patience to repeat his original instruction to these disorderly Corinthians and thus to correct this flagrant abuse. While the preacher must know all the details in regard to the Corinthians, it is not necessary to burden the sermon with them. Paul’s words may be read as being addressed to us.

**[23] For I received from the Lord, what also I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread, [24] and after having given thanks broke it, and said: “This is my body which is for you. This do in remembrance of me!”** We must note that ἐγώ is emphatic: “*I myself* did receive from the Lord.” Paul contrasts himself with the Corinthians. What they had received from Paul was quite different from what they are practicing in Corinth. “For” substantiates by



reference to what the Lord had given to Paul so that he can only reproach them for the abuse which made the celebration of the Sacrament impossible in their midst. So the first and most important corrective is to remind the Corinthians of what the Lord had delivered to Paul and what the latter had transmitted unchanged to the Corinthians. Now the abuses in Corinth occurred in connection with the *agape* and the *agape* was not a divine institution, only a church custom, — by the way, a custom that eventually was entirely abandoned. Paul thus lays down no regulations for the *agape*, his concern is the Sacrament. When the Corinthians get to see that they dare do nothing that would interfere with the Sacrament, they will themselves abolish the irregularities occurring at the *agape*.

Paul says very plainly that he received what he here records “from the Lord.” He has *παρά* in the compound verb and *ἄπό* in the added phrase. It is asserted that this means, Paul received the words of the institution not immediately from the Lord, but only mediately, by way of men, either the other apostles or ordinary Christians. Paul himself contradicts this idea in Gal. 1:11-12 where he says outright that he did not receive his Gospel in any manner from men but “through a revelation of Jesus Christ,” and certainly the Holy Supper is a most vital part of the Gospel.

The tendency to lower Paul is strong among the critically minded, and so they here see an opportunity to detract from him, — he has received the Lord’s Supper only *at second hand*. As an apostle he is *not* on a par with the Twelve. To base this idea on his use of *ἄπό* instead of *παρά* in the phrase is linguistically unsound, and the critics who claim great scholarship should know it. Robertson rightly warns against such radical distinctions; *παρά* calls attention to the fact that one is beside the person or the place when he starts; *ἄπό* merely notes the point of departure; and *ἐκ* asserts that one has been within the place or circle before departing. So the *ἄπό* in Paul’s phrase is correct and to the point. *Παρά* in the compound verb implies that what Paul received came from the very presence of the Lord, and *ἄπό* in the phrase adds that Paul himself was not beside the Lord at the time, — even as he says in Galatians, revelation brought him the information. It is bothersome to spend so much time on unwarranted notions, yet the unwary are so liable to pick them up for real learning.

What Paul had thus received he transmitted to the Corinthians; both verbs are historical aorists and state the two facts. The Corinthians,

however, were making a horrid change in what they had received, — they practically lost the Sacrament. It is for this reason that Paul here sets down in writing the original institution of the Sacrament, to which the Corinthians must return, carefully doing what the Lord has said, instead of not caring whether it was yet possible to have the celebration of the Sacrament in their midst. To conclude, that because the words as Paul writes them are so much like the words preserved by the three evangelists, therefore Paul must have drawn from these evangelists, is entirely fallacious. Paul wrote First Corinthians before any of the three evangelists wrote their records. The deduction to make is this: The Holy Spirit inspired all four of the writers, and thus these four accounts of what Jesus did and said on the night in which he was betrayed are in such perfect agreement. Yet the words of the four records are not identical, all exact and diplomatic copies of an original or of one of the four records. Exact verbal sameness is less good than free but exact and true agreement.

It was on the night in which Jesus was being betrayed (*παρεδίδοτο*, progressive, descriptive imperfect) that he instituted the Holy Supper. The other evangelists need no such preamble because they write history and thus come to this tragic night. Paul must name the time and he marks it by the betrayal. The traitor brought Jesus to his death. In that last solemn night Jesus, who knew every move of the traitor, instituted this Sacrament. The phrase makes a most solemn and sacred impression, — the very opposite of the levity and the disturbance occurring at the *agape* which then ruined all opportunity of celebrating the Supper. Yes, “in the night in which Jesus was being betrayed,” — think of that night! The great sacredness of the Sacrament should here dawn upon us. We need this impression, for we must also understand the vital words that follow: “for you” — “in my blood.”

“He took bread” states the fact, hence the aorist. Note that throughout the acts are expressed by the historical aorist, — fact placed next to fact. The words of our Confession regarding the interpretation are true: “We are certainly in duty bound not to interpret and explain these words of the eternal, true, and almighty Son of God, our Lord, Creator and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, differently, as allegorical, figurative, topical expressions, according as it seems agreeable to our reason, but with simple faith and due obedience to receive the words as they read, in their proper and plain sense, and allow ourselves to be diverted therefrom by no objections or human

contradictions spun from human reason, however charming they may appear to human reason.” Abraham’s example is then mentioned in this connection, when he received God’s command to offer up Isaac, which seemed against both divine and human law, and even in conflict with God’s own promise concerning Isaac: “He understands and believes God’s Word and command plainly and simply, as they read according to the letter, and commits the matter to God’s omnipotence and wisdom, which, he knows, has many more modes and ways to fulfill the promise of the Seed from Isaac than he can comprehend with his blind reason.” *Concordia Triglotta* 987 etc. Read also Heb. 11:17-19.

[24] Then, having given thanks, Jesus broke the bread and said: “This is my body which is for you,” — the addition of κλώμενον: which is in the act of being broken for you,” is textually unsound, although our A.V. follows the texts that have it. We thus need not state that the body of Jesus was not “broken.” Matthew and Mark have: “after having blessed” the bread, but the meaning is the same as “after having given thanks.”

The eleven disciples present saw at once that Jesus had concluded the Passover ritual, and that what he was now doing was something entirely new and different. The words of thanksgiving or blessing which Jesus uttered certainly dealt with the bread in his hands and with the heavenly gift which this bread was to convey. These words have not been preserved to us. Evidently the Holy Spirit purposely withheld them. We take this to mean that we are not to repeat these words in our ritual of the Sacrament. The reason for this is the fact that these words, spoken once by Jesus, bear no repetition. Once spoken by him, they are efficacious for all time for every true and genuine celebration of the Sacrament. These words of thanksgiving or blessing reach across the centuries to you and to me and make this the Sacrament of Christ’s own true body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. The same efficacious power resides in the words of Jesus that are recorded. “Where his institution is observed and his words are spoken over the bread and cup, and the consecrated bread and cup are distributed, Christ himself through the spoken word is still efficacious by virtue of the first institution, through his word, which he wishes there to be repeated.” *Concordia Triglotta* 999.

Jesus “broke” the bread only for the purpose of distribution. There is no counterpart as regards the wine. The breaking symbolizes nothing, for the

Lord's body was not broken: "A bone of him shall not be broken," John 19:36. The R.V. margin has "loaf" for bread, but this misleads. Jesus held and broke nothing that resembled our loaves of bread. This was unleavened bread, baked as it had to be, in thin sheets, and thus pieces were broken off for the purpose of eating. I saw a woman on the Syrian coast baking such bread on a hot flat stone. It was in sheets about a foot in diameter. Seeing that I was so interested, she gave me a sheet and I did pretty much what Jesus here did, I broke off pieces so that my companions might eat, and I too ate.

The Reformed insist on breaking the bread. Having lost the true substance of the Sacrament, the body and the blood, they stress the form and the symbolism. They have received the following crushing answer: "Bread is an inanimate thing: how can breaking it be like putting a human being to death? Breaking bread is the very symbol of quietness and peace, who would dream of it as an appropriate symbol of the most cruel and ignominious death? Bread is the representative food, and used in metaphor is the symbol of spiritual and supernatural food. The breaking of bread is the means of giving it as food, and as a symbol, the symbol of giving and taking a higher food. No one would dream of the breaking of bread as the symbol of killing a human body; and if so extraordinary a symbolic use of it were made, it would require the most explicit statement on the part of the person so using it, that such was his intent; and when he had made it, the world would be amazed at so lame a figure." Krauth, *Conservative Reformation* 723.

The giving to the disciples, mentioned by the evangelists, is only implied by Paul, who at once writes: "and said: 'This is my body which is for you.'" Luke adds to "my body" the modifier: "being given for you," i.e. as a sacrifice on the cross, which shows how Paul's briefer "for you" is meant. The essential point is that each communicant must receive the bread. "This" is my body is neuter in the Greek, τοῦτο, and it cannot possibly modify bread, which is a masculine, ἄρτος. In English "this" and "bread" are not distinguished in gender, yet failure to see the difference in the Greek is pure ignorance. "This"= *hoc quod vos sumere jubeo* == the gift Jesus extends to the disciples == not the simple bread, but the consecrated bread, the bread which the Lord's consecration has turned into a vehicle of his body.

Much has been written about ἔστιν, which is a mere copula, connecting subject and predicate. In the Aramaic, which Jesus used, he employed no copula, and for this reason some propose to remove ἔστιν from the texts. But in the Greek we have the copula, must recognize it for what it is, namely a copula, which never means “represents” or anything else that would eliminate the predicate “my body.”

When Jesus says: This is “my body,” the words mean just what they say. In fact, they are so simple and so clear, the meaning lying on the very surface, that no human ingenuity has ever been able to get rid of their meaning. Christ means: in truth and reality my body, or as it has often been phrased: “my true body.” This is made doubly certain by the addition of τὸ ὑπὲρ ὁμῶν, which is appended by a second article, and is stated more fully by Luke: ὑπὲρ ὁμῶν διδόμενον, “in the act of being given for you” as a sacrifice on the cross. Christ’s own body, not the symbol, bread, and not some body merely symbolized by bread, was now in the act of being given into sacrificial death.

These words have never caused difficulty. Only men’s rationalizing intellect has darkened them by raising the unanswerable question: How could Jesus give his own body and his own blood to the disciples? The answer is given: He could not do so. It is not reasonable that he could, because reason cannot understand how he could. After the true meaning of the words has thus been set aside, two substitute meanings have been injected: that the words imply a transubstantiation of the bread into the body of Christ, so that we receive only body, not bread; others assert symbolism, and make the words mean that the bread “represents” the body. Both of these ideas do violence to Christ’s simple words. The first loses the bread, the second loses the body, — the worst of the two is, of course, the latter (Zwingli, Calvin, all the sects).

The question as to the “how” can never be answered, because Christ has not given us the answer. His words state the fact, but do not state the manner. This is not at all strange, for even in the natural world we have to be content with many facts, the manner of which is utterly beyond us. We there ask a thousand “hows” and are met by huge silence. We may say even more: many a how is beyond our finite mind. If we were told how, we could not grasp the explanation. Perhaps it could not even be put into human language. The intellect that nevertheless clamors for an answer to its how is

like a petulant and a silly child asking for what it could not take when given to it.

All notions that rationalize by speaking about gross, carnal, Capernaite eating of raw flesh are irrational. For the first disciples, who saw Christ standing bodily before them and from his bodily hand received the Sacrament, never dreamed of such crude, outrageous eating, but understood that Christ was giving them his sacrificial body in a supernatural way. That was what Christ wanted them to understand, that is all that is necessary. Let us add that “my body” does not mean “a piece of my body” or any of the intolerable Catholic notions along this line, which we do not care even to mention here.

Of the evangelists only Luke records the words of Paul: “This do in remembrance of me!” Yet this command of Christ converts the first celebration into an institution. The present imperative “this be doing” is iterative. Here τοῦτο, “this,” == what Jesus had just done, namely these two acts which we now term the consecration and the distribution. The phrase “in (or for) my remembrance” is an echo of the Passover rite: “And this day shall be unto you for a memorial.” A new and a greater memorial takes the place of the old. The phrase dare not be cheapened to mean that the purpose of the Sacrament is to remind us of Christ and of his death. Many a realistic painting or statue would do that far more effectively than our eating a bit of bread and drinking a bit of wine. “In remembrance of me” means that the entire Sacrament is to be the remembrance, i.e. we are to eat Christ’s own sacrificial body, drink his own sacrificial blood, and thus remember him. To reduce this remembrance to a mental act of the memory, an act only induced by the ritual of the Sacrament, is to empty Christ’s command of its real meaning.

**[25] In the same manner also the cup, after having eaten, saying: “This. cup is the new testament in my blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me!”** Luke adds to the phrase “in my blood” the words “which is in the act of being poured out for you (in your behalf).” The other two records say that all are to drink. Matthew and Mark record: “for this is my blood,” an exact parallel to “this is my body.” Mark adds to blood: “of the new testament, which is being poured out for many.” Matthew has “for the forgiveness of sins.” All of the four records are in

perfect agreement on all essential points; only the wording varies, and this variation is of "such a character as greatly to aid the interpretation.

“In the same manner” means, as was done with the bread: Jesus took the cup, consecrated the wine, gave it, and spoke the words recorded. There is, however, nothing to compare with the breaking of the bread; wine is not distributed in such a manner. “After having eaten” means after the disciples had eaten the bread, or, as Keil thinks, after the eating of the Passover. For at several points in the Passover ritual the cup was passed, and this drinking from the cup is not to be confused with the drinking during the Passover. “After having eaten” would thus mean: “after the eating of the Passover had been entirely concluded.”

We quote from Krauth’s elucidation, because he exceeds all others in clarity: “The word ‘cup’ may mean, without metaphor: 1) The vessel meant to contain liquids, whether they be in it or not; 2) the liquid which is contained in such a vessel, or is imparted by it; 3) the vessel and liquid together... In the words: ‘He took the cup,’ Luke 22:17, the word ‘cup’ is used in the third of these senses — he took the cup containing, and through it the contents. In the words: ‘Divide it among yourselves,’ the cup is conceived in the second sense — divide the contained cup, by passing from one to another the containing cup, with its contents. In the words of the institution: ‘This cup is the new testament,’ the contained cup, in the second sense, is understood — the contained as mediated through the containing — that which this cup contains is the new testament in my blood. In such a use of the word cup there is no metaphor, no rhetorical figure whatever. It is a grammatical form of speech; and if it be called a ‘figure,’ the word ‘figure’ is used in a sense different from that in which it is denied that there is a ‘figure’ in the first words of the Supper. We deny that there is a rhetorical figure in any part of the words of the institution.” *Conservative Reformation* 778 etc.

“The cup” (article) == the one used in the Passover ritual. All save a few fanatical special pleaders agree that the cup contained wine, with which some water was mixed. The special pleaders abuse the expression “fruit of the vine,” which they generalize to mean any product, derived from the vine. They generally ignore Matt. 26:29: “of this fruit of the vine,” this that was used in the Passover, which was wine, not unfermented grape juice, raisin tea, or grape syrup diluted with water. The expression itself is taken

from the Hebrew *pheri hagiphen*, a choice liturgical term for wine. Since a testament cannot be altered without violation, the use of any other liquid than actual wine made from grapes renders the Sacrament invalid, so that it ceases to be the Sacrament. Christ's testament stands only as he made it, not as we may think we should change it. Whoever denies that Jesus instituted the Sacrament by using wine, stultifies himself.

Ἐστίν is the same as in v. 24. "This cup" == this wine consecrated by the Lord to be the bearer of his blood. The predicate is "the new testament in my blood," and the ἐν phrase modifies "testament." Mark: "my blood of the testament," and Matthew even has the attributive genitive. When the Lord gave the wine to the disciples by means of the wine they received Christ's own blood as connected with "the new testament," not the blood without the testament, or the testament without the blood.

Διαθήκη == testament. The wavering between testament and covenant should cease. From the extensive discussions we register the main point. "Testament" is one-sided. It is the testator who designates the inheritance and the heirs. A testament is not a mutual agreement between two parties. "New testament" == in place of the old, but not a second testament. This new testament, connected with Christ's blood, superseded the old, which was also connected with blood (see Ex. 24:4-8), by bringing the fulfillment of the promise contained in the old. The old testament (covenant) could be written in animal blood, for it contained only promise. The testament of the fulfillment had to be written in the blood of the incarnate Son of God. This very blood, together with the body from which it flowed, is now given us in the Sacrament to certify us as heirs of the "new testament" in Christ Jesus.

"Blood" is the word, not "death," — blood == sacrifice, while death could occur in many ways, without being a sacrifice. Body and blood are two entities, yet they are indissolubly joined: no sacrificial body without sacrificial blood, and vice versa. It is idle to talk about the glorified body. When he instituted the Sacrament Jesus was not yet glorified, and the body and the blood which he gives, he says is the body being given into death for us, and so too the blood. To the command to do this in his remembrance Jesus here adds "as often as you drink it." Every time the 'disciples drink the sacramental cup, this cup and its drinking, like the eating of his sacrificial body, is to constitute our remembrance of the Lord.



When now we use wafers as the bread, this casts no reflection whatever on the first institution of the Sacrament by Christ. I am unable to say the same when now in late years the wine is placed into many little individual cups. In my judgment this casts a reflection on Jesus who used a common cup. Say that you do not mean to cast a reflection, you actually do so, whether ignorantly or not. Jesus was not sanitary enough. Or, if you shrink from the word sanitary, he was not refined, fastidious enough. The use of these little cups even *obtrudes* this idea upon every communicant, right at the altar, and this in connection with the most holy blood of our Lord. To say that this division of the wine is the same as the division into wafers, is not true, for the point is not the division, but the purpose for which it is made, this is not the same. To be sure, the little cups do not nullify the Sacrament, but does that justify the practice? To stab my heart is fatal to me, hence I protect my heart, but by this act I do not mean to indicate that it makes no difference whether you cut off my nose, my ears, my fingers, my toes, my hands, my feet, etc. Conserving the absolute essentials never means abandoning and sacrificing everything else.

[26] “For” means to explain: **For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are proclaiming the death of the Lord till he shall come.** Each person partakes of the Sacrament for his own personal benefit, to receive anew and to have sealed to him the forgiveness of sins. But the Sacrament is a public act, we all commune together; hence its celebration does something for others, namely “proclaiming the death of the Lord till he shall come” at the end of the world. The Sacrament is a united act of the congregation making this most solemn proclamation. Shall anything be allowed to interfere with this proclamation, as the disorders at the *agape* interfered in Corinth? Surely the answer must be no. The word “death” is here deeply solemn. Who could proclaim the Lord’s death with other than the most solemn feelings? Our entire celebration of the Communion is full of solemnity; modes that are less solemn we would discard.

[27] But all that Paul says leads to the conclusion: **Wherefore whoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.** It could not be otherwise. And this is the most serious guilt of all, it is like that of Caiaphas, of Pilate, etc., if not worse. Note the Greek: “unworthily, guilty shall he be.” The little connective “or” has a long literary history, since the Romanists sought

to pin their doctrine sub una specie to it, and the Protestants preferred “and” to “or.” The grammarians increased the confusion, for they do not distinguish between the disjunctive “or” which accepts only one of two, and the conjunctive which accepts both the one and the other and often even more than just two. Here “or” is the latter; other examples are found in Rom. 2:4; 4:13; 9:25; etc.

“Unworthy” includes all forms of unworthiness, for no restriction is added. It, of course, includes the unworthiness of the Corinthians which displayed itself so openly at their agape-meals. When we warn our communicants we point to the forms of unworthiness to which they are liable, lack of repentance, unwillingness to amend, hatred in the heart, failure to believe, also failure to believe the words of the Sacrament, etc.

To partake of the Sacrament while in such an unworthy state makes the communicant “guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord,” ἔνοχος == ἐνεχόμενος, held fast by something, thus “guilty,” held in guilt. The violated object is in the genitive. Here the crime is committed against the Lord’s own body and his blood.

False logic is attributed to those who take Paul to mean that the body and the blood of the Lord are present in the Sacrament, namely in this manner: Major premise: the object against which one sins must be present; minor: in the Sacrament the object sinned against is the body and the blood of Christ; ergo, these must be present. It is child’s play to upset this, for the major is not always true. Insulting a royal seal or image is a crime against the king, and yet the king is not present. When Lutheran dogmaticians (Quenstedt for instance) are charged with this fallacious logic, these dogmaticians have not been read, or they are lied against. Quenstedt himself explodes this logic. He presents the truth of the matter: “But whoever in the Lord’s Supper *eats this bread*, which is the κοινωνία (communion) of the body of Christ, or drinks the Lord’s cup, which is the κοινωνία (communion) of the blood of Christ, unworthily, *eo ipso*, by this very unworthy eating and drinking, becomes guilty of the body itself and of the blood itself of Christ.” *Theologia Didactico-Polemica*, IV. 251 etc.

Luther expresses the same truth: “How is it that the sin against the body of Christ is connected with *the eating*, if that body is not to be present in the eating or bread? He would have had to say: Whoever eats this bread

unworthily sins against the Lord's Supper, as against God, or against the command, or against the Lord's order. Now the nature and manner of the words compels the conclusion that he *who eats* unworthily is guilty in regard to what he eats... for the text mightily compels that the sin occurs *in the eating and the drinking*, ...and yet it says that the sin is committed against the body and the blood of the Lord." *Sapientia sat.* Walch XX, 321; Erlangen 29:250 etc.

[28] First the facts (v. 23-26), next the warning (V. 27), now the admonition. **But let a man test himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup!** This is the right deduction from the facts and from the danger. To remain away from the Sacrament would be a wrong deduction. Δοκιμάζω is to test. So coins and metal were tested for both weight and purity. The testing which Paul means certainly includes faith in the words of the Sacrament, and then anything in our hearts that may conflict with the beneficial reception of Christ's body and blood. Should anything be found lacking or amiss, the idea is not to remain away but to remove the lack or the wrong by repentance. Only the individual himself can do this, hence the singular. To aid the communicants the Church has its preparatory service preceding the Communion. Note how the eating and the drinking is again repeated. Luther is right when placing the import in these words.

[29] Why the careful self-testing? **For he who eats and drinks, judgment to himself does he eat and drink, not discerning the body.** The insertion of "unworthily" is not needed, even as also the unmodified participles suffice: the one eating, the one drinking. These are the decisive actions and thus are named again. The danger is κρῖμα to oneself, a sentence of judgment (not κρίσις, the act of judging). The word is not κατάκριμα, "condemnation" (A.V. "damnation"). "Judgment" need not at once be damnation, it may be also any temporal punishment [30].

The Greek participles leave the relation which they convey unexpressed; here "not discerning the body" is not conditional (R.V. "if"), but causal. The crime upon which the verdict is pronounced is the failure to discern, distinguish the presence of the holy body of Christ in the eating and the drinking. The sin is the treatment of this eating and drinking as though it were ordinary reception of food. One need not say this in plain words, for

actions often betray the attitude more than statements. The reference to the body is enough at this point; that the blood is meant as well is understood.

[30] Judgment had already struck some of the Corinthians: **For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and a considerable number are sleeping.** Spiritual weakness and sickness cannot be meant, because the sleeping cannot be spiritual. These are physical ailments and physical death, sent in judgment by the Lord. Since Paul writes that a considerable number are sleeping, this must mean that they were not damned at death, for “to sleep” is used only with reference to the death of the saved. Of course, it refers only to the body, this alone sleeps in death. The judgment was a shortening of the earthly life. This brings up the question regarding possible physical effects of the Sacrament. We know of no beneficial physical effects. The best work to consult in regard to the superstitions connected with Communion is Adolph Wuttke, *Der deutsche Volksaberglaube* 193, 318. The elements do not act as a poison for the unworthy. It is unsafe to generalize from the experience of the Corinthians. How and with what God will visit his displeasure upon the unworthy communicants he himself determines.

[31] Judgment is easy to escape. **But if we would discern ourselves we would not be judged.** The extended paronomasia is practically lost in English: χρῆμα — διακρίνων — διεκρίνομεν — κρινόμενοι κατακριθῶμεν. To discern ourselves (not “judge,” A.V.) is to remove all illusions about ourselves, to see just what we are. This, of course, will mean that we correct anything we may find to be wrong. Thus to go to the Lord’s Supper will enrich us with all its blessing. The contrast lies in the verbs and in their voices: our discerning — our not being judged. It does not lie in the subjects (A.V.): if we judged, the Lord would not judge us.

[32] Paul adds a word of comfort: **Yet in being visited with judgment by the Lord we are being chastened, in order that we may not be finally judged adversely together with the world.** All the present judgments of the Lord have the blessed purpose of keeping us from the final judgment of damnation. Note the effect of the tenses: κρινόμενοι, being visited now and again with judgment for our grave sins, iterative present — punctiliar aorist, κατακριθῶμεν, final condemnation. When the Lord visits us with painful judgment in this life, this is a sign of his correcting love; when he sends judgments on the world, these are forerunners of final damnation. To be

sure, if we despise his corrective judgments, we join the world and may read in such judgments our final damnation with the world. Luther says that Paul writes thus “because otherwise with our reason we would not well believe and grasp this. For, after we learn — and this also is certain — that God punishes sin, our reason concludes nothing but that these punishments are Without all mercy on God’s part. Hence it falls from God, and despairs of his grace.”

## Homiletical Aid

The Sacrament a miracle of the Lord’s grace, so great and blessed that when we come to partake every one of us should be

### **The Worthy Communicant.**

- I. Joyfully discerning the Lord’s true body and blood in the Sacrament.

According to the Lord’s own words; according to St. Paul’s further words. This sacrificial body and blood the seal for each of us of our forgiveness, etc. What a joy to discern all this.

- II. Thankfully making his participation the remembrance of the Lord.

Not a mere act of memory, for other reminders are more vivid. But the remembrance this, that we rightly partake of the Lord’s body and blood and thus secure all the benefits of his sacrifice.

- III. Seriously examining himself in preparation for the Sacrament.

As to his faith in what Jesus says in it; as to any repentance that may be needed; as to the right hunger and thirst.

The unworthy communicant obtains judgment instead of blessing: The worthy communicant is the most blest man in the world.

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In the night in which he was betrayed the Lord made his last will and testament.

## **The Lord's Testament in his Blood.**

I. The document, the written Scripture words, to be read as they stand, not as men may think they should be.

II. The legacy. The Lord's true body and blood, conveying all the treasures of salvation.

III. The false claimants, the unworthy communicants, who do not discern the body, examine themselves, etc.

The testament allots nothing to them. Their judgment.

IV. The true heirs. How we know ourselves to be such heirs. How blessed the inheritance.

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In this life the Sacrament brings us nearest to our Lord and Savior.

## **The Sacrament the Holy of Holies of our Faith.**

I. Here is the Lord himself.

II. Here is the blood of the new testament.

III. Here is the warning against profanation.

IV. Here is the call to eat and to drink.

V. Here is the door to the Sanctuary above.

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A more solemn scene cannot be witnessed than the one in the Upper Room. A tenseness grips the heart. An element of deep sorrow is added. The Passover was a farewell feast. Only a few more hours remained to Jesus ere he died. As a father makes provision for his children when he knows that he must leave them, as he makes every effort to insure that they shall not want, so our Lord in that holy night did not forget his own. He thought not of himself. His life had been a life of self-sacrifice. He now makes the richest provision for his own. In this solemn hour he makes his will. And oh, what

a will it is! It conveys to us all the treasures of the Gospel. It is inscribed as his will with the words:

### **The New Testament in My Blood.**

Let us consider

- I. The Testator.
  1. He has an estate to will.
  2. He is competent to make a will.
- II. The Testament.
  1. It is carefully worded.
  2. It confers the greatest wealth.
- III. The Heirs.
  1. They are the Lord's disciples.
  2. They are in need of the legacy here conferred.
  3. They accept their inheritance as the Lord gave it. Glenn E. Seamon.

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### **A True Lutheran Prizes the Lord's Supper Most Highly.**

G. has this fine theme in Magazin etc. vol. 11, but I could not use his mere categories as parts: I. Why they do this. II. How they show it by deeds. I much prefer something like the following.

- I. They realize what they actually receive in the Lord's Supper.
- II. They see to it that they come to the Lord's Supper as worthy guests.
- III. They would not dream of admitting an outsider to the Lord's Supper.

# Good Friday. Is. 52:13-53:12

## “As a Lamb to the Slaughter”

The epistle series includes a few Old Testament texts. In the entire Old Testament no clearer prophecy of Christ's death and resurrection is found. Isaiah has rightly been called the evangelist of the Old Testament. Under the general Lenten theme: The Christian Bought by Christ's Blood, our text forms the climax with its subject: *The Lamb Slaughtered for the Christian*. The text includes the saving effect of this slaughter, not only in v. 4-5, but also in other verses, thus in v. 10-11. Our text forms a unit section in Isaiah. This section foretells the high exaltation of the Messiah, the Servant of Jehovah, from deepest humiliation, and in this respect recalls our epistle for Palm Sunday. The first stanza, v. 13-15: *The inhumanly humiliated Servant of Jehovah shall be exalted*.

**[52:13] Behold, my Servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.**

Here the theme of this entire section is stated, the exaltation of Jehovah's Servant: in the first clause the way to this exaltation, and in the other clauses the stages of exaltation. The word translated “prudently” conveys the idea of “wisely” with respect to the task of his calling, and thus carrying this task through effectively, successfully, with the result of ever higher elevation. We might translate: “prosper will my Servant.” He will carry out his task despite all obstacles.

Hence the outcome will be: *jarum*, he shall not go down in defeat, but shall prevail; *nissa'*, he shall climb high; *gababh m"od*, he shall be very high. It has well been said, that these three refer to the resurrection, the ascension, and the sitting at God's right hand. We shall lose no words in regard to the identity of this Servant (note, not slave), he is Jesus Christ.



**[14] Just as many were astonished at thee — Thus inhumanly was his visage marred And his form not like that of the sons of men — [15] So shall he astonish many nations; The kings shall shut their mouths at him: For what had not been told them shall they see, And what they had not heard shall they consider.**

The second and the third line of v. 14 are parenthetical. The construction is: “Just as many were astonished at thee... so shall he astonish many nations.” The Servant shall be so inhumanly disfigured that he shall arouse general astonishment. By his “visage” his appearance is meant, — it was so marred as no longer to appear human. So also his form or body did not look like that of the sons of men. Ps. 22:6. The expressions are choice and convey the idea that the Servant originally possessed the noblest human appearance.

[15] The A.V. has: “He shall sprinkle many nations” (*rabbim gojim*), but *hissah* is not used with the accusative of persons in the sense of “sprinkle.” And this meaning does not fit the context, which requires a thought that tallies with v. 14a: “Just as many were astonished at thee.” The sense of the verb is “to spray,” and the hifil “to make something squirt upward and scatter” in great astonishment or in fright. Thus shall many Gentile nations be astonished at the sight of the divine glory of the Servant and shall spray upward like water and scatter. Their kings shall be struck dumb at sight of him. The reference is to the Parousia of the Servant, Matt. 24:30; 25:31 etc.; Luke 23:30; Rev. 6:15-16; etc.

*Khi*, “for,” states the reason: these nations and their kings perceive something unheard-of, unexpected, incredible. Consternation overwhelms them. Outer perception is indicated by *ra’u*, and inner perception by *hithbonanu*. “What had not been told them” and “what they had not heard” does not imply total previous ignorance on the part of these Gentiles and these kings; in our own land thousands know nothing about the coming glory of Christ, know nothing about his Parousia despite all the Bibles, churches, etc.

The second stanza, v. 1-3: *The inhuman humiliation of the Servant.*

**[1] Who hath believed our preaching, And to whom is revealed the arm of the Lord? [2] For he came up before him as a sprig, Yea, like a root-sprout out of dry ground. He had no form nor comeliness. Looked**

**we at him, there was no appearance that would please us. [3] Despised was he and by every man avoided, A man of pains and acquainted with grief, And like one from whom one hides the face, Despised, so that we considered him nothing.**

In 52:15 the Gentiles are mentioned; now in this stanza “we” == the Jews, and “he” == Jehovah. The line of thought is this: so high and glorious shall this despised Servant eventually appear that the entire unbelieving world will be dumbfounded and struck speechless. Yet this his exaltation has ever and ever been preached to us, Jehovah’s people, but who, even among us, believed the preaching? *Sch’mu’nah* == ἄκοή, the preaching that one hears. “Our preaching” == the preaching granted to us by God through his prophets. Who of us believed the preaching we heard? The thought is: Very few. The point is intensified by the synonymous question: “To whom is revealed the arm of the Lord?” Jehovah’s arm is his omnipotence. With this he raised Jesus from the dead and exalted him. But even when this occurred, the Sanhedrists would not admit it (Acts 4:10; v. 30). They refused to see the revealed arm of Jehovah.

Somehow Delitzsch here finds chiasm and the final conversion of the Jews. According to him the confession of Israel’s unbelief implies Israel’s final faith. Chiliasts are acrobats and turn somersaults that make other people dizzy.

[2] *Vaw* is explanatory. The human lowliness of the Servant is described. He came up like a little sprig “before him,” i.e. before Jehovah. As the stump of a tree, after being cut down, tries to send up a little shoot, so was Jesus born from the old decayed royal stock of David, which no longer produced kings. The synonymous second line repeats and emphasizes this fact, yet it adds the idea of “dry ground,” — even the ground was waterless and thus would not help the stump to send up a shoot. The idea is that the little shoot which sprang up despite these handicaps looked so tiny and weak that it was a hopeless matter to expect it ever to amount to anything. The parallel passage is 11:1. The dry ground does not refer to Israel’s condition, either political or spiritual. Matt. 13:55 etc.: “Is not this the carpenter’s son?” John 1:46: “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?”

“He had no form or comeliness” refers not to physical appearance, but to rank and position among men, to power, riches, earthly pomp, such as

impress men. He made no imposing, grandiose impression. When the Jews looked at him, there was no appearance that could attract them. This was not the kind of a Messiah they had imagined and were looking for. It seemed incredible that a man like this should actually be the Son of God and the promised Messiah. So Israel rejected him, while, as far as the Gentiles were concerned, they had never heard of him.

[3] While v. 2 describes the lowly human origin of the Servant and his own humble appearance, v. 3 adds the effect of this fact upon the Jews. *Nibseh*, participle nifal from *basah*, states the “despised” nature, to which is added the concrete evidence: *chadal* (construct) == destitute of, and *'ischim* refers to men of standing, important persons. “Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?” John 7:48. Jesus utterly lacked such men. His disciples were only humble fishermen. Publicans and sinners to a large extent made up his following. Nearly all of the notables of the nation avoided him.

“A man of pains” simply describes; *makh'oboth* are pains of all kinds, mental as well as physical. Pains of all kinds were the marks of the Servant, his life and especially the end of it were loaded with pains. “Acquainted with grief” doubles the statement. *Choli* does not always refer to sickness, but may include all manner of grief, evil, misfortune. Lit.: “And the one conscious of grief.” Pains and grief sought the Servant, he attracted them like a magnet. These pains were not bodily diseases, but the effect of the sin and the guilt of the world, of the wrath, the curse, and the penalty taken from us and laid upon him, v. 5-6.

“And (he was) like hiding of face from him,” or “like making (one) hide the face away from him,” means that he was an object that aroused shudders, so that people veiled, their faces because they were unable to endure the sight. In the last line *nibseh*, “despised” reverts to the same word in line one, and the next clause states to what extent the Servant was despised by the Jews: “so that we considered him nothing,” *lo'* not the mere negative adverb “not,” but with the force of the noun “nothing.” Yes, the Jews were done with the Servant.

The third stanza, v. 4-6: *He bore our punishment.*

**[4] Truly, upon himself he took our griefs And our pains — them he bore. But we considered him as a stricken one, Smitten of God and**

**brought low. [5] But he — pierced was he for our transgressions, Crushed because of our iniquities. The penalty for our peace lay on him, And we are healed with his stripes. [6] All we like sheep have gone astray; We turned every one to his own way; And Jehovah made the iniquity of us all to meet on him.**

Here is the solution of the mystery of the suffering Servant of Jehovah. Here is the complete doctrine of expiation and of substitution. Here is what reached its climax and was finished on Golgotha. All three verses present contrasts.

*'Akhen* assures: “Truly” or surely. Voluntarily, hence in the noblest possible manner, he took upon himself “our griefs,” *cholajenu*. The emphasis is on “our” and on “he” (*hu*). In the second line: “our pains — them he loaded on himself” shifts the emphasis. *Naza'* in the first line == he took up, he loaded on himself; *sabal* in the second line == bear, drag along. “Our griefs” and “our pains” are the results of our sins; v. 5 names the sins themselves. Note the contrast: he bore what was ours to bear.

Yet while he did this for us, we Jews considered him *nagua'* (passive participle of the *qal*) as one struck by God’s judgment for his own criminality and his outrages against God, one at last smitten of God and brought low, *m'unneh*, one bowed down, bent to the dust, for having outraged the high majesty of the Almighty.

[5] But what were the facts? “But he (emphatic) — pierced was he for our transgressions.” “Pierced” to death, yea “crushed,” utterly smashed, because of our iniquities. The terms are physical, and “pierced” makes us think of the spear that pierced Jesus’ side and penetrated his heart, but the terms reach beyond the physical. The spirit of Jesus felt the penalty. Here now the sins themselves are mentioned: “our transgressions,” *p'scha'ejnu* and “our iniquities,” *'awonothejnu*, the latter indicative of the great guilt involved.

From the sins with their guilt the advance is made to the penalty, yet now with another contrast, namely “our peace”: the penalty imposed for the purpose of our peace. In *sch'lomenu*, *shalom* embraces our entire salvation, “peace” in the sense that all is well between God and us. John 20:19 and 21. The penalty he bore was for our peace. This purpose was attained: “We are healed with his stripes,” — another oxymoron, — by that

which for him was wounds or swollen welts. Here is the strange exchange of which Luther sang: *Er wechselt mit uns wunderbarlich, usw.*

[6] “Our transgressions — our iniquities” receive elucidation: “All we (lit.”our totality“) have gone astray.” This is followed by individualizing: “every one” turned to his own way. Like a herd of sheep, lost and helpless, not even conscious of its condition, so we all went astray, and there was no exception, each took his own way, none knew the way of God. Some interpret this as a reference to the Babylonian exile, but the prophet’s vision goes far beyond that to Israel’s fallen condition, Matt. 9:36. This going astray is spiritual. It was always Israel’s. sin. Israel came to be like the Gentile nations which God allowed to go their own way, Acts 14:16.

Israel deserved to be cast away, but “J ehovah let the iniquity (with its guilt) meet on him,” let it strike him, and not us. The soul that sinneth, it shall die (Ezek. 18:20), but Jehovah made a way of escape through his servant, — he let the deadly penalty strike him. God did this, the Servant voluntarily gave himself. Yes, he was one stricken of God, but stricken not for his sins, but for ours, for he was sinless.

The fourth stanza, v. 7-9: *Patiently he bore the penalty, although he was innocent.*

**[7] Maltreated was he; but he — he bowed himself, And his mouth he opened not, Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, And like a ewe that is dumb before its shearers, So he opened not his mouth. [8] By violence and judicial decree he was hurried away, And his contemporaries, — who (of them) considered it That out of the land of the living he was torn away? For the transgression of my people was the stroke upon him. [9] With scoundrels they appointed his grave; But with a rich man he was in his death, Because he had done no wrong, And no deceit was in his mouth.**

Maltreated — utterly patient — wholly innocent. This is the triangle of thought. *Niggas* is the main verb: “maltreated was he.” *Nagas* is the brutality of the tyrant, a *noges* the Egyptian slave-driver. So the Servant suffered brutality. The perfect fixes the image: he remains the maltreated one. So he showed the five wounds after his resurrection, Luke 24:39. How did the Servant receive this brutal abuse? “He bowed himself,” he was a

*na'aneh*, one continuously bowed. The Hebrew lays the emphasis on this being bowed by inserting *hu'*, "he," emphatic.

He never opened his mouth in objection (1 Pet. 2:23), he made no complaint. In this he was like a *seh*, a little lamb that is led away to be butchered, so silent, so inwardly unresisting. The tender image is doubled and thus emphasized. He was like a *rachel*, a ewe, a mother sheep lying dumb before her shearers. The lamb and the ewe are chosen because of the tenderness and the absolute gentleness implied. So unresisting was Jesus.

[8] The A.V. translates as if the deliverance were meant, but we are now told how the death of the Servant was brought about. We have the exposition of *niggas*, "maltreated," in v. 7. Violence was used, *min* is to be taken in the causative sense: "by means of violence and judicial procedure" he was rushed away to his death. The event is foretold exactly; so they did kill Jesus. Because of *min* some insist that here already the removal of Jesus from violence and wicked judges is referred to. This would have the wrong implication, that Jesus never came to die, but was delivered right out of the judicial procedure.

Yes, his judges rushed him to his death. *'Eth-doro* is an accusative of respect: "as regards his generation," his cotemporaries — who of them lamented it that he was torn away in death? *\_Sahha'r* == *bedenken*, consider. The Jews were glad they were rid of Jesus. The A.V. confuses this verse. By a violent verdict the rulers rushed him to death, and no one among the people even considered it. No one laments his violent death. The followers of Jesus did lament it, of them the prophet makes no mention; but even they did not understand the import of Jesus' death. The right consideration was this: "For the transgression of my people was the stroke upon him." This would have plunged all of them into deepest repentance and would have lifted all of them to faith. This last line sums up once more what is said in v. 4-5.

[9] A further indignity was to be his, to have his grave with the wicked. The verb is impersonal: *man wies ihm sein Grab an*. Regarded as godless himself, his body was to lie and to rot with the godless. The full import is this: executed and done to death as a criminal, his intended grave was the pit where other scoundrels rotted.

But God designed otherwise: “With a rich man he was in his death-condition,” *b’mothajw*. We know the fact: Jesus was buried in the wealthy Joseph’s tomb, in which no corpse had yet been placed. We pass by the difficulties of the Hebrew, glad that the thought is plain. The burial of Jesus still belongs to his humiliation, but the sacrifice on the cross had been finished, and no further brutal indignities were allowed by God. This act of protecting the dead body of Jesus took place “because he had done no wrong and no deceit was in his mouth,” — he was sinless, innocent, the Lamb of God without spot or blemish.

The fifth stanza, v. 10-12: *The divine exaltation of the Servant*.

**[10] Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him, make him grief. When his soul has brought a sin-offering, He shall see his seed, prolong his day, And the plans of Jehovah shall prosper in his hands. [11] For the labor of his soul he shall see refreshment; By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, justify many, For he shall bear their iniquities. [12] Therefore the many will I give him as his portion And the mighty shall he divide as spoils, — For this that he poured out his life in death And allowed himself to be numbered with transgressors, Whereas he bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.**

What came upon Jehovah’s Servant was due to Jehovah himself. “It pleased Jehovah” refers to the good pleasure of his grace, which planned to redeem us. “To bruise or crush him” is amplified by *hecheli* (3rd person singular masculine hifil from *chala*): “made or caused grief.” The suffering and the death is meant, which is the price of our redemption.

The next three lines state Jehovah’s plan regarding his Servant: when his soul shall have brought the offering for sin by dying on the cross, he shall receive all the blessed fruits, namely “he shall see his seed” (John 12:24), a vast spiritual progeny of men saved; “he shall prolong his days,” according to Rev. 1:18: “I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore.” In addition, the plans, the intentions of Jehovah shall prosper in his hands, he, the great Mediator, bringing them to glorious completion.

[11] The reward of the Servant is further unfolded. *Jir’eh sera*’, “he shall see his seed,” has the companion *jir’eh jisba*’, “he shall see refreshment.” Min before *’amal* is again ethically causal: “due to the labor of his soul” the

Servant “shall see refreshment.” To see refreshment == is to be refreshed. The righteous Servant shall pronounce righteous many by his knowledge, *jazdiq*, the verb and all derivatives are always forensic. Note the conjunction of *jazd’iq zaddiq*, “shall pronounce righteous the righteous one,” *zaddiq* a noun and not just an adjective (A.V. “my righteous servant”). He who became our righteousness by his holy life, sufferings, and death shall acquit many. The fruit of his labor shall be great and vast indeed. Personal justification is meant. Not the analytic verdict which finds a man righteous and in justice declares him so; but the synthetic verdict, which finds no righteousness in a man but for the sake of the righteousness of another imputes this to him and so declares him righteous. We must consider *b’da’tho*, “by his knowledge” subjectively, the knowledge of the Servant, not objectively, knowledge regarding him, possessed by those whom he declares righteous. This must be the case because of 11:2 and 4a, a parallel to the line we are discussing. The Servant knows all the ways of Jehovah and applies his knowledge in declaring many righteous.

The reason for the acquittal is the fact that he shall bear their iniquities. The Servant is a Priest for ever after the manner of Melchizedek, Ps. 110:4. Not that he shall always suffer and so bear ever anew by expiating; but he shall take their sins from them by making them his own. Like all the other future tenses, this last one is continuous and durative. “I lay my sins on Jesus.”

[12] Like the A.V., many others have misconceived these lines. Pieper gives a list of the wrong translations of notable men. Surely the *rabbim* are the same *rabbim*, “many,” as those mentioned in v. 11. They are the ones whom the Servant declares righteous. The second mistake occurs in mistranslating *’achalleq-lo* “I will divide him a portion” with others, he sharing it with them, whereas the verb always means to divide out, to apportion to one his portion, to give him as a portion. “The many” constitute the portion allotted by Jehovah to the Servant, they are his seed.

Now the next line is clear: he shall divide the mighty as spoil, win them and apportion them to himself. To think that he shall divide the spoil with the great (A.V. and other translators) makes no sense, — for who would those great ones be, who might be great enough to stand beside Christ when the spoil is divided. “The mighty” are the spoil, and Christ takes them for himself. That he does not divide the mighty and apportion them to other



persons is plain, he takes them for his own. Luther is right: *er soll die Starken zum Raube haben*.

All this shall be his reward: “for this that he poured out his soul (life) into death,” as the expiation and offering for sin (v. 8 and 10), “and allowed himself to be numbered with transgressors,” i.e. criminals, his body too to be cast into the pit with them (v. 9), “whereas” the fact is “he bore the sins of many,” he the one for all the others, “and made intercession for the transgressors” as the true High Priest.

Luke 12:37, Jesus himself says: “And he was reckoned among the transgressors,” a prophecy that had to be fulfilled. The reference to Christ’s intercession is new, hence “and” == “yea even” this he did. The intercession is the climax of the perfect action of the great *'Ebed Yahweh* when he died on Golgotha.

We have in this section the awful humiliation:

1. Its fearful depth.
2. The Vicarious suffering as our substitute.
3. The patience and the innocence.
4. The cause, God’s judgment and good pleasure.

Next we have the glorious reward:

1. Already in his honorable burial.
2. Then in his long life and his numerous seed.
3. The refreshment of his soul in saving this seed.
4. The dominion over the many and the mighty.

The treatment which is accorded this grandiose section by the critical commentators is “beneath all criticism,” as the Germans express it. Trivial, distorted, unheard-of ideas are substituted apparently just to get rid of the truths expressed by the prophet. These men are no blessing to the Church. We kneel before the image of the Suffering Savior here painted by the great evangelist of the Old Testament and pray:

“Be thou my consolation and when I die my shield;  
Let me behold thy Passion when I my breath must yield,

Mine eyes, to thee uplifted, upon thy cross shall dwell,  
My heart by faith enfold thee: who dieth thus dies well.”

Paul Gerhardt. *Am. Luth. Hymnal*, 383.

## Homiletical Aid

This is the day when the price was paid in blood for you and for me.

### The Death of our Heavenly Savior.

- I. A fearful death.
  1. Our sins, transgressions, iniquities killed him.
  2. The sins of all of us, think of their terrific guilt.
  3. God laid them all on him: Penalty, wounds, stripes, sacrifice for sin, lamb, dead, buried, all the fearful features.
- II. A fruitful death.
  1. The sin is borne, the expiation is made; atonement for us all.
  2. The saved: the seed, many saved, declared righteous, the Lord's plans executed, etc.
  3. This is the Savior who saves indeed, before his cross kneel and pray.

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### The Death on Golgotha.

I. Painful. II. Terrifying. III. Expiating. IV. Saving.

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### The Man of Sorrows.

- I. No humiliation as deep as his.
- II. No load as heavy as his.
- III. No suffering as noble as his.

IV. No reward as glorious as his.

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We may sum up Isaiah's wonderful prophecy in the one expression:

**Bruised for Our Iniquities.**

This explains

- I. Why he was born so lowly, in the first place. A tender plant, a root-sprout in dry ground. No form nor comeliness.
- II. Why his suffering was so great.  
Too fearful to look upon.  
The violence, the outrage of innocence, the frightful judicial verdict, the callousness of the people, the abuse in detail.  
All the sins of men vented themselves upon the sinbearer, each stabbed him in its own way.
- III. Why his expiation is so complete.  
He bore all the sins of all men.  
His very burial showed that no more was left to bear.  
His stripes are our healing.
- IV. Why his reward is so glorious.  
Lives for ever in glory.  
Brings all God's plans to glorious completion.  
The many his seed.  
The many justified and saved.  
The spoils of his victory.

He was bruised for my iniquities.

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## **The Death of Jesus Christ on the Cross.**

- I. The great, praiseworthy sacrifice of God's love for us sinners.
- II. The ground of our reconciliation to God and of our justification in his sight.
- III. The safe guarantee of our eternal salvation.

C. C. Schmidt, *Weg des Lebens*.

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I abbreviate the formulation of H. Wy. in *\_Magazin\_* etc. vol. 8.

## **Our Redemption on Golgotha.**

- I. It is solidly founded.
- II. It is full of supreme comfort.

# The Easter Cycle

## The Christian Living in the Victory of Christ's Resurrection

### **Easter**

*Celebrating the Victory of the Resurrection*

### **Quasimodogeniti**

*Faith, the Victory Over the World*

### **Misericordias Domini**

*Following in the Supreme Victor's Steps*

### **Jubilate**

*“Putting to Silence the Ignorance of Foolish Men”*

# Easter. 1 Cor. 5:6-8

## Christ our Passover

The Easter cycle is like the Epiphany cycle, it begins with a burst of glory. Lent slowly climbs to its height, Christmas has its preparation, but Easter comes unannounced like a heavenly surprise. The theme of the cycle is

### **The Christian Living in the Victory of Christ's Resurrection.**

Easter Day itself presents *The Christian Celebrating the Victory of the Resurrection*. "Let us keep the feast!" keep it as it deserves to be kept.

Quasimodogeniti is considered as the octave of Easter, completing the high festival: *Faith is the Christian's victory over the world*, faith in the Son of God who arose from the dead.

Misericordias Domini shows *The Christian Walking in the Steps of the Shepherd and Bishop of His Soul*, who defeated the hellish wolf (see the gospel).

In this series of ancient texts Jubilate closes the cycle; in the modern selections the Easter cycle includes Cantate. *The Victory of Obedience* is the sum of this epistle text.

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The gospels for the high festivals of the Church Year *celebrate the historical fact of the saving deeds of God*; they make no application of these facts, allowing the facts to produce their own effects. Homiletical-ly all of these histories are rated as histories of the first rank. Without them there would be no salvation. If some other events had not occurred, our salvation would nevertheless be secured. In the pulpit these histories must be treated by homiletical appropriation, and not by homiletical application. See *The*

*Sermon 225* etc. The latter type of treatment would be a homiletical crime of the worst type.

The epistles for the high festivals do not intend to repeat the festival historical facts, but deal with *the effect of the historical facts* as presented by the festival gospels. When this is borne in mind the epistle for the Easter festival will cease to appear strange, its appropriateness and its beauty will be seen. For the epistle even speaks of the celebration of Easter. -It was the Jewish Easter or Passover, the imagery of which our epistle uses, but it is festive. Christ's death on Calvary and his resurrection on the third day underlie this text, for without these two acts there could be no new leaven of a Christian festival. Yes, our celebration of Easter must be a proper and a truly Christian celebration. With this our text deals.

When we consider that these words were originally addressed to the Christians in Corinth and are now applied to us as necessary for our Easter celebration, it might appear that homiletical *application* is in place. But this is only appearance. When we now read the words, we do not think of the Corinthians, they seem to be addressed directly to us. They come to bring us anew the risen Christ with all his victorious power. We thus receive him, — if the preacher knows his homiletical business, — and this is *appropriation*, as it should be for the greatest festival of the Church Year.

Paul has just dealt with the case of incest and has sent the Corinthians a formal resolution which they are to adopt for expelling the terrible sinner. Finally they are to cleanse themselves from the guilt of participation in this sin. "They should long before have taken such action of their own accord, should have done this when the sin first became known. It was a serious blot on the congregation to allow it to go on without such congregational action. It is to this that the apostle refers when he says: **Your reason for glory is not good**, καλόν, morally excellent. With such an open, flagrant sin in their midst, worse than the sins of heathen people, how could they claim any καύχημα at all? Distinguish this word, "cause for glorying," from καύχησις, "the act of glorying." Our versions have "glorying," which denotes the act: that you Corinthians glory and boast of your Christianity. But this is incorrect: it is the matter in which they glory that Paul says is not καλόν. Paul is not saying, as he has been understood to say: "It is bad, in the face of your delinquency in this case of incest, to boast; you ought to close your mouth and rather be deeply ashamed." Paul is saying: "The thing of

which you boast is hollow and bad and not at all a reason for boasting.” Note that when we really have something creditable, the act of boasting is not wrong but in order. The Corinthians may speak of wisdom, great spiritual charismata, etc., as long as they allow such a flagrant sinner to continue in their midst, all reason for their boasting is useless.

It is always thus. It may not be incest, it may be some other moral blotch or, still worse, some sin against faith and confession that rests upon a congregation and its preacher. When now they celebrate Easter with music and lilies and act as if all were well with them, the whole *καύχημα* is *οὐ καλόν*, — hollow, useless, misleading. Let worldliness parade itself in a church, and what good is it to boast of your church work? Let doctrinal laxity and corresponding laxity in practice be a preacher’s position, let him take in people that he should keep out, and fraternize with preachers and with churches that are not his brethren in faith and confession, what has he done to his cause of boasting? Oh, he may boast loudly enough, but the real cause for Christian boasting has suffered a fatal blow.

[6] But if in one respect we may have no ground for boasting, does that remove the grounds we may have in other respects? It does. **Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the entire lump?** Paul may be appropriating a proverbial expression or a common saying. But aside from its source, everyone knows what a little yeast will do to a mass of dough; it will penetrate the entire lump and cause it to swell or “rise.” One might say that the case of incest in Corinth was only one case, confined to one member, and that Paul is not warranted in generalizing so as to involve the entire congregation. If Paul would not have said a word about it, if he had never found out about that case, the insidious leaven would nevertheless have worked; for when the case became known among the membership, it challenged all of them as to whether they would tolerate it or take action to rid themselves of participative guilt. The thing worked like yeast, — there was no stopping it. All the Corinthians were involved whether they wanted to be or not.

In the New Testament yeast or leaven is used figuratively in both a good sense (Jesus in the parable, Matt. 13:33), and in an evil sense (Jesus regarding the teaching of the Pharisees, Matt. 16:6-12; Paul a second time in Gal. v. 9). The point of the saying lies in the contrast between “little” leaven and the “entire” lump.



[7] It is evident that if the whole lump is not to be penetrated and involved, the leaven must be promptly removed. **Clean out the old leaven, in order that you may be a new lump, even as you are unleavened!** Yet Paul does not deceive himself and think that the removal of the one bad case, or for that matter if there were more, the removal of such cases from the congregation is enough. The matter is not as simple as that. This and similar cases are not the dangerous leaven. “The old leaven” that needs to be cleaned out is the old disposition left over from the old former life which cares little or nothing about sins and also little or nothing about sound doctrine, true confession, and safe practice (Gal. v. 9). This old worldly, indifferent, contaminating disposition must be completely removed: ἔκκαθάρατε, a peremptory aorist, fortified by ἔκ.

The figure of thoroughly cleaning out the old leaven is taken from the Jewish custom of removing all leaven and anything leavened from the house in preparation for the Jewish Passover Feast. The bread that was then eaten was unleavened, baked without yeast, in thin sheets. This figure suggested itself to Paul because he was writing this letter shortly before the time of the Jewish Passover. We cannot say that this Jewish festival was continued in the Christian congregations, nor can we assert that the Christian Easter celebration had already been inaugurated. What is certain is, that time was counted according to these Jewish festivals. It is thus that we are able to date the approximate time of the year in which First Corinthians was written.

In the purpose clause: “in order that you may be a new lump,” note the word used for “new,” νέος, new as never having existed before, and thus differing from καινός, new as compared with something old. In Eph. 4:23-24 derivatives from both adjectives are used, and, of course, are applicable. Yet here Paul has the stronger word. We are not to be new only as compared with our old and former condition, but so new that nothing old can be said to have existed. We are to be a lump of dough freshly mixed, from which unleavened bread for festival use is to be baked, which no yeast is ever to touch. Our Christian character and life is to be like an entirely fresh beginning. This is what Easter which celebrates the glorious resurrection of Christ is to produce in us. For his resurrection signifies that his atoning sacrifice has been accepted by God as all-sufficient for the sins of all men. To attest that acceptance God raised Jesus from the dead. In the power of

this atoning sacrifice so accepted we are to be a new lump, free from corrupting leaven.

Yet Paul adds: “even as you are unleavened.” For this is not the first time that the Corinthians are to appropriate this cleansing power of Christ. It is because they are ἄζυμοι, “unleavened,” that all the old leaven must be kept away. “Even as” means that being “a new lump” accords with the grace the Corinthians already have and which made them clean and unleavened when Christ was originally brought to them. Paul reminds the Corinthians of what they really are as Christians, namely “unleavened.” For such people it would be altogether abnormal to allow the old leaven to be introduced again, as Satan was attempting to do through the egregious case that had developed, in which also he had had a certain degree of success. Καθώς often indicates norm. The copula ἔστέ has no stress whatever and we should not translate: “according as you are unleavened.”

“Even as you are unleavened” appeals to the subjective motive in the hearts of Paul’s readers. It does this with regard to us today. But there is also the greatest possible objective motive or reason for the cleansing which the apostle here enjoins. Thus “also” (καί) adds and “for” names the reason. **For also our Passover was sacrificed, Christ.** The emphasis is not on “our,” otherwise this pronoun would precede the noun, but on πάσχα, “Passover,” and on the apposition “Christ,” placed in the emphatic position at the end. The verb θύειν == to send up in smoke and thus, in a modified sense, to slay, to sacrifice.

Paul extends the figure of the leaven that was removed for the proper celebration of the Jewish festival by adding the lamb that was sacrificed and that constituted the Jewish Passover. This lamb was roasted entirely, no bone was broken, and it was eaten by the family, by a group large enough to consume it entirely. See my *Interpretation* of St. Matthew, page 996, for a description of the Passover ritual. It is not this eating of which Paul speaks, but he refers to the slaying of the lamb, which typified the sacrificial death of Christ. He is called “our Passover” because he is the antitype, the fulfillment of all that the slain Passover lambs of Israel promised. The point is clear: the Passover Lamb is slain, Christ is sacrificed on the cross, our great Passover Feast has thus begun. How could we still have any of the old leaven about? This would be an utter contradiction. If such a thing would be a frightful matter in the case of the Jews, where it was a matter of the sacred

ceremonial ritual, how much worse would it not be for us Christians who have our divine Lamb, slain for the deliverance of the world? When Paul speaks of the Passover that was slain he refers to all the Jewish lambs, those slain at the first Passover in Egypt and those slain at the yearly celebrations since that time.

[8] One might think that this text refers only to the slaying of Christ and thus to the death that occurred on Good Friday, and in consequence might conclude that this is not a good text for Easter. But that would be a mistake. For Paul continues: **And so let us celebrate, not with old leaven, neither with leaven of badness and wickedness, but with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.** Ἐορτάζωμεν == let us keep festival, make a festive celebration, hortative subjunctive, and not dependent on ὥστε, “and so.” Paul means that this festive celebration is to continue throughout our entire life. The Christian Easter festival had not yet been introduced. The Jewish festival day and week belonged to the Jews, and it was superseded since Christ died and rose again. Please note that all of our Christian Sundays (they are not Sabbaths!) are so many Easter festivals. Though Paul says only that our Passover was slain, and this refers to Christ, he includes Christ’s resurrection. For if Christ had not been raised up, his slaying would have been in vain, no everlasting festival of joy would have resulted. 1 Cor. 15:13-20 makes that very plain. While here only the slaying is mentioned, and yet as including the resurrection, so in other places the reverse is done: the resurrection alone is mentioned, yet always as including the death.

Since Paul’s hortation, a durative present tense, takes in the entire Christian life, this naturally includes our present Easter festival, which, although it has been fixed to occur on a certain Sunday, is to illumine our entire life just as effectively as it makes glorious the one day. The Easter sermon should always carry that thought.

Paul’s modifiers retain the idea of the celebration and the figure he has been using in such an expressive manner. We are ever to keep festival with Christ “not with old leaven” (no article) of any kind. Everything that in any way pertains to the old worldly mind, thought, disposition, way of life, is to be swept out. This specification is general and comprehensive. The slain and risen Savior, who has cleansed us from all sin and introduced us into a new life, is to fill our hearts completely. Easter purity and joy is to be ours throughout our life.

“Nor with leaven of badness and wickedness” specifies. The genitives are appositional. One type of leaven is κακία, a condition of moral baseness and meanness, and its companion leaven πονησία, active, vicious wickedness. These two conditions are the basis of a large number of sins and then of the disregard of the sins-which they produce. What a celebration that would be which is engaged in by hearts so leavened?

Beside the negative Paul places the positive: “but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth,” untouched by anything like leaven. As the opposite of ζύμη the neuter plural ἄζυμα, *matzoth*, *Ungesaeuertes*, is used, which means thin sheets of bread baked without yeast. Τὰ ἄζυμα with the article was used as a name for the festival itself. The genitives are again appositional. Εἰλικρινεΐα == purity in the sense of being unmixed with foreign substances. In this connection the foreign substance would be the spreading yeast spores. Ἀλήθεια == truth, here in the sense of a moral quality, the inner desire for nothing but the divinely revealed realities, the abhorrence of all lies, deceptions, hypocrisies, and shams. Feast on this kind of bread, Paul says.

## Homiletical Aid

The greatest Christian festival. Our divine Savior gloriously triumphant over sin and death. The work of redemption for ever done. The fruits of this work are ours by faith today, forgiveness, a new life, hope of heaven.

We celebrate today, but this is to effect our entire life. Celebrate as our Lord intends. You must have for this celebration

### **The True Easter Heart.**

- I. Full of the great Easter faith.
  1. The Jewish Passover. The lamb slain. Its blood on every house. Its flesh eaten by every Israelite. Its efficacy derived from Christ by means of faith.
  2. Our Passover Lamb Christ. God’s Son in human flesh. Spotless, his voluntary sacrificial death. All-sufficient, sealed as

such by God who raised him from the dead. The efficacy of his death and his resurrection ours by means of faith.

3. The Easter joy this faith spreads over our entire life. The Lord's Supper in which the Risen Lord gives us his true body and his true blood, with which he bought our salvation, to seal us as his own.

## II. Full of the great Easter purity.

1. The Jewish purging out of all leaven. Its significance. Faith in the significance of the Paschal lamb is a faith that keeps clean and clear of the old sins.
2. The old leaven that would corrupt our hearts and our lives. The old baseness and wickedness, caring little or nothing about sin, about violations of the Gospel doctrines, the confessions, and the right practice of the church. Asking not what saith the Risen Lord, but what say and do other people, etc.
3. The Easter heart full of unadulterated purity of thought, will and desire full of love for nothing save God's truth and Gospel.
4. The joy of having such a heart at this Easter festival, at the Communion table, and throughout our life.

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Easter! Its glorious and eternal fact.

Easter! Its blessed and enduring effect.

The fact outside of you, whether you believe it or not; the effect must be inside your hearts by faith. The way in which St. Paul impresses this upon us by looking at Easter in the light of the ancient Jewish celebration. He makes us look at

### **The Leaven and the Lamb.**

- I. Clean out the leaven that the lamb may be brought in!
  1. The leaven and the lamb symbolize opposites. Hence all of the leaven was cleaned out, before the Jewish Passover lamb could be

brought in.

2. This is symbolism for the leaven of sin, etc., and for our great Passover Lamb, slain for our sins and raised for our justification. To have the divine Lamb by faith for salvation, the leaven of sin cannot be left in your heart.
3. The blessedness of the riddance of sin; the gloriousness of possessing the Lamb of God. By faith all our life long, one heavenly Easter. Every time we commune.

II. Then glory in the Lamb alone!

1. *καύχημα* The of so many, like that of the Corinthians, is “not excellent.” They boast of many things while the open blemishes of confession, of members allowed to vote and to commune, at funerals, etc., etc., cry out against them. The old leaven of indifference and worldly thinking works on unchecked. Cause for deepest repentance, not for glorying and for boasts.
2. To glory in the Lamb alone is to be free of the old leaven and to have the hearts filled with sincerity (purity) and love of truth.

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Easter hallelujahs, which shall echo throughout our entire life.

**Our Easter Passover is Sacrificed for Us.**

- I. The Lamb that was slain in sacrifice for the expiation of our sins.
- II. The Lamb that was raised from death in proof of the perfect efficacy of his sacrifice accepted by God.
- III. The Lamb of our faith, purging us by justification and the bestowal of a new life.
- IV. The Lamb of our joy here and hereafter. Now in his Word, then face to face in glory.

Great the Easter event (add a few words)!

Great must the Easter celebration be (add a few words)! The celebration which alone harmonizes with the event is that in which

### **The Lamb is at our Easter Feast.**

- I. The slain and living Lamb with his atonement, expiation, assurance, comfort, peace, power of a new life, glory of hope.
- II. With no old leaven to bar him out. Those who stage Easter feasts with their old leaven spreading the abomination of worldliness, indifference to sin, violation of the true confessions, tainted and false membership, etc. Though the music be angelic, the Lamb is not there. 'Even the cunning modernists have no substitute for him. Shall we even leave a doubt as to his presence in our Easter service this morning?
- III. With pure and unmixed faith to glory in him and his resurrection alone, making no boast of what we have done, but only giving glory to what he has done for us and still does in us, our great delight thus unleavened bread of pureness and of truth which comes from his Word alone.

Celebrating such a feast is joy at the time of the celebration and is a blessing ever after.

# Quasimodogeniti. 1 John V. 4-10

## Our Faith, the Victory

Quasimodogeniti is the octave of Easter. The resurrection is too great an event to be celebrated only on one or on two days. The celebration extends to this Sunday and the jubilant note continues. The subject of this cycle is The Victorious Christian, and the text tells us in what his victory consists, *The Victory is our Faith*. The gospel is John 20:19-31. By means of his blessing of peace Jesus the Risen Lord sends out forgiveness through his apostles and says: “Blessed are they that have not seen and yet believed.” Thus also the note of the gospel is faith.

The dominating term in v. 1-3 is still “love.” John has touched on “faith” and on “testimony,” but now he joins the two and develops them in his wonderful manner. **Because everyone who has been born from God (reaching back into 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; v. 1) is victorious over the world; and this is the victory, the one that becomes victorious over the world, our faith.**

John writes about victory in 2:13-14, the Victory to the young men who are strong and who have overcome the wicked one. He tells these young men not to love the world. The world is the domain over which the wicked one rules; he is the prince of this world, and the world lies in the wicked one. The present statement includes all Christians, and when John writes “our faith” he includes himself. All Christians are victorious over the world, otherwise they are not Christians. There are only two classes of human beings, victors and vanquished.

Ὅτι == “because”: here is the reason why God’s commandments, the sum of which is love, are not grievous, i.e. burdensome to us (V. 3), it is



because all of us, who have been born again, have overcome the world. The world is no longer able to make us love the things that are in it, and thus to interfere with our love to God and with the expression of this love, the doing of God's commandments. The close connection between love and keeping the commandments is seen in John 14:15:21:23; 15:10.

To have been born ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ means to be regenerate. Ἐκ denotes that our birth is "from" or "out of" God (source). This means a spiritual birth, or instead of using the word "birth" we might say, the obtaining of the true "life." The perfect participle "he who has been born" refers to the present state, for birth ushers into life and this continues. When John says that every person born from God "keeps conquering or being victorious" (durative present) over the world, he mentions this victoriousness as the evidence of our new spiritual life, and thus of our birth and entrance into this life. There is a Virile, manly note in the word *writ*, "is victorious over." Our birth did not give us a weak little spark of life, unable to fight and to gain victories, but a strong tide of life, full of power to trample the world under foot.

"The world" is to be understood in the ethical sense, a collective for all that is hostile to God and Christ here on earth. The conception here is not that this world allures and seduces us with its ungodly solicitation, but that it attacks us and that it loses the battle. Yes, the world is out to destroy our spiritual life. We must fight, if we would win. Christianity knows no passivity in this respect. John states what the victory is: "this is the victory, the one that becomes victorious Over the world, our faith." Note how the words expressive of victory are repeated. A triumph rings through them. This second mention of the world shows the greatness of this victory. We are world-victors, world-conquerors. This is no small victory. All others are conquered by the world and its rulers, but not we. In all the world there is no power able to triumph over our life. The attributive participle has its own article and is therefore emphatic: this great victory that overcomes no less than the world. It is an aorist, either ingressive: "that becomes victorious," or constative: "that overcame" (summing up the whole course of Victory).

We might think that John should say: this victory is our love. Not that he could not have said this, for the love of the world is conquered by our love of God and of Christ. But love itself is only evidence of something else in us, from which love springs, and that is "our faith." So also to have been born from God goes beyond the evidence of our love to God, goes down to

the very life we have received. Our spiritual life, then, we may say, is our faith. Here John does not speak of the receptive quality of this faith. In this respect it is like the eye into which the light falls and thus enables it to see, or like the ear into which the sound falls and enables it to hear. This is the saving side of faith, and this is what is meant by Paul's phrases ἔκ πίστεως (Rom. 1:17 and elsewhere), that faith is the source of our justification. This could not be said about any activity of our faith, for that would be rank Pelagianism, worse than synergism. When Paul's ἔκ makes faith the source, it is the contents of faith that is meant, faith as the cup filled with Christ and his merits, from the first instant of its existence onward. This content is in our faith and saves us without added effort of our own, even when we are asleep or lie unconscious in a coma. This is our great comfort at all times, especially in the instant of death.

When faith is described as Victory over the world, as the source of the love which casts out the love of the world, the energetic, operative side of faith is meant. Luther, who knew justifying faith so well, has also described this sanctifying activity: before you have a chance to tell faith what it should do to please God, it has already run and done it all. Of course, this means a healthy faith, fed on the Word, and made strong accordingly. When faith is weak, sickly, stunted, puny, there is not much victory in it.

[5] Here too John is not content with the mere word "faith," but he adds the contents of this faith; for the victorious power of faith is not due to the intensity of our believing, but to the object in which we believe. You may believe all you please, it will help you nothing, in fact, will ruin you the more, if you do not believe the truth, i.e. trust in Christ. So John asks with a dramatic touch: **Now who is the one that is victorious over the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?** The answer is incorporated in the question, with the thought that no one will think otherwise. If our victory is our faith, then the victor is the believer, and thus the abstract statement becomes concrete.

Everything depends on *what* one believes. Believing a fiction, a fable, a false doctrine, a lie, a deception is no victory for the believer, but for the prince of this world. A few victories for him along this line and soon the enemy will have won the fortress. The conception is popular that we may give up this, that, and the other doctrine, as long as we believe the central one. But this is folly. These doctrines are not distant outposts which may

fall and not effect our central fortifications; all of these are integral parts of the central fortification, and to give up any of them is to allow the enemy to make a breach in our central fortification. And what that means we need not say. Many preachers will be saved only as by fire. 1 Cor. 3:15. John has said much about the light, the truth, the Word. He now states the substance: “that Jesus is the Son of God,” — in v. 1 “that Jesus is the Christ.” To name this as the substance is to strike at the heretic Cerinthus. He had his headquarters at Ephesus and taught that Jesus was the physical son of Joseph; that “the eon Christ” was joined to Jesus at his Baptism, but left Jesus before his Passion and death, so that a mere man died on the cross; he rejected the gospels and Paul’s letters, and accepted only parts of Matthew and Mark.

He was a former Jew who hailed from Egypt and he sought to construct a spiritual Monism or universal religion. He is the founder of Gnosticism, also a chiliast.

John here says “that Jesus is the Son of God” and thus connects with all that he says in 1:1-3, 7; 2:1-21, 22-23; 3:8, 23; 4:9-10, 15; 5:1, regarding the deity of Jesus and regarding his blood. It would be a great mistake to think that John is here mentioning only one article of faith. That Jesus is the Son of God is the sum and substance of all the articles. It is the entire Gospel. It is the whole fort, not only one tower of it. It is in this sense that John proceeds:

**[6] This One is the One who came by means of water and blood; not in connection with water alone, but in connection with the water and in connection with the blood.** We shall understand this better when we know the heresies of Cerinthus. Jesus, the physical son of Joseph, received “the eon Christ” at his Baptism, but this eon left Jesus again, so that he died on the cross as a mere ordinary man. John says that Jesus came (ὁ ἐλθών, aorist, historical) by means of both water and blood. John impresses these facts: “not in connection with water alone,” as Cerinthus claimed, “but in connection with the water,” namely of his Baptism, “and in connection with the blood” shed on Golgotha. “The One who came” refers to the coming of Jesus on his mission. His mission began with his Baptism, by which he ranged himself alongside of the sinners to work out their salvation. God sent the Holy Spirit upon him and installed him into his great office. So he came.

But also “in connection with the blood,” when by his expiation and atoning sacrifice he completed his redemptive mission on the cross. Note that we have two ἔν with the water and the blood, hence these two are not combined into one act. The reference is not to the water and the blood that flowed from Christ’s pierced side. Many misunderstand ἔν and try to make “in” local, or indicating means, or circumstance. So also διὰ. Jesus did not wade through (local) water and blood or in water and blood. Ἐν is used in its original sense: he came on his great mission “in connection with.” the water and with the blood. How this is meant as regards the water Mi states, he used water as the means in Baptism when beginning his office. When the historical sense of ὁ ἔλθών, “the One that came,” is lost, we get all sorts of vagaries. We mention only Besser, who here thinks of the two Sacraments.

Our faith has this contents regarding Jesus and his mission. But on what testimony does our faith rest? Here John combines with 1:2 and 4:14: “we are testifying.” Our faith rests on true testimony. Here the ultimate witness is named. **And the Spirit is the One giving testimony, because the Spirit is the truth.** John and the apostles are the intermediate, the human witnesses. It was sufficient to refer to them in 1:2 and 4:14. But John had to go back to the ultimate, the divine witness, to show the full Victorious and triumphant power of our faith.

The testimony of the Holy Spirit is so great because “the Spirit is the truth.” He is not merely “true,” but the embodiment of “the truth” itself. Jesus also says this regarding himself. Jesus calls him “the Spirit of the truth” (John 15:26; 16:13), and adds: “*He* shall testify concerning me.” To the apostles he says: “and you too testify, because from the beginning you are with me” (John 15:27). All this sheds light on 1:2; 4:14; and our present passage. The Spirit was given to the apostles, he testified through them as his mouthpieces (2 Pet. 1:21).

[7-8] But the law has ever required two or three witnesses (Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1). God himself adheres to this principle (Heb. 10:28-29); so does Jesus (Heb. 6:18; John 5:31-37). At the end of Revelation two witnesses attest the book. Hence John here states: **Because three are the ones giving testimony, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, and the three are for one thing,** i.e. their testimony is one identical thing. Not in one word do they disagree in regard to the deity of Jesus or in regard to anything else, for all radiates from this center and is bound up

with it. While the Spirit is a person, the water and the blood, the additional witnesses, are not persons, but it is not necessary that they should be. In Heb. 6:18 the second witness is not a second person. In John 5:36 the “works” testify.

The Baptism of Jesus speaks volumes in regard to the deity and the mission of Jesus. Besides the historical accounts which tell of the Father’s calling him “my Son,” consider John 1:29-34. The Passion of Jesus does the same, from the oath that Jesus swore before the Sanhedrin attesting his deity, to his testimony before Pilate and his words on the cross. Loudly “the blood” testifies. All this testimony is “one thing.”

Omit the interpolations of the A.V., the so-called *Comma Joanneum* and see Horn, *Introduction*, 7th ed., vol. IV, pp. 448-471 (exhaustive); Zahn, *Intro.* III, 372 adds a few points.

**[9] If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, because this is the testimony of God, (this) that he has given testimony in regard to his Son.** We certainly receive the testimony of men, and that regarding all matters, small as well as great. How can we object to receiving, how can we refuse to believe the testimony of God who is infinitely greater than men? God has sent us his three witnesses and we hear how their testimony agrees. Can we possibly disbelieve? And this testimony is not a testimony regarding some minor matter, but regarding a matter most vital to God and certainly most vital to us, to whom the testimony is sent, namely “that (ὅτι declarative, not causal) he has given testimony in regard to his Son.” The perfect μεμαρτύρηκε == he testified in the past, and ever since this testimony stands. See how John rings the changes on “testimony” and the verb “to testify.” All testimony and all testifying call for faith, and all faith rests on testimony. The terms are correlative.

[10] Eight times we have “testimony” and the verb “to testify”; seven times we have “God”; six times we have his “Son.” **The one believing in the Son of God has this testimony in him** (in his heart, for believing so receives it); **the one not believing God, has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony which God has testified concerning his Son.** This is certainly plain and to the point. The perfect tenses: “has made him a liar — has not believed,” revert to the moment when these acts began and include their continuous effect.

John does not say that the disbeliever “calls” God a liar, but that he “makes” him a liar. Note the emphasis in the Greek: a liar he makes him. Let the modernists of today face this designation of their crime. To make God a liar is the worst crime because God is so great, holy, true, and righteous. To make him a liar when he testifies to us concerning his Son is to commit the worst crime possible even against God, for he sent his Son into the world to save us by his blood.

What shall we say about the modernists who reject the Virgin birth, the deity of Jesus, and the blood that cleanses with divine power? Yet they claim fellowship with the God whom they have turned into a liar; but see 1:6 — by their claim of fellowship *they lie*, and even more, they do not the truth. To use “lie” and “liars” in these days is not in good taste. But when one speaks the honest truth as John here does the words are in place, even the word “antichrists” (2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7). Part of the lie of the modernists is the claim that Jesus never called himself the Son of God, and that the apostles did not call him this. Our text alone is sufficient answer.

Believing is no mere opinion, so that it makes little or no difference what one believes. It makes a world of difference in secular life whether what you believe is fact, reality, truth, or a lie. Trust the wrong bank and your money is lost. Trust the unsafe bridge, thinking it is safe, and you wreck your auto and kill yourself. Trust the tainted food or water thinking that it is wholesome, and you know the consequences. Trust false doctrine, and the results are according; trust not the Son of God and his blood, and you are lost, for there is no salvation except in him.

## Homiletical Aid

The devil and the world. The terrible power. Can they be conquered by you and by me? Yes.

### Our World-Conquering Faith.

- I. Its power.
  1. Born of God.

2. Its contents, that Jesus is the Son of God and came on his mission in connection with water (at the Jordan) and in connection with his blood (on Calvary).
3. Its victory over the whole world, all worldly powers drawing us into unbelief and sin. Add examples. All faith's victories are won in the power of the Son of God and his blood.

II. Its source.

1. The testimony of God, threefold.
2. True, incontrovertible. incontestable, invincible.
3. Those who make God a liar and are conquered by the world instead of conquering it. 4) We who believe and have God's true testimony in our hearts. We triumph.

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Human world-conquerors always hoped to rule over the world as their domain. We conquer the world to defeat its every attack.

### **Spiritual World-Conquerors.**

- I. They are mighty indeed. Not with might of their own, for then their defeat of the world would be a farcical undertaking. Their might must be divine. It is. They carry the Son of God in their hearts. In his might they conquer every foe.
- II. What is there about the deity of the Son that develops such power in us? His mission, begun at his Baptism in the Jordan when he shouldered the load of our sins by placing himself alongside of the sinners; finished on Calvary when he shed his expiating blood, went to his tomb, and rose again in triumph. These world-conquerors: They trust in the Baptism and in the blood of the Son of God. Thus fortified, no assault overthrows them.
- III. If you ask what makes them so Victoriously sure and certain, it is no mere human certainty, no confidence in a word of men, like all the confidence of skeptics and unbelievers. The assurance that conquers every assault rests on divine testimony, on God's witness, on his three

witnesses, the Spirit (in the Word), the Baptism, and the blood of Jesus, God's Son. These world-conquerors: They stand on the testimony of God himself. No wonder that no human cavils, fictions, lies are able to overcome them.

- IV. Thus our faith is the victory that ever overcomes the world. Describe some of the assaults and temptations. Even when one foolishly allows himself to be caught, he yet can win by repentance. So we are world-conquerors indeed. Yes: They defeat every assault the world can bring. The joy and the glory of this victory.

Note: In this sketch each part of the sermon is first developed, and then either at or near the close of the respective part its summary is succinctly stated. This type of sermon structure may be entirely new to you. Try it. It helps to add variety.

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Drifting with the world. Held by its tyrannous, deadly power. No way of escape but the one prepared by God.

### **God Makes Us Victors Over the World.**

It requires

- I. Jesus the Son of God, no less a person.
- II. The completion of the Son's mission, no less a work.
- III. The testimony of the Spirit, no less an assurance to make us strong and certain.
- IV. The new birth from God, taking us out of the world and making us children of God. V. Genuine faith, filled with the invincible truth.

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Note: You may withhold the mention of your subject and your theme for a time and thereby stimulate the minds of the hearers. If you keep your hearers in suspense too long, you will kill the stimulation. If you hide the



theme still longer, you will disgust your hearers. No one can teach you the psychological secret, — you must yourself know some things. —

What is the strongest thing in the world? The strange thing is that those who are physically weak may possess the strongest thing in the world. There is about it no outward show of strength. It has often proved itself stronger than death (martyrs).

### **The Strongest Thing in the World.**

Our text names it. You and I must possess it.

I. The faith of him who is born of God.

The source of strength is supernatural.

II. The faith in the Son of God.

The Stronger who overcame the strong one, whom faith embraces and makes its strength.

III. The faith resting on the testimony of God.

Testimony that no lie can overthrow, and that imparts invincible assurance and strength.

IV. The faith that conquers the world.

The strength of the world, of its deceptions and its temptations. See how many it holds in an iron grip. We are stronger, we conquer and triumph.

# Misericordias Domini. 1 Pet. 2:21-25

## Following in the Supreme Victor's Steps

This is the Sunday of “the Good Shepherd.” So Jesus calls himself in the gospel, John 10:11-16. Peter calls him “the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.” But this is not the Shepherd who leads to the green pastures and the still waters (Ps. 23:2). This is the Shepherd who meets the wolf, who lays down his life for the sheep (so the gospel), the Shepherd who bore our sins in his own body on the tree (so the epistle). Gospel and epistle agree perfectly. The former states for how many he laid down his life, that also he knows them and they know him. The epistle speaks of *Following in the Supreme Shepherd's Steps*. He has not only redeemed us, — in doing so he has also left us an example.

Peter's words are addressed to the slaves who are members of the churches (v. 18-20). Some of them may have to suffer a good deal at the hand of their pagan masters. The very fact that they have become Christians may call forth ill-treatment and abuse. This ill-treatment will increase when suddenly the provinces copy Nero's example and begin to persecute the Christians. Nero is making Christianity an illegal religion throughout the empire. Hitherto Christianity had not been distinguished from the Jewish religion. The latter enjoyed legal tolerance and this tolerance was extended also to Christianity; but now such tacit protection was to disappear. Peter's letter warns and fortifies the Christians in advance. Not a few of them were slaves. We must remember that the empire harbored great numbers of slaves, and Christianity won many of them as converts. Peter thus admonishes and instructs these slaves. When doing so, he dwells on the nobility of suffering innocently, unjustly, and for conscience sake, and thus points these slaves to Christ's noble example. While this example, however,

is so instructive for poor, helpless slaves, it also is applicable to all of us, even as he intended it not for slaves alone but for all of his followers.

**For for this you were called, because also Christ suffered in your behalf, leaving behind for you a writing-copy, in order that you may follow his tracks: [22] — he the One who did not do sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; [23] — he the One who, being reviled, kept not reviling in turn; suffering, kept not threatening, but kept committing (himself) to the One judging righteously; [24] — he the One who his own self carried up our sins in his body on the wood, in order that having ceased to exist for the sins we may live for righteousness; — he the One with whose stripes you were healed.**

“For this” means “this” that has already been stated, namely that you should suffer while doing good. Peter is still addressing slaves who, even if they serve as conscientiously as they can, may still be shamefully abused by their masters for no other reason than that they are Christians. Yet the “you” found in the inflectional ending of the verb and the pronoun “you” in v. 24 change to “our” and to “that we may live.” The ὅτι clause that follows cannot possibly state for what object the slaves were called; this ὅτι == because. The sense of the clauses is: “For (to explain what I say about your suffering) for this (i.e. such innocent suffering) you were called, because also (i.e. the reason for your being called to this suffering is) that Christ suffered in your behalf,” etc.

The great point is this: innocent suffering redeemed us. Hence we accept innocent suffering as part of our Christian calling. This is not defeat, it is victory.

“Christ also suffered for us” is repeated in a restatement in 3:18: “because also Christ suffered once for sins, One righteous instead of unrighteous ones,” etc. The time has come when we need make no defense for translating ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν “in your stead.” The papyri have answered all objections. I need refer only to the elucidations found in Robertson’s great *Grammar* and to the evidence furnished in his little book, *The Minister and his Greek New Testament*. To deny the idea of substitution to the phrase is not the result of linguistic knowledge, but of dogmatical prejudice, bent on destroying the doctrine the Church has ever held. Our very redemption was wrought by suffering that was not deserved by the Sufferer, by innocent

suffering borne instead of you and of me. That suffering purchased and won us (Luther's expression), and by doing this left us a ὑπογραμμὸν (found only here in the Bible), a writing or a drawing to be placed under another sheet and to be traced on that by the pupil, "writing to be used as a perfect model for copy." "An example" in our versions substitutes only the general idea for this picturesque Greek word.

In the purpose clause a different, though allied, figure is used: "in order that you may follow his tracks," ἵχνος, German *Spur*, footprints left in the soil. The aorist is effective: "actually follow." We must go the way the Master went. When doing the highest good for others he suffered. This is the reason why our call causes us to suffer in our humble way when we do good to others for conscience sake. Our suffering is never an expiation, hence never substitutionary. In that respect Christ's suffering is supreme. No; ours is only a copy, an imitation. For that reason too only suffering is mentioned here, and not death. After we are dead, our copy is finished.

[22] Four great relative clauses follow. They come with emphatic repetition, and thus are not the common relatives, but relatives with demonstrative force. We translate with no ordinary "who," but with: "he the One who." Indeed, "he is the One who did no sin!" The aorist states the historical fact as such, — he is the One, the only One who was absolutely sinless during his entire life.

"Neither was guile found in his mouth," — not even this trace of sin. Δόλος is the word for "bait," and it is also used for any cunning deceit by which others are misled to one's own advantage. Peter is not quoting Is. 53:9: "because lawlessness (ἀνομίαν, LXX) he did not do, nor was guile in his mouth"; he restates Isaiah. The thought agrees with James 3:2 which stresses the fact that sin of any kind will show itself first of all by means of the tongue. The reference to guile is so pertinent because Christian slaves, and also Christians in general, would be tempted to use a little guile to escape suffering and deem it no sin at all. The double statement regarding Christ presents him as absolutely innocent, and nevertheless he suffered. Who of us can claim such innocence?

Regarding the sinlessness of Christ compare Luke 23:41; John 8:46;; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15. All of the gospel records establish the fact of his sinlessness. We may note especially that in all clashes with his cunning

enemies no trace of evasion, equivocation, guile, deceit, or trickery is found, nothing but the pure, holy truth, — with this alone he vanquished them. At his trial before the Sanhedrin and before Pilate, when his life was at stake, he made oath to his Sonship and his deity and testified to his Kingship. His entire life was stainless. Skeptics may deny this, but they may as well tell us that the sun in the heavens is not bright.

[23] The second dramatic relative emphasizes two features of the sinless life of Jesus: he did not retort with reviling when he was reviled; when he was suffering, he uttered no threats. Under the severest provocation he remained calm and silent. When we read the record of this patience, we are struck by the holiness of his innocence. Think of how the Sanhedrists reviled him at the end of their mock trial and when they stood under his cross. If ever there was provocation, it was here. The imperfect tenses stand out among the aorists. All of them report historical facts, but the imperfects present them as moving before our eyes as they do in the film of a moving picture. The imperfects ask us to dwell on the actions, to note all that is in them: this entire stream of reviling, and in Jesus not one bitter word of reply; this mass of frightful suffering and from Jesus' lips not one word of threatening.

He did nothing beyond committing himself to God, the God who judges righteously. He did this by his silence. The verb is active and has no object in the Greek. We may translate: "he was making commitment to the One" etc.; or we may translate with an object supplied: "he committed himself." It is necessary that this statement be added. For the righteous and just God must reckon with the crimes perpetrated upon his sinless Son. Let no one suppose that when we are persecuted, wronged, reviled, abused, these wicked abusers will go free and not be brought to account by God. God rights every wrong. In Jesus we see his perfect trust in God in this respect. This is an outstanding feature of his sinlessness.

[24] The third demonstrative relative advances to the object of this sinless suffering of Christ, which is now our example when we are called upon to suffer while doing good. All Christ's suffering was endured for us, to rid us of sin to give us a new life of righteousness. The following modernistic thought is made impossible: when Christ lived here, there were very wicked men on earth, and he suffered terribly at their hand; and now when we live here, some men are equally wicked, and so we too must suffer

much. No; Christ suffered ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν *in your stead; your sins* caused his suffering and death. He is also our example, but his example is of no avail, unless we see and embrace his expiation for our sins, get freed from our sins through him, and thus enter upon a new life of true righteousness, in which we also as he did patiently endure what men may inflict upon us. Peter is no shallow moralist as are so many preachers in the pulpits of today. He knows that the example of Christ rests on his perfect, all-sufficient, and most efficacious atonement.

Ἀναφέρω is a ritual term (see the LXX translation of Lev. 14:20; also James 2:21). The verb tells us that Christ made a sacrifice. “The sins that are ours, he himself carried up in his body” etc. Peter speaks like his teacher, the Baptist, John 1:29 and 36. Sinless himself, Jesus carried up our sins, acting as our substitute. *Yahveh* laid on him the iniquity of us all, Is. 53:6, made his soul (life) an offering for sin (v. 10), to bear their iniquities, pouring out his soul (life) unto death (v. 11-12). Peter is exact: Christ carried up our sins “in his body” (Heb. 10:5); his body was slain in sacrifice. We see his body on the way to Golgotha, bruised and bloody, full of shame and pain, the victim led out to be put to death.

“He himself” carried this load — Voluntarily. “Upon the wood” (our versions have “tree,” but the Greek word for tree is not used in any of the passages that speak of Christ’s crucifixion) == accursed. Christ voluntarily died the death of the accursed. Here see Deut. 21:23; then Gal. 3:13; also Acts v. 30; 10:39. Even dead criminals were suspended on a wooden post to proclaim the fact that they died as accursed of God. Think not that the cross as used as a means of death for slaves and the worst type of criminals signifies only the ultimate of shame; to every Jew then and now it conveys the idea of God’s curse. He was accursed that we might escape the curse and be blessed. This is the heart of the Gospel. In all those passages that refer to Christ’s crucifixion the word is ξύλον, “wood,” not δένδρον, “tree,” or some other term. And now look at the LXX of Gen. 2:9 and 3:22, and then at Rev. 22:2. Strange to say, here we find the same word: “wood of life,” not the word *dendron*, “tree.” To find the same word employed for Christ’s cross, for the tree in Eden and for the trees in the Eternal City, strikes me as most remarkable.

“In order that having ceased to exist for the sins we may live for righteousness” states the great purpose of Christ’s sacrifice. Ἀπογίνομαι ==

cease to exist and thus governs the dative. The word is used as the opposite of γίνομαι, “to be or to exist.” The word does not mean “die” (our versions), in fact, Peter does not use “die” even with reference to Christ. The thought is simple. The sins that once held us before faith and repentance brought us to Christ claim us no longer, we have disappeared from their sight, gone out of existence as far as they and their hold on us are concerned. We now live for righteousness, for that which the verdict of God approves, not wholly sinless indeed, yet so that righteousness is our aim and goal.

We regard also this fourth relative as a demonstrative: “he the One with whose stripes you were healed,” μώλωπι a collective, hence in our translation a plural. The bloody welts raised by the scourge upon the body of Jesus, at the ends of which gaping holes were torn into his flesh by the pieces of bone fastened to the ends of the lashes, these “stripes” healed us. The statement is highly paradoxical. It carries the idea of substitution to its climax. Do not introduce the idea of diseases that were healed by the stripes. Those blows should have struck us, but Christ interposed himself, and so because they fell on him, we escape and in this manner are healed. Peter again reverts to Isaiah.

[25] “For” is explanatory of all the preceding relative clauses. **For you were as sheep wandering astray, but turned yourselves now to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.** Here is part of Is. 53:6, the sheep wandering astray, with no one to act as their shepherd. So Jesus saw the Jews, Matt. 9:36. But here the reference is not to Jewish Christians, for Peter’s readers were mostly of Gentile origin. They are the other sheep of John 10:16. Their former state was equally pitiable. But now Peter’s readers are in a blessed state indeed. In them the suffering Savior’s purpose has been attained. They have turned themselves to the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls. The one article makes “Shepherd and Overseer” a unit title. Doubling the designation makes it strong and emphatic. Wandering sheep are lost and must perish. Christ looks after his sheep.

You may collect from the Scriptures all the features that lie in the beautiful term “shepherd” as applied to Christ. But begin with the fact that he laid down his life for the sheep. He laid it down, he died for them, but not indeed to leave them shepherdless and assuredly doomed; he took up his life again, he is the risen, victorious, triumphant Shepherd who slew the wolf. And so we return to him in order to live under his care for ever. He is

our *Episkopos*, a word that was later used for “Bishop,” one who oversees a diocese. But in Peter’s day the word simply meant “overseer,” one who takes care of the flock. Pastors were called “overseers” (Acts 20:28), the title referring to their labor; their other title, “presbyters,” “elders,” referred to their dignity. Here is comfort and assurance for all of us.

“You *were*” is in contrast to what the readers are “*now*.” The participle states only what the readers once were, and does not help to form a periphrastic imperfect tense. The passive of ἐπιστρέφω is used also in the middle sense, the Koine often preferring the passive forms. Yet we may translate it either as a middle or a passive. For the sense of the middle is not synergistic or Pelagian. We turn to Christ, when his Spirit turns us by his Word and Gospel.

## Homiletical Aid

This is the Sunday of the Good Shepherd, but of the triumphant Shepherd, who conquered for us on the cross and arose in triumph from the tomb. The text does not mention the resurrection, does not need to, for without it there would be no Shepherd and no flock.

### **Christ, the Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls.**

- I. He bore our sins.  
As our substitute.  
In a bloody sacrifice.  
On the accursed wood.  
Suffering innocently because he was sinless.  
Willingly.  
Patiently.
- II. He made us his sheep.  
We had all gone astray.



But for his sacrifice of himself we should have been doomed for ever.

He purged us from our sins and placed us into a new life of righteousness.

He brought us to repentance and to faith by his Word and Gospel.

III. He left us his example.

Especially in regard to the sufferings that we are called to undergo for his sake.

But many of the details of his whole life are an example.

Is not his example too ideal for us? Peter asks slaves to follow in his steps.

Our Shepherd and Bishop leads us and enables us to follow in his steps.

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Where do men arrive when they follow their will and way? Is. 53:6 and our text tell us. They are lost like shepherdless, straying sheep, bound to perish. Therefore we follow Christ and let him lead us

**“In His Steps.”**

I. They were bloody steps for Jesus.

Made bloody by his sacrifice. Elaborate all that the text says regarding Christ’s suffering.

The steps that formed the way of life.

We follow this way when by repentance and faith we turn to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.

II. They are at times bloody for us.

The martyrs who actually shed their blood for Jesus and the Gospel.

Many suffer less.

Jesus our example in all such suffering and in all else in our lives.

We follow in his steps when we suffer innocently, patiently, living in righteousness, relying on the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.

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Let us not envy worldly men who enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season (Heb. 11:25). Let us not murmur and complain when despite all our doing good we receive evil and persecution. Let 'us rather keep our eyes on

**“The Way the Master Went.”**

**(Amer. Luth. Hymnal 256)**

The way he went

- I. For our advantage.
    1. The bitter way of the cross.
    2. In innocence, in sacrifice, in substitution, silent patience.
    3. To become the glorious Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.
    4. That we might embrace him by faith.
  - II. That we might follow in his steps.
    1. As they who have turned to become sheep of his flock.
    2. As they who do not exist for sin, but live for righteousness.
    3. As they who copy his example in patient suffering while doing good.
    4. Whom thus the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls will ever keep and bless.
- 

Our text contains a good deal of history, and it will be understood much better if we survey that history. Then we can most effectively make the application of St. Peter's words to ourselves.

## **The Admonition to Follow in Jesus' Steps.**

I. It was written to slaves (v. 18, οἰκέται, "houseslaves"). Slavery in the empire. Many Christians were slaves. Heathen masters. No human rights. Some masters ugly and cruel, as in our country when we had Negro slavery. The Roman world had millions of white slaves.

St. Peter tells them how to suffer when abused, although they serve ever so well and do only good. Some masters did not want their slaves to become Christians and made their lot the harder when they did.

The application to ourselves is easy. We are not such poor, helpless, undefended slaves. If then we are mistreated, persecuted in the same way, shall we not keep to the Master's steps?

II. It was written just before Nero's persecution.

The burning of Rome in July of the year 64. Rumors that Nero set the city on fire. In October Nero blamed the Christians of the old congregation in Rome and the horrible persecution began. Christians exposed to wild beasts, some tarred and fastened to posts in Nero's gardens, and set on fire to serve as torches while Nero rode through in his chariot. Add further details from the histories.

Now Nero made the Christian religion unlawful. To be a Christian became a crime, the sentence could be death. With these terrors impending St. Peter writes to warn the churches in the provinces. St. Paul was far away in Spain. This is St. Peter's last letter. He too was martyred, crucified with his head down. What a lot would Christian slaves now have?

How easy is our lot by comparison! But think of Russia today. We must be fortified. What little we suffer now and then for Christ's sake is child's play. Bear your share valiantly.

III. It points to the Great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.

Our hope and stay is this Shepherd who died for our advantage.

Our support is the example he left us, especially for evil days.

He leads us in his steps till we leave this world behind.

# Jubilate. 1 Pet. 2:11-20

## “Putting to Silence the Ignorance of Foolish Men”

The gospel speaks of “a little while” during which the apostles shall not see Jesus, of a time when they shall weep and lament, while the world shall rejoice, when they shall have sorrow and be like a woman in travail. The epistle refers to the same time, but the epistle offers us the directions that are necessary for us Christians during this time. We sum them up in the statement that *we are to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men* by the goodness and nobility of our Christian conduct. The text is placed into the Easter cycle, and this means that we do what Peter tells us to do in the power of the Risen Savior. We do not fight the wicked world. Our victory is of an altogether different kind, as was the victory of Christ, when he walked on earth.

**Beloved, I urge you that as outsiders and foreigners you hold yourselves aloof from fleshly lusts, which are of a kind that campaign against the soul, [12] having your conduct among the Gentiles excellent, in order that in what they speak against you as doers of baseness, due to your excellent works, when they look upon (them), they may glorify God in the day of visitation.**

Peter urges his readers to keep away from all fleshly lusts both for the sake of their own souls, and in order that they may conduct themselves in their pagan surroundings in such a way that the very thing for which they are slandered may make their slanderers glorify God, when he visits them with his grace.

With the address “beloved” Peter draws his readers to his heart with intelligent and purposeful love, thereby also calling out a corresponding love on their part that has as its purpose intelligently to obey. Παρακαλῶ == I urge, admonish, exhort, comfort according to the context. Here the first meaning is best. “I beseech” is out of the line of thought. The readers are

“outsiders and foreigners” in this world and are to conduct themselves accordingly. When they became Christians, they ceased to be natives of the world. So Abraham lived as a foreigner, Heb. 11:9. A *παρεπίδημος* == “a foreigner,” one who is allowed to live beside the *δῆμος* or people. The idea is doubled by adding *πάροιχοι*, “outsiders” who dwell beside the native citizens, but with restricted rights and privileges. The danger is always present that the Christians may forget their status in the world, that they may want to be like the citizens of the far country and yet hold their royal position in the Kingdom. Young people are often aggrieved because they cannot run with the ungodly youth of the world.

“Hold yourselves aloof from fleshly lusts,” in which the world freely indulges because they are its native element. “Fleshly,” *sarkikos* == what accords with sinful flesh, an ethical adjective. The Christians are spiritual, the opposite of fleshly. The imagery is that of citizens of a superior country residing for a time in a barbarous land, who thus decline to stoop to the low practices of the barbarians. They hold themselves far above such practices. “Fleshly lusts” must not be taken in too narrow a sense, for they include all the sinful desires that accord with our depraved, fallen nature.

The relative is qualitative and causal: these lusts are of a kind that war against the soul, and because they are of such a kind, we are to shun them. The verb really means: “are campaigning against the soul,” are organized and busy in a regular campaign against the soul to capture and to enslave it. This is the nature of these fleshly lusts in the world. Peter’s appeal is here to the Christian’s enlightened self-interest.

[12] Peter continues with a participle, and this means that what he now says is subsidiary to the preceding. Our first care is for our own souls, our second care is for outsiders. So our conduct among the Gentiles must be “excellent,” noble in the moral sense. The purpose of such conduct is to be, that in connection with the very thing they speak against us as *κακοποιοί*, “bad actors,” in connection with that thing they may come to glorify God: The relative phrase *ἐν ᾧ* is to be construed with both verbs, “speak against you — may glorify God.” When a group of people suddenly separate themselves from their neighbors and from the rest of the populace and act as though they were outsiders and foreigners to them, refuse to join them in the old fleshly ways of living, and congregate by themselves, suspicion is bound to arise, people find fault with such actions, and bad rumors arise.

Peter sums these rumors up with the word “bad actors,” “doers of baseness.”

How can the Christians meet such situations? Not by shouting aloud and protesting their innocence. This would probably have the opposite effect. They must let their morally excellent works speak for them. These speak louder than words and are harder to refute. “When they look upon” (them) the evil speaking pagans may change completely: they may glorify God in the day of Visitation. This means that a gracious day of divine visitation may come for them, a day when grace wins their hearts and they glorify God because they have become Christians. Peter is restating Jesus’ words found in Matt. 5:16: “that they may see your excellent works and may glorify your Father, the One in the heavens.” Peter again appeals to the Christian’s self-interest, but now combines with it the interest in the salvation of pagan neighbors.

All this becomes highly impressive when we remember what occasioned Peter’s letter. We have sketched the situation in connection with the preceding text. When the pagan governors would arrest and accuse Christians, or receive accusations against them, these pagans who had been impressed by the excellent works of the Christians could testify that they were in no sense “bad actors” but the opposite. We in our land do not confront this situation; only in missionary lands is it repeated. We have the reverse. Worldly people expect us to live up to our Christian profession and point the finger of scorn at us when we run with the world. Yet to this day, living the true Christian life still wins worldly people for Christ. Some cultivate a morbid Christianity and expect great results from their aggravated piety, but they defeat themselves.

[13] When now the Christians would be looked upon as “bad actors” and would be accused before the magistrates, it became a question as to how the Christians should regard and treat the pagan government. Peter answers this question: **Be subject to every human institution for the Lord’s sake, whether to a king as supreme, [14] or to governors as having been sent through him for vengeance on doers of baseness and praise on doers of good.**

“Be subject” is a decisive aorist, and the second aorist is to be taken in the middle sense. Κτίσις “creation,” and thus here “every human creation,”

in the sense of “institution.” It is useless to make a Republican out of Peter, in opposition to Paul who is thought to be a Monarchist. Peter refers only to the human form of the government, for he himself specifies “a king” (which does not sound republican) and “governors.” Nero was not a king; the Romans were highly averse to granting the title *rex* to an emperor. The emperor was called so, not in our modern sense, but as being commander of the army. The provinces, however, commonly called the ruler of the empire “king.” Here Peter understands “king” as he himself says: “as supreme,” the head of the whole government, and thus adds “governors,” subordinate officials, whether *legati Augusti*, proconsuls, procurators, or having some other title. The one order to Christians is: “Be subject!”

[14] Peter is speaking of the normal functions of government officials. The governors are the supreme ruler’s agents, “sent through him for vengeance on doers of baseness (on real’ bad actors) and praise on doers of good.” For this reason we are to be subject to them. Peter himself had to face a government that demanded something contrary to God. We read in Acts v. 29 how he practiced his subjection. We have also Christ’s own great example. If instead of giving praise to the Christians as being most excellent citizens because of their good works, government persecutes, even kills them, the Christians submit and do what Jesus did, as Peter writes in v. 23. This submission is, of course, “for the Lord’s sake,” because it is his will and his example.

[15] Peter himself says this: **because so is the will of God, that by doing good you muzzle the ignorance of foolish men, [16] as free and not as having this freedom as a veil for baseness, but ’as slaves of God.** “For the Lord’s sake” is the Gospel motive, to which Peter adds as one feature of that motive, the muzzling of the ignorance of men who in their blind ignorance slander the Gospel. By οὕτως, “so,” “thus,” is meant “in this way” by submitting yourselves to every human institution. The figure in the word “muzzle” is less that of silencing than that of preventing from biting. The muzzle prevents a dog from barking, but still more from biting. The ignorant, senseless talkers, who ought to know better, will be rendered innocuous.

[16] “As free” continues the subject of the main verb “you be subject” and certainly not some intervening accusative, and μή is the regular negative with the following participle, and is not due to the main verb

which is an imperative, or to an imperative idea. Let us get the grammar rightly. We subject ourselves “as free,” in no way as the slaves of men, — how free Acts 4:19 and 5:29 indicate. We are free when we follow what God has willed and made known to us as his will.

Καί is important; the word is not δέ. “And” == as part of our freedom, “not as having this freedom as a veil for baseness, but as slaves of God.” The word is not “cloak” but “veil,” and κακία is certainly not “maliciousness” (A.V.) “malice,” “wickedness” (R.V. and margin), but “baseness,” good-for-nothingness. No, we Christians do not hide behind a veil of good actions only in order to practice undetected evil actions. Free we are in the true freedom, which makes us “slaves of God,” i.e. people whose one aim is to do God’s will, even as a slave yields his will completely to that of his master.

[17] Peter specifies how we are to muzzle the ignorance of foolish men. **Honor all!** This a peremptory aorist and stands out from the following present imperatives. **Keep loving the brotherhood!** “Brotherhood” conceives all of the Christians as one body. We are to love them with intelligence and corresponding purpose. We are one with them. In the early days of Christianity pagans often admired this love. **Keep fearing God!** Letting this holy, childlike fear prevent us from sin and disobedience to him. **Keep honoring the king!** i.e. as king, as being in this office, — mentioned in the singular here because we honor one in this office in a distinct way, and not merely in general, as we honor all men. What can even ignorant and foolish men object to in such actions?

[18] See the preceding text in regard to the slaves in the empire and in the Church. Peter has a word for them in particular because they were owned bodily by their masters. **The house-slaves, continuing in subjection in all fear to the masters, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the perverse!** Supply nothing. The nominative is the continuation of the subject of “be subject to every human institution.” In good Greek fashion Peter ties all his instructions together. The house-slaves are named because they are constantly under the eyes and the hands of their owners. Roman law gave great power to these owners who could have them scourged to death if they wished. Of course, they could beat and maltreat them to their heart’s content.



Christian slaves were to continue in subjection to their masters. “In all fear” means not in fear of these masters (the dative depends on the participle), but in all fear of God, lest by acting rebelliously toward their masters they disobey God and harm the cause of Christ. Peter is careful to specify: “not only to the good and gentle,” to be subject to whom is no hardship, “but also to the perverse,” the crooked, the cranky, who are so hard to please. Ἐπιεικῆς is a beautiful word; we may translate it either “gentle” or “kindly.” With Christianity proscribed as a *religio illicita*, all slaves, and in particular all house-slaves, would have a bad time of it.

**[19] For this is grace, if because of consciousness of God one hears up under griefs, suffering wrongfully. [20] For what sort of reputation (is it), if sinning and getting cuffed you shall stand it? But if doing good and suffering you shall stand it, this (is) favor with God.**

Κάρις is not “thankworthy” (A.V.) nor “acceptable” (R.V.), but signifies “grace.” It is grace from God, the great grace that he has put into our hearts, if for his sake we bear mistreatment without resentment or complaint. The first meaning of συνείδησις is “consciousness,” “co-knowledge.” That meaning is in place here. So Joseph was conscious of God and refused to sin. We often sin when we lose thought of God and of his presence. Our versions misunderstand the genitive when they offer: “for conscience toward God,” and their English is poor. Let us note that although we are not slaves, we too often suffer wrongfully, and should stand it. To do so is divine grace operative in us.

[20] Peter adds the negative side and then once more the positive. So strongly he impresses his admonition. Κλέος == fame, fine reputation. What sort of high reputation is this, that when you do wrong and get cuffed by your master, you stand it? The participle means fisticuffed, being beaten up. A touch of irony lies in the question. What an idea to build up such a reputation! The two “if” clauses are placed chiastically, with everything else put in between them. This shows what the alternatives are. It is not that the slave escapes ill treatment, — he gets that in either case. The alternatives are not that he stands or does not stand it. He has to stand it in either case. The alternatives are: remaining conscious of God and thus ever treating the master with honor and doing good in serving him, — thus keeping God’s grace and favor. The other, to forget God, to sin against the master, to get

beaten up for it, and thus to lose God's grace and favor. When these alternatives are plain, the Christian has no difficulty in making his choice.

## Homiletical Aid

Easy to drift with the current, to do as everybody does, to howl with the wolves. Only remember, it is not so easy to take the final consequences. Is it hard to stem the tide, to swim against the current, to take the part of an outsider and an alien, where others are citizens? Well, this is your calling.

### The Christian an Alien.

- I. He looks it.
  1. You can see "alien" written all over him. There is the heathendom of the world and he keeps completely aloof from it (lusts).
  2. His heart belongs to God and to his will.
  3. He is constantly conscious of God.
  4. The outward marks of his alien character are many.
    - He abominates all fleshly lusts. The world delights in them.
    - He is maligned and slandered and yet does only good works.
    - He is obedient to the government, even when this is in the hands of heathen men.
    - He is free, no slave of men, and yet never misuses his freedom.
    - He honors all, loves the brotherhood, fears God, honors the head of the government.
    - He suffers wrongfully without complaint.
  5. Yes, an alien indeed! There is none like him in the world. Now and then you meet with an imitation.

- II. He would not change for anything.
    1. The efforts to change him from an alien to a native are many but fruitless. He would not lose his soul (v. 11).
    2. He would not forfeit the grace of God.
    3. He would not drop the consciousness of God and go counter to God's will.
    4. He is ever happy to muzzle the barking dogs of ignorance.
    5. He delights to bring men to glorify God and join him in being an alien to the world.
- 

We sing: "Be a hero in the strife!" Yes, there is iron in the blood of a genuine Christian. We want no cowards or traitors. Understand it well:

### **The Christian, A Hero.**

- I. Yes, it is heroic to stand alone in the world.
  - II. It requires courage to trust to well-doing alone, good works not as the world counts them, but as God judges them.
  - III. It takes a staunch heart to suffer wrong for Christ's sake, and never to murmur or to complain, but to count it the highest honor.
  - IV. Finally, it is heroism to abandon all human favor, and to rely on God's grace and favor alone, his grace in Christ Jesus our Savior, who died for us and rose again.
- 

I cull this from Seybold:

### **How the Christian Passes through the World as a Stranger.**

- I. The lusts of the world do not captivate him.
- II. The talk of the world does not confuse him.

- III. The institutions in the world are no burden to him.
  - IV. The conduct of the world does not determine him.
- 

We may look at our text from the angle of the expression that fleshly lusts war or campaign against the soul. Jesus, our Victor, enables us to win the victory in this campaign.

**In the War against the Soul “The Victory Ours Remaineth.”**

- I. The enemy, the fleshly lusts, both strong, insidious, persistent.
- II. The allies, worldly men, who speak ill of us, who boast of their idols: “science,” “progress,” “tolerance,” “social religion” etc., and seek to have us turn traitor.
- III. The campaign orders, the will of God, by doing which we defeat our enemy and all his allies. Details regarding what God wills are given in the text.
- IV. The constant victory and the final triumph. There may be suffering, but the crown is certain.

# The Pentecost Cycle

## The Christian Endowed with the Spirit

### **Cantate**

*The Firstfruits of His Creatures*

### **Rogate**

*The Man and the Looking-Glass*

### **Ascension Day**

*The Promise of the Baptism With the Holy Spirit*

### **Exaudi**

*Good Stewards of the Manifold Grace of God*

### **Pentecost**

*Jesus Sends the Holy Spirit for Us All*

### **The Festival Of The Trinity**

*“Oh the Depth of the Riches Both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God!”*

# Cantate. James 1:16-21

## The Firstfruits of His Creatures

The gospel for the day speaks of the Comforter, the Spirit of the truth, and of his great work both in the world and in the disciples (John 16:5-15). Evidently the gospel begins the Pentecost cycle. The epistle corresponds with the gospel. The best gift that comes to us from the Father of lights is his Holy Spirit. God begot us with the word of truth, and this God did by his Spirit. We may thus sum up the text by stating in its own words what God through his Spirit has made of us: “*A Kind of Firstfruits of his Creatures.*”

This text ushers in the Pentecost cycle which is exceptional because it has no less than three high festivals in its short compass. The ascension of Christ naturally goes hand in hand with his sending of the Holy Spirit ten days later. The festival of the Trinity crowns both the Pentecost cycle and the entire festival half of the Church Year. While the texts for these festival days naturally refer to the high object of these festivals, the subject of the Pentecost cycle is: **The Christian Endowed with the Spirit.** How the various texts range themselves under this theme the chart preceding indicates. Thus as regards the first epistle text: It is the endowment with the Spirit that makes us a kind of firstfruits of God’s creatures.

[16] James has been writing about temptation, and has shown that temptation is not due to God but to our own lusts. Thus he warns his readers: **Do not be deceived, my brethren beloved!** namely in this matter regarding temptation, as if you could in some way shift the blame onto God. The verb may be the middle voice and, as so often, the present imperative may have the force of stopping an action already begun, thus: “Stop deceiving yourselves!” The loving address “my beloved brethren” reveals the deep solicitude of James. It is sad enough when others attempt to

deceive us, but when we ourselves deliberately deceive our own selves, this is calamity indeed. Yet this very thing is being constantly done.

[17] The truth in regard to God is so evident: **All giving (that is) good and every thing given (that is) complete is from above, descending from the Father of the (heavenly) lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow cast by change.** It is utterly impossible that temptation or any evil should come from God. Nothing but that which is good and complete comes from God; all of the brilliant heavenly bodies are his children, yet he can change even less than they, — they may be in shadow now and then, God never. James has a fine hexameter in Πᾶσα... τέλειον; therefore some of the commentators want to deny it to him and give it to some one else. Curious indeed! These commentators think it perfectly natural that some old pagan should write a beautiful metrical line, but they cannot tolerate an inspired writer's skill in penning a line of such beauty. Well, James is not quoting, and when you read his letter carefully you will be struck by the fact that James is a real poet, the richest poetical imagery is natural to him.

See how here the words are beautifully chosen and are placed with exactness. Δόσις, with the suffix *mg*, is a word indicating an action, the act of giving; while Manna, with the suffix *-μα*, is a word expressing result, the thing given (δῶρον would be merely “gift,” and δωρεά a “present”). The two words correspond: every act of giving requires some thing given, and every thing given involves an act of giving. This difference is erased in the A.V. which translates both words as “gift,” and is blurred in the R.V. which translates “gift” and “boon.” The adjectives are predicative: “all giving (that is) good and every thing given (that is) complete” — all and every one of them (act as well as object) is from above, i.e. from heaven, God's throne, where alone goodness and completeness dwell. The adjective “good” is here to be understood in the soteriological sense, *heilbringend*, beneficial for salvation. The other adjective τέλειον, — “complete,” not failing to reach the goal. “Perfect” is not an exact rendering. Neither is “complete” for that matter, though we deem it better. Keep the idea of a goal that is attained. When God bestows a gift, he aims to attain an object thereby, and he never fails.

We see how sinful it is to imagine that God tempts us. We also see Why this text was chosen for this Sunday. Compare Luke 11:13: “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much

more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” The Spirit is God’s greatest gift.

In v. 5 we meet this Giver and note his character: he gives without reservation, without upbraiding us who deserve nothing from him. We now see his changelessness. “From above” directs us toward heaven, and “from the Father of the lights” in the firmament places him above all the radiant heavenly bodies. God created these lights, hence he can be called “the Father of the lights.” There is no warrant whatever for considering these “lights” to be brilliant heavenly spirits or angels or something else. When James viewed sun, moon, and stars, he was not blind like so many who boast of their “science,” he was affected as we Christians are, he thought of their heavenly Creator. His mind went farther. All these heavenly bodies are “lights,” beautiful and brilliant. God, who is light, made them. Yet they do not always shine brightly with light. They are subject to variation; they are darkened by “a shadow cast” (τροπῆς ἄποσκίασμα) “due to turning” or to “change,” causal genitive. James is writing to ordinary people, and he uses no astronomical terms. Many nights are completely cloudy and dark and nothing can be seen in the sky. A change has cast a great shadow. There are also dark and gloomy days, when the sun does not appear. “Change,” τροπή, comes and goes. With God there is nothing of this kind. “I am the Lord: I change not” (Mal. 3:6). “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5).

Yes, everything is subject to variation and to change, even the mighty “lights” in the firmament. Only God changes not, his love, grace, mercy and truth are ever the same, and all the giving and all the gifts that come from him are truly good and complete.

[18] James now states what gift we have received from this great Giver. **Having willed it, he brought us forth by means of truth’s word, so that we are a kind of firstfruits of his created things.** God has regenerated us and has thereby made us a kind of firstfruits, set peculiarly apart and sanctified unto him. Never under any condition would God tempt us and undo his blessed work in us.

James writes, that God even willed what he thus did for us. Thayer’s dictionary leaves us at sea regarding the real difference between βούλεσθαι and θέλειν, so often translated into English with the same word. Both refer



to the will, but the former is wider than the latter, hence it may be used in place of the latter, but not vice versa. The former == to have in mind, to intend, to will in preference to. Paul often uses it to indicate what he wants his assistants or his readers to do. The latter == “I determine,” the will pressing to the deed. We thus get the full thought of James: We were all lost in sin, yet God intended not to leave us in this state but to bring us forth as new creatures by means of his saving Word. The aorist implies that this blessed intention was actually accomplished in the readers of James. He who formed this intent and carried it out in us changes not.

It is characteristic of James to repeat a word instead of using a synonym or an equivalent expression. Thus in v. 15 he writes that lust “brings forth” sin, and sin “brings forth” death, and now he writes that God “brought us forth.” The verb means “to give birth to.” That James means the birth of regeneration is beyond question, because he adds: “by means of truth’s word.” The genitive makes the expression definite, while the absence of the articles leaves the nouns qualitative. There is only one “Word of truth,” i.e. the Gospel, the power of God unto salvation. “Thy Word is truth,” John 17:17, and sanctifies. One may debate about the genitive and may make it appositional: “Word consisting of truth”; or objective: “Word speaking truth”; or qualitative: *Wahrheitswort*, “Word marked by truth.” As “Word” it reaches our hearts, as “truth,” ἀλήθεια, it brings us reality, the whole reality, the actual facts concerning ourselves, God, Christ, the way of salvation. Often it is enough to say “the Word” or “the truth,” but whether used singly or together they both are opposed to all religious lies, perversions, and delusions.

We find here another reason why this text appears in the Pentecost cycle. In the gospel Jesus speaks about “the Spirit of the truth” who shall guide us into all truth. The epistle tells us that this truth gave us the new birth and life.

Very often εἰς τό with the infinitive denotes result, and not merely purpose, despite all that commentators and even grammars may say. Here we do not translate in agreement with our versions: “that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures,” but: “so that we are” etc. Must we wait a while after God has brought us forth by truth’s Word before we become a kind of firstfruits? Is there perhaps a possibility that, although God has brought us forth, we may not be his firstfruits? No; the moment God brings

us forth, we are a kind of firstfruits. Our birth from above, by means of water and the Spirit (John 3:3 and 5), does not leave us incomplete.

“Firstfruits” (idiomatic plural in English, collect — ive singular in Greek, although also pluralized) both those of the harvest, the first grain cut and brought to God, and those of the firstborn, which according to the ceremonial law had to be redeemed by the payment of a price, were accounted sacred to God as being his special property. See the Bible Dictionaries. Through the Old Testament ritual which regarded the ἀπαρχή as *Deo sacrum*, something sacred to God, the figure as here used is lifted far above the use made of it by pagan writers (Liddell and Scott). For a new spiritual birth by means of the Holy Spirit and his Word of truth makes us God’s peculiar possession, not only created by him like other creatures, but also redeemed and regenerated to be his children. The addition of τινά, “a kind” of firstfruits, indicates that James applies the figure in a limited way. For he himself brings us forth, and this fact already sanctifies us unto him and makes unnecessary a rite of presentation. Thus we are “a kind of firstfruits,” in a sacred position like the dedicated firstfruits, even from the very beginning of our spiritual existence. It is therefore unthinkable that God should ever put us in jeopardy by temptation or by anything else.

[19] Such is our high position, produced by “truth’s Word.” Brought forth by this Word, we should ever be ready to hear and to do it

**Know it, my brethren beloved! Now let every person be swift for the hearing, slow for the speaking, slow for wrath, [20] for a man’s wrath does not work God’s righteousness.** The A.V. follows the inferior reading which has ὥστε, “wherefore,” in place of ἵστε. The form may be either indicative “you know,” or imperative: “Know!” Opinions will differ. James either acknowledges that his readers already know, or he now tells them to know. The Greek needs no object, the English demands at least an “it.” The unexpressed object includes what James has just said about God and about us. He lays his finger on v. 17-18 and demands: “Know it!” Yet he does so as a brother, and therefore adds the loving address “my brethren beloved,” which is full of concern and kindly solicitude. James commands only lore, “know with the mind,” for already this is enough. If he had written γινώσκετε he would have asked his readers to realize with a reflex effect upon themselves. When one knows even a few vital things, he will be

guided correctly, and will not be deceived (v. 16) either by his own wrong ideas or by the wrong ideas of others.

Δέ specifies: “swift for the hearing, slow for the speaking” (λαλήσαι, breaking the silence). We have two infinitives, aorists: “the whole matter of hearing, the whole matter of speaking.” Great and persistent talkers are notoriously poor hearers, and this is a dangerous matter when it comes to the proper hearing of the Word of God (v. 23 etc.).

Like a flash comes the second βραδύς, but now construed with a noun: “slow to wrath.” The trouble with the swift talker is that not all will agree with him, he will meet strong contradiction, there will be clashes, hence “wrath,” violent, passionate outbursts. One must have seen orientals in action in order to get the full effect of what James here forbids. In Constantinople, for instance, on the Galatea bridge, in the case of our own party of guides, I have seen a slight difference of opinion argued with a terrific violence that seemed to threaten immediate blows, if not actual murder. Intemperate talking tends to passion and often leads to rankling wrath.

[20] James says, the result is never “God’s righteousness.” He means the acquired, not the imputed righteousness, hence righteous deeds on our part that receive the verdict of God’s approval. Note 3:18: “The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by them that make peace,” — it is not sown in wrath. James here speaks in general terms. He knows all the dangers of the tongue (3:5-8), what fires it kindles, how it cannot be tamed. Hence he wants all Christians “to be slow to talk.” He urges them to become good hearers. His injunctions apply in all fields of activity. Thus, of course, they apply with special force to our readiness and our happiness in hearing the Word of truth.

**[21] Wherefore, by putting away all shabbiness and what there is of a good deal of baseness, accept with meekness the implanted Word that is able to save your souls!** We here face three questions: 1) What does ῥυπαρία, a hapaxlegomenon, mean? 2) Does πᾶσαν also modify περισσεΐαν? 3) What is meant by περισσεΐαν κακίας? Here are my answers. “By putting away” is not figurative for putting off a garment, but literal, — bad things are to be put away, that is all. Πᾶσαν has its mate in περισσεΐαν, hence does not modify this noun. As there is much of one bad quality, so

there is a good deal of the other, and both are to be removed *in toto*. Περισσεία means that there is a good deal of κακία, an abundance of “meanness or baseness.” This is not “wickedness” (R.V.), the word for which is πονηρία; nor “malice” (R.V. margin), an old mistranslation appearing also in other passages. The word means moral inferiority or good-for-nothingness. A soldier is *kakos* when he is a coward; a student when he is lazy, a bearer when he is dull and inattentive and wants only to be talking — talking. *Kakia*, is this kind of a quality, and James says, there is a good deal of it, and all of it must be removed. The “superfluity of naughtiness” of the A.V. is one of the happy phrases which has caught the English ear.

If ῥυπαρία means “filthiness,” one is left to wonder how “all filthiness” came to be introduced into this connection of hearing the Word. I drop this idea of our version and of various commentators and follow the cue furnished by Plutarch, — the word means “shabbiness” and thus matches *kakia* or meanness. We thus have expressed in the two words the conditions which prevent salutary hearing of the saving Word. The person who is never ready to hear and really to appropriate the saving Word that he hears, who always wants to talk back and flares up when he finds himself contradicted and corrected, shows himself to be spiritually cheap and shabby and also mean and inferior in mind. When he is in that state, the Word can do little or nothing for him.

The opposite of this shabby and base condition is “meekness,” a lowly condition of mind and heart. The pagan world always despised the meek and humble man and admired the bold, self-assertive, masterful, and domineering man, who made other men bow to his arrogant will. This ideal of worldly men has not changed in our progressive age. This is the day of dictators. Christianity ennobled meekness and humility by the wonderful example of Christ and by the spiritual power which it lent to these Christianized terms. There is left no connotation of pusillanimity or cowardly weakness; there enters the nobility of mind which claims nothing for self. Meekness demands not only a man and manliness, but a spiritual man. A Christian who is meek is ready to receive the Word. The meek heart will not pretend to know better than the Word, will not quibble and find fault, will not contradict and reject; such a heart humbly and gratefully accepts. Back of this meekness lies the realization of one’s own sinfulness

and unworthiness, the knowledge that what God sends us in his Word is pure grace.

ἔμφυτον == implanted" (R.V.), not "engrafted" (A.V.), which would be ἐμφύτευτον. The Word is not like a graft that has been inserted into us and is expected to grow on an old stem and root, — this conception would be wrong. The Word is "implanted" into our hearts, there to grow and bear fruit. James writes to Christians and not to people who have not as yet received the Word, in the case of whom he could not call it "the implanted Word," save by a strange prolepsis. Since this Word has already been planted and lodged in them, the Christian readers of James are to hear again and again. James himself is implanting it anew by means of this letter. In ever fuller and deeper measure we are to accept the Word which we have already accepted. Think how much of the Word there is. How long will it take you to read through the Bible even once? How fully do you understand it when you do read it once or twice? What a calamity if any shabbiness and baseness in our hearts interferes with our true absorption of the Word!

The attributive participle not only describes the Word, but also states the great reason for its proper acceptance, the supreme motive why we should want to hear it aright: "as able (or: as the one able) to save your souls." In Rom. 1:16 Paul calls the Gospel the δύναμις or power for salvation; in 1 Cor. 15:2 he says, "by which also you are saved," and in Eph. 1:13 he speaks of the Word as "the Gospel of your salvation." The aorist σώσαι means to save effectively, actually, and it includes our entrance into heaven. In all the universe there is no other means able to effect this wondrous saving. And to think that all that is required of us is to hear this Word! And yet, to think that some will either not hear or will hear so as not to receive!

## Homiletical Aid

What God has made of us Christians by his Holy Spirit and his Word of truth. We must consider others, but certainly that does not mean that we are to disregard ourselves and the lofty condition to which we have been raised.

### **The Exalted Position of the Christian.**

- I. His noble birth.
  1. The Father who begot him. The Father of lights, without variableness or shadow cast by change.
  2. The Word of truth by which he is begotten. The new life of the regenerate. Nothing even comparable in others. This Word powerful to overcome all falsehood, etc. Truth regarding sin (law); truth regarding Jesus Christ (Gospel). We are God's own children.
  3. The position into which this birth places us: first of the earthly creatures of God, higher than all the rest, sacred to God, nearest to him.
- II. His superior privileges.
  1. The fountain of all good and complete gifts open to him as God's child. May go to his Father for all temporal and all spiritual blessings.
  2. The Word of truth is his special possession, full of light and power, able to save the soul. The richest treasures to be drawn from it through the Spirit that lives in this Word.
  3. The unvarying and changeless assurances and promises are his. The Christian needs to do no more than to accept and to believe.
- III. His lofty obligations.
  1. To recognize his Father, his birth, his privileges, his obligations and all that belongs to him. "Do not err," v. 16.
  2. To put away everything that degrades and antagonizes his position, such as shabbiness and meanness of mind that interfere with the right hearing and acceptance of the Word.
  3. To foster everything that accords with our noble position, such as being swift to hear the Word, slow to talk except when it is necessary, slow to stir up contention and wrath; such as cultivating meekness for hearing the saving Word.

Conclusion: Yes, we must revise our opinion of ourselves upward in more ways than one. Nobility is our position, and not shabby baseness of mind.

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Explain the ritual and significance of the firstfruits. We Christians are here called

### **The Firstfruits of his Creatures.**

The designation applies to us after a certain fashion, because by his Holy Spirit God has

- I. Begotten us by the Word of truth.
  1. Our spiritual regeneration which makes us God's own children.
  2. God's best gift to us is his Spirit and the Word of truth.
  3. We are thus made sacred unto God by God himself.

Moreover, we are God's firstfruits as

- II. Receiving the implanted Word.
    1. We live by this Word, and thus receive it ever anew. Reading our Bible, hearing the instructions and the preaching in church.
    2. This must be done with meekness, ever swift to hear, never swift to come with what we think and to stir up wrath with our opinions.
    3. Ever mindful that the Word implanted in us by faith is able to save our souls eternally.
- 

It is a noble thing to preach the Word of God to Christian people. God himself instituted the office of the ministry. Yet there are special advantages for you, the rank and file of the members of the Church, who come to hear the preaching of the Word. It is a spiritual art to hear this Word. After

preaching for years I became a regular hearer and found that I had to learn how to hear.

### **The High Art of Hearing the Word.**

In the parable Jesus explained why the good seed did not come to fruit in so many hearts. You must hear aright.

- I. Hear it as the greatest gift of God to you.  
Good and complete in the highest degree.  
Varying and changing as little as God himself.
- II. Hear it as the fount of your spiritual life.  
By this Word you were begotten of God to be his child.  
By this Word you became part of the firstfruits of the creatures.  
By it your spiritual life can be kept alive and can develop.
- III. Hear it with an eager heart.  
Swift to hear, slow to speak, — hear it in silence without adding talk of your own.  
Put away all shabby and good-for-nothing thought.  
Hear it with meekness, in true submission.  
Thus truly “receive” it.
- IV. Hear it as the Word that saves your soul.  
There is no other means to take you safely into heaven.  
This Word has that ability, to save now and for ever. It is God’s power of salvation to every believer.

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It is so simple just to hear. Yet it is so serious, this hearing, for your eternal salvation depends on this simple act. Strange, yet true, that many fail in this simple act of hearing. The Jews even heard Jesus for three years, and received only greater condemnation.



## **Do Not Err, My Beloved Brethren, about This Matter of Hearing!**

- I. This is no common word to which you can smartly talk back. Though preached by men. Too many swift to talk.
- II. You cannot hear it with shabby and mean thoughts in your heart. The thoughts of the old Adam crowding into your mind, lest the Word enter in.
- III. This is the Word of truth full of regenerating and saving power. It must be heard as such.
- IV. This Word asks to be received, and that means by true faith in meekness of heart.

Blessed are they who so hear the Word and keep it!

# Rogate. James 1:22-27

## The Man and the Looking-glass

It is only the gospel which gives to this Sunday the name Rogate and thus fixes it as the Sunday when a sermon on prayer is to be preached. Its other Latin name was *Vocem Jucunditatis*, derived from the Introitus for the day taken from Is. 48:20: “With the voice of singing declare ye and tell this: utter it even to the end of the earth. Hallelujah! The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!” The epistle takes this character of the Sunday into account and thus gospel and epistle do not correspond. Yet both are anchored in the idea of Pentecost, for it is the Holy Spirit who teaches us to pray aright, and it is the Holy Spirit who makes us both hearers and doers of the Word.

The epistle for last Sunday bade us hear the implanted Word with meekness. The epistle for today is the immediately following section in James and it bids us be doers as well as hearers of the Word. This sequence is excellent.

Δέ particularizes as the German *aber* does at times. **Now continue to be Word doers, and not only hearers, cheating your own selves by false reasoning!** The durative present tense of the imperative does not imply that the readers had never been doers or that they had ceased to be doers. At most it may suggest that some of the readers had grown careless in regard to the doing. Such present imperatives, however, usually simply bid people go on in the course they have already been following. Yet such admonitions are needed, both to encourage us in going on and in stopping us from growing weary and indifferent. We never have too many real doers of the Word.

James is writing to Jewish Christians. They might easily fall a prey to the fault of the Jews. For the Jews were noted for punctiliously attending the synagogue and there hearing the parashas and the haphtharoth of the

Old Testament as they were read by the rabbi, but that was all. As to really apprehending the Gospel contained in that Word, embracing it by faith and thus leading a new life, this these hearers missed almost entirely. Their doing of the Word was formal, legalistic, self-righteous, and thus an abomination unto God.

The gravest wrong is constantly done to James, even by evangelical preachers, when they regard James as a preacher of morals who insists on works to save the soul. They imagine that he follows the teaching of the Jewish rabbis. Yet James has just said: “*Receive the implanted Word!*” (v. 21) and no one receives it except by faith. He has just said that this Word saves your souls, and it does that by faith. Moreover, it is the gravest misconception to imagine that being a doer of the Word is to be a doer only of works. To be a doer of the Word is to do God’s will, and his Word and his will is “that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life” (John 6:40). To do the Word is *to believe* it for the saving of the soul. The Word ever asks for *faith* and intends to implant *faith*. The Sermon on the Mount is often regarded in the same wrong way. It is thought to inculcate law and not Gospel. But its very basis, the Beatitudes, is pure and wondrous Gospel, and its whole framework is the same. Note the Lord’s prayer, seeking first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, the tree that must first be good before good fruit follows, etc. James preaches faith as fully as Paul, and he does so right here.

To be only a hearer and not a doer does not mean to be a *believing* hearer yet only an indifferent or lazy one; it means merely to hear and *not to believe*, to be a hearer without faith. These hearers let you pour into their ears all of the Word you desire, but all of it passes into one ear and out of the other, and none of it finds lodgement in the heart through faith. Like Paul, James knows that faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:18). The first and the foremost call of the Word is ever and ever: “Believe, believe!” To believe the Word is thus to do it; to believe the Word is thus to obey it. No one ever does the Word without believing it. Where faith in the Word is found, there all else follows. Where faith is absent, nothing else can follow. Hence James warns against “cheating your own Selves by false reasoning.” To reason that we do not need faith, that it makes little difference what you believe as long as you do what is good, is

reasoning παρά, beside the mark. Such thinking is off the track. Hearing is a means, not the end. Hearing is to produce faith.

[23] Do you want to see just what such a self-cheating looks like? James is a poet and he paints for you a portrait of a bearer of this kind which you will not soon forget. **Because, if one is (only) a Word-bearer and not a doer, this one is like a man taking cognizance (only) of the countenance of his being, in a mirror; [24] for he took cognizance of himself, and has gone away, and straightway forgot what kind he was. [25] But the one who looked closely into what is complete law, (namely) that of the (true) liberty, and remained so, having become not a forgetful hearer, on the contrary, a work-doer, this one shall be blessed in his doing.**

Note the difference: “if one is only a Wordhearer”; James cares only to imagine a case. But in v. 25 he speaks about an actual hearer: “the one who looked” etc. A Word — hearer and not a doer of the Word, i.e. a man who only hears but does it without faith, this man is like one who takes cognizance only of his countenance, in a mirror. Yes, he looks carefully and notes his features well. James does not say that he looks only fleetingly, superficially. The image, however, that he sees is only “the countenance of his being,” only the mere surface. The best rendering for γένεσις is *Dasein*, “being,” not *Lebenslauf*, and “the face of his birth” of the R.V. margin is farcical. This man is a surface-hearer. He never gets beyond the outside surface; he never lets the Word affect him inside, in his soul. The Word affects him like water poured on a duck’s back — all of it rolls off and the duck is not even wet. Since he does a great deal of this sort of hearing, the man becomes expert at it. Less and less is the hope that the Word may get beneath his defense and reach his heart in faith.

[24] “For” explains by now telling of an actual case: “he took cognizance of himself” well enough, namely of the looks of his face, as one does in a mirror, — the women know all about it! — “and has gone away, and straightway forgot what kind he was,” — a man would do just that regarding his face. “He forgot” — that is the full extent of the good which the Word did him. He prevented it from doing more. Jesus uses a different picture: the hard-trodden road, not plowed up by the law, on which the seed of the Word lies exposed, and the birds come and eat it up. The Word never gets beyond the surface.

We have more hearers of this sort than we suppose. Some are regular church-goers. Their hearing is entirely on the surface, one may say that it is done with the ears only, certainly not with a heart hungry for righteousness (Matt. v. 6). They see themselves in the Word as one sees his face in a good looking glass. That, Of course, leaves 'no deep impression. YOur go away and a 'thousand new impressidns'COme to your mind, and not only the face you saw in the mirror is forgotten, but the very mirror itself.

The grammarians puzzle about the tenses: “he took cognizance (aorist) — he has gone away (perfect — he forgot” (aorist). These are not gnomic aorists, for here we have simple narrative. To make the two aorists gnomic leaves one at sea with regard to the perfect tense found between them, and to speak about a possible gnomic perfect is the solution of despair. This is the vivid, dramatic perfect, used in narrative, and it is perfectly normal and in order between aorists. The perfect is picturesque; it intends to say more than a mere aorist would, — this going away was not the mere leaving of church, but the man's going from one place to another during a space of time. James knows how to use the tenses, and to criticize him is labor ill-spent.

[25] In order to show how wrong this surface hearing is James sketches a true hearer. This man looked closely into the Word itself, and remained so. What he saw in the Word was not dissipated after he left the church and during the week went about his other occupations. Hence this man did not become a forgetful hearer, on the contrary, he was a work-doer, who did the believing first of all and then the works of faith. This man, James says, shall be blessed in his doing (faith and its products). To be sure, he is already blessed; the future tense states that his blessing shall go on and on and never stop.

Remove from your mind the mistaken idea that in John 20:5 and 11 παρακύπτω indicates only a hasty look, and that therefore also in other passages where this word is used only a hasty look is implied. John took a long, earnest, rapt, serious look into the tomb, where he saw all of the linen wrapped in careful folds, as it had been wrapped about the limbs and the body of Jesus. All of it was undisturbed, but the body had gone out of those folds. That was a sight so astounding that it fixed John's gaze upon it. In 1 Pet. 1:12 the looking into the mystery of the incarnation on the part of the

angels is not a fleeting, hasty glance. So here the sense is: “having looked closely,” into what is complete law, etc.

What does James mean by νόμος (no article, either here or in 2:12) τέλειος ὁ τῆς ἐλευθερίας? In substance the same as “truth’s Word” in v. 18 and “the implanted Word” in v. 21, the contents of which are both law and Gospel, and the doing of which == repentance and faith (in v. 18 regeneration) and a life of Christian obedience. The great mistake is to see in this *nomos* of James only law and no Gospel, and thus to make James a moralist, a preacher of works without faith. We reproduce the anarthrous noun by translating: “what is complete law,” namely that of the liberty. The modifiers should prevent us from making this mistake. The Mosaic code cannot be “what is law complete,” for this code was done away with (Gal. 3:17-19); nor was this law connected with “liberty” (genitive of relation or of quality). The Mosaic law made slaves (Gal. 4:21-31, Hagar, Ishmael). We must note that James does not use the word εὐαγγέλιον, “Gospel.” Here he wants a comprehensive term that will include the Old Testament Scriptures plus all of the preaching of Jesus and of his apostles and thus he coins this expression: “what is complete law, namely the one of the true liberty.” Τέλειος is explained in connection with v. 17 (last Sunday). There are other similar expressions in this letter: “law of liberty” (2:12), “royal law” in 2:8. “Blessed” recalls the glorious beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount.

To look closely into this “law” means to believe in Christ and to live in Christ. The whole business of making James a Jewish legalist in conflict with Paul is deplorable and has helped to produce low opinions about this noble elder and his magnificent letter.

[26] James reverts to v. 19-20, his starting point: too much loose talking about religion and then wrathful contention. God gives us his Word for a different purpose: to hear, to believe, to obey it, and thus really to do it. **If one thinks to be religious, while not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his heart, this one’s religion is in vain. [27] Religion pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, to guard oneself unspotted from the world.** “Among you” (A.V.) is not in the text; nor does James say “seems religious,” but “thinks to be religious,” — θρησκός (accented thus), found only here in the New Testament, == one who observes the *cultus exterior*, goes to church

regularly and so hears the Word in a surfaceway. James does not deny this man's religiosity, his *cultus exterior*.

Yet James adds the rest of it: "while not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his heart." This is one of the many striking figures employed by James, more fully elaborated in 3:3, where James has much more to say about the tongue. This man's tongue is like an unbridled horse, running away, damaging people right and left. He is "swift to talk" (v. 19), to air his religious opinions no matter what harm he causes. Generally speaking, his tongue is without inner Christian control. This man deceives his heart by thinking that his religiousness, which allows his tongue such license, is the religiousness that God desires. Well, this man's religion is in vain, μάταιος, it does not get him to the goal for which true religion was intended.

[27] To undeceive such deceived people James states what "religion pure and undefiled" really is. He describes this religion by means of the evidence of its presence. A tree is known by its fruit. Of course, there are other lines and other kinds of evidence. James confines himself to two. This true religion and religiousness does not do a great deal of uncontrolled and harmful talking, it shows its presence and its genuine character by the corresponding deeds. Among these are deeds of true Christian charity: "to visit the orphans and widows in their distress," in order to help and to comfort them and to relieve their distress, θλίφις, "affliction." In the Old Testament orphans and widows are mentioned most often as individuals who are especially under God's care. To all appearances James also has in mind Matt. 23:14 and Luke 20:47, namely the hypocritical Pharisees who were excessively religious, yet devoured widows' houses. To visit the least of these brethren of Jesus is to prove oneself a true follower of his, Matt. 25:40. James mentions this sample of true Christian love as the fruit of true faith, showing its presence, and demonstrating that there has been more than mere surface-hearing of the Word.

With an arresting asyndeton James reaches into another side of Christian life and presents another piece of evidence of the presence of true religion in the heart: "to guard oneself unspotted from the world." Like John, James also used "the world" as a designation for the ungodly, unbelieving mass of men, and we adopt this use today. The world is vile and foul. To guard oneself unspotted means to exercise such care as will keep us clean from such defilement in heart and soul. We mean to let none of the world's

impurity lodge permanently within us. This, however, includes constant cleansing (John 13:10; 1 John 1:9). The readings with regard to the παρά phrase vary as regards the article. Copyists seem to have made changes according to their conception of what the Greek should be. “God and Father” is a unit title, and it needs only one article. This God will judge as to what religion is pure and undefiled, and he too will judge in public according to the open and public evidence.

Rationalists still single out this statement of James as supporting their idea of genuine religion: Just do works of charity and lead a clean moral life, — all the rest does not matter! The same is done with Acts 10:35. Masonry and other lodges agree: Just so you believe there is a “God” of some kind and try to do what you think is right! Rationalists claim to be rational. Is it rational to select a sentence here and another sentence there of an epistle or a discourse, make this mean what we please, and act as if the documents said no more? This is irrational in at least two directions.

## Homiletical Aid

St. James and St. Paul, the special task of each. St. Paul opposes the false works of the law; St. James the absence of true Christian works. The one opposes Pharisees who trust in their pharisaic works; the other opposes sham Christians who expect to be saved by a dead faith, having no fruits of faith. Both St. James and St. Paul preach justification by true faith; both preach that genuine Christian works are the only evidence of such true faith. Hence in our epistle St. James tells us that hearing alone is not enough; we must also do the Word. The first consideration for doing the Word is to believe; the next to show that we do believe it by doing the works of faith.

### Be Ye Doers of the Word!

- I. He who is only a hearer deceives himself.
  1. Self-deceit illustrated by a parable. He is like a man who looks well at his face in a looking glass and then goes about his daily work and quickly forgets how his face looked. This shows what hearing alone amounts to.



2. Self-deceit illustrated by an example. The man who diligently goes to church and hears and hears, but does not bridle his tongue, — he perhaps swears, curses, lies, talks in silly, in harmful, in ill-considered fashion, slanders, spreads gossip and evil reports. James mentions only one member of the body, one kind of sin. Other kinds prove the same thing.
3. Both illustrations show that this man did nothing beyond hearing the Word. He did not really believe it. His works prove it.

II. Only he who is a doer is blessed in his doing.

1. Your deeds are necessary to prove that you have truly heard the Word, heard it with saving effect. The Word is the law of liberty. To hear it aright is to be liberated from sin and worldly ways. This means that the Word you have heard has produced repentance and faith in your soul, and this change always shows itself in the life you lead, in your deeds. Unless your deeds testify to your faith, your faith is only pretense.
2. The kind of deeds that prove hearing in true faith. Deeds of genuine love, like helping orphans and widows, but doing this for Christ's sake. Matt. 25:40. Deeds of genuine purity, like keeping unspotted from the world. This is true religion indeed, the evidence of faith. Faith alone can do the Word.

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There are two kinds of hearers, forgetters and doers. To which kind do you belong?

### **The Man and the Looking-glass**

in our text is to help you arrive at the correct answer.

I.

He looks like an entirely sensible person. You may even admire him when you see him so regularly in church and so attentively listening to the preacher. Is not that what all of us ought to do? Yes it is, only we ought to

do more, especially something that you cannot see with the naked eye. This man makes a great point of his church-going and his hearing. You might actually mistake him for a good Christian. In fact, that is what he on his part thinks he is. But he deceives himself. His hearing is only like looking into a looking-glass. He is

### **A Forgetful Hearer.**

He goes about his business and he forgets what he saw in the glass. The impression it made was not deep enough. He saw nothing to change his heart, to alter his life. To hear the Word like such a man is to hear it superficially without faith. You hear and hear and remain unchanged. Such hearing never saves anyone. How could it do that? Do not use false reasoning and deceive your own self!

### **II.**

This man and his looking-glass are to help us learn what true hearing of the Word really is. The precious Gospel Word is more than just a Word to be heard. It is “the complete law of liberty,” the power that reaches into your very heart and soul and liberates you from the bondage of sin and death. When does hearing the Word produce this saving effect in your soul? When you hear so that you become

### **A Doer of the Work.**

But the very first doing and work is true faith in the Word and in the Lord and Savior of whom it speaks. Without this faith all hearing is in vain. When this faith results, all else follows.

Take the examples of St. James. An unbridled tongue is evidence of a forgetful hearer. Helping the helpless, like orphans and widows, and keeping ourselves unspotted from the world are evidence of a true hearing of the Word. The fruits tell. Where they are, we have faith. Where they are not, faith does not exist and hearing has been in vain.

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The pair that should never be separated:

## **Hearing and Doing.**

- I. The man who thinks he can dispense with both hearing and doing. Thousands do not hear, will not hear, and do as they please, scorning the Word.
- II. The man who thinks he can dispense at least with the doing. He is a great hearer and that is all. He will not be saved by his much hearing. Where is his faith in what he hears so often? That would make him a doer.
- III. The man who thinks he can dispense at least with the hearing. O yes, he believes in doing, like the old Pharisees, like all the work-righteous. "It is not what you hear and believe that counts, but what you do." Alas, their doing is entirely self-chosen, misdirected. The Word and faith in the Word should be the guide, but this guide is rejected.
- IV. The man who knows that he cannot dispense with either hearing or doing. Elaborate this yourself.

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Rationalists, modernists, and all who propose to climb to heaven by their own efforts abuse the last verse of our text regarding what true religion really is. We too want

### **Pure Religion and Undefined before God and the Father.**

- I. We get it by means of the Word, the Word as "the complete law of liberty," the Gospel of salvation in Christ Jesus. To reject the Word is to abandon all pure and undefiled religion. The Word, the only source.
- II. By means of the Word which is heard. The ear is the avenue by which pure and undefiled religion enters and fills the soul. Formal hearing is useless (the man and the looking-glass). Yet hearing is the channel to the heart. Not to hear the Word is to hear something else, and then pure religion and undefiled is impossible.
- III. By means of the hearing which believes. Faith enters and remains in the law of liberty. Faith in Christ, the soul and center of the Word, is

itself the sum and substance of pure religion and undefiled. Unbelief is fatal to this religion. Faith in part of the Word is at best a maimed religion, a poor cripple. Or a diseased, morbid religion.

- IV. By means of the believing which proves itself by the deeds. Faith is full of Christian love. Example: orphans and widows helped for Christ's sake. Faith is loyal to Christ. It keeps unspotted from the world. It does not flirt with the world. It is religion pure and undefiled.

This is the only true religion, and there is no other.

# Ascension Day. Acts 1:1-11

## The Promise of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit

Read the text and note the promise of the Holy Spirit contained in it. This makes the text so suitable for the Pentecost cycle. It also contains the historical account of the Ascension. The ascended Lord sends us the Spirit ten days after his ascension.

Two texts among the epistles for the Church Year are taken from the book of Acts, this text and the one for Pentecost. One might take it that these two are more like gospel than epistle texts. I shall not quarrel with that opinion. Both texts, however, are eminently fitted for the festivals for which they have been chosen. We ought to preach on the one in the service on Ascension day, and on the other at Pentecost. Let us note that in general the epistles too at many points deal with the great historical Gospel facts.

Luke addressed both his gospel. and the Acts to Theophilus. In chapter one of the Acts he narrates the opening events, the first of which is the Ascension.

**The first account I made concerning all things, O Theophilus, which Jesus began both doing and teaching [2] until what day he was received up, after having given behests through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he chose for himself; [3] to whom he also, after he suffered, presented himself alive in connection with many proofs, letting himself be seen by them during forty days, and declaring the things concerning the Kingdom of God; [4] and while partaking together of salt he ordered them not to be withdrawing from Jerusalem, on the contrary, to be awaiting the promise of the Father, which you heard from me; [5] seeing that John baptized with water, that you, however, shall be baptized in connection with the Holy Spirit not many days after these.**

It is necessary to know a bit of the story of Acts. Luke wrote both his gospel and the Acts for Theophilus, whom he addresses in the gospel as “Your Excellency,” who thus was either a Roman knight or an important official personage. The opinion that Luke wrote “books” and that he dedicated them to this man, in order that he might attend to their publication, emanates from the mind of a professor who is used to writing books and seeing them published. Λόγος in the opening clause does not mean “book,” argue as one may; the Greek has its own word for “book.” It does not even mean “treatise” (our versions), for this still sounds too bookish. Luke wrote an “account.” The two accounts were intended for Theophilus personally. This man of high standing was interested in Christianity, but was not yet a believer, when Luke wrote his first account to him in order to furnish him with the certainty of the things concerning Jesus, or as he here says “concerning all things which Jesus began both doing and teaching.” Luke’s aim was. missionary, to convert Theophilus to the faith. That Theophilus was still unconverted is the conclusion drawn from the address κράτιστος, “most excellent,” or “Your Excellency,” found in the gospel. None of the early Christians addressed a brother by such a title.

Luke’s purpose was attained: his gospel brought Theophilus to the faith. Thus a short time after writing the gospel Luke sends Theophilus the Acts to acquaint him, who is now a Christian, with the story of the saving Gospel’s advance from Jerusalem to Rome. This account would help to build up Theophilus in the faith. Since he is now a Christian, Luke addresses him without a title, simply, “O Theophilus.”

Luke never uses the comparative “former,” but even when he has two objects in mind, he writes πρῶτος, “first.” This means that when he wrote the gospel he did not yet plan to write a second account, and certainly his use of “first” does not mean that he had planned to write both a second and a third account, failing, however, to pen the third. Such wrong opinions are part of the supposition that Luke was a writer of books for publication.

Accurately Luke indicates what his first account covers: “all things which Jesus began both doing and teaching.” “All things” is a popular way of stating that no thing of vital importance is omitted. “Began” marks the point of departure (aorist); “both doing and teaching” describes the course

of activity (present infinitives); and “until” etc., (v. 2) marks the terminus at which the gospel of Luke stops.

[2] “Until what day he was received up” refers to the Ascension. The Scriptures say both that Jesus was raised from the dead and that he arose; they do this also with regard to the Ascension. Thus we here have the passive “was received up,” namely into heaven. This pertains to the human nature and to the body of Jesus. The Ascension occurred “after having given behests through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen for himself.” Jesus did not finally leave the apostles without supplying them with all the behests and directions which they needed. Then, at last, he was received up and they met him no more.

In Matt. 10 we have the account that Jesus chose the apostles for himself. The verb used is reflexive. These apostles were to be his representatives, his ambassadors. It was within his province to choose them. The phrase “through the Holy Spirit” is to be construed with “having given behests to the apostles.” Here the mediation of the Spirit is in place, yet it is not especially emphasized. When the phrase is drawn to “he elected for himself” an unnatural and a powerful emphasis is given to it in the Greek, and one also wonders why at this place the thought should be made so prominent that Jesus elected the apostles “through the Holy Spirit.”

[3] Under what circumstances Jesus gave such final behests to the elected apostles the next relative clause states: “to whom he also, after he suffered, presented himself alive in connection with many proofs, letting himself be seen by them during forty days,” etc. “After he suffered” includes the passion, the death, and the entombment. Then came the resurrection, and then the forty days with their appearances of the risen Savior. Jesus “presented himself alive.” When a person is alive and so presents himself, those present have no difficulty in seeing that he is alive and not dead. Yet Luke adds that Jesus did this “with many proofs” or tokens, i.e. with all manner of evidence even beyond his presentation as such. Luke 24:36 indicates part of what is referred to. Jesus could not leave even the remotest doubt concerning his physical resurrection in the mind of any of the apostles. We know how he treated Thomas. Thus this prodigality of proofs.

Fully forty days were devoted to these repeated appearances of the risen Savior. The wording is exact: “he presented himself” and “he let himself be seen.” For Jesus had not risen like Lazarus in order to continue his earthly life as it had been lived before his death; he arose in a glorified state in order to enter heaven with his body. He delayed the Ascension merely for the sake of the apostles. So, in a supernatural way he appeared now and again and thus let himself be seen.

Luke states what Jesus did at these appearances: “declaring the things concerning the Kingdom of God.” Concerning these things Jesus had taught during his entire earthly ministry. So many parables begin: “The Kingdom of heaven is like” etc. Now, however, Jesus is able to add the last instructions which his apostles need. Many fail to understand what the Kingdom of God signifies. If they understood, they would not speak of their building the Kingdom. The Kingdom too is not built. So many dream of converting the world and thus building the Kingdom. Very many suppose that this Kingdom is eventually to embrace all governments on earth and all business, all social, and all other relations. No wonder they end with the idea of a millennium. Meanwhile, they try to reform everything so as to move the Kingdom forward more and more, — and they fail utterly to see that the more they reform, the more the devil supplies them with terrible conditions to reform.

The Kingdom is not an organization; it is not like the kingdoms on earth; it is not of this world at all (John 18:36). Earthly kingdoms make and also unmake their kings. Recent history shows us both acts. These kingdoms have subjects. None of this is found in the Kingdom. Here the King makes the Kingdom, he alone. The Kingdom has no subjects at all, — it is too great for that. The Kingdom is the rule of the King; where he rules, there is the Kingdom. On earth this is his rule of grace, above it is his rule of glory. We partake of his Kingdom, inherit it, and thus are ourselves kings in the Kingdom and rule with Christ our King. Here on earth we rule through his Word. The Kingdom began with Adam and it continues for ever. More is to be found in my *Kings and Priests*.

[4] The participle συναλιζόμενος == “while partaking of salt,” i.e. while eating with the apostles. The rendering “being assembled together with them” is not suitable, because this rendering is possible only with a collective noun. When on one occasion Jesus ate with the eleven, he told



them not to leave Jerusalem until they had received the Holy Spirit. After the Jews had done so much to Jesus here in Jerusalem the apostles would certainly have fled from the city, dreading severer experiences at the hands of the Jews. They were to remain until Pentecost. “The promise of the Father” == the fulfillment of this promise which Jesus had communicated from the Father to the apostles.

[5] Ὅτι is not “for” or “because”; it is the *consecutivum*: “seeing that” or “in view of the fact that.” And the fact referred to is “that John baptized with water, that you, however, shall be baptized in connection with the Holy Spirit.” The Baptism of John is the same as the Baptism of Jesus mentioned in Matt. 28:19. John’s Baptism was the Baptism of repentance unto remission of sins, hence it had the Holy Spirit (John 3:3 and 5). To reduce John’s Baptism to a mere water-ceremony is to contradict Luke 3:3. What Jesus says is that John began the work which is to be finished and crowned on Pentecost by Jesus himself. As far as we know, all of the apostles were baptized by John, and not one of those whom John had baptized was ever rebaptized.

Note that ὕδατι is a dative of means: “by means of water.” But ἐν Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ is a phrase and not a mere dative. Luke does not make the Spirit the counterpart of the water, as this is done in our versions. The two expressions do not mean “with.” The phrase means “in connection with the Holy Spirit.” Thus the words do not say that John dealt only with water and with nothing more (which contradicts John 3:5), but that the other act dealt with the Spirit. We know fully what is meant by the latter, for we have Luke’s account in chapter two of this book. The Baptism thus promised “not many days after these” was administered ten days later.

**[6] Now they having come together began to inquire of him, saying: “Lord, art thou at this time restoring the Kingdom to Israel?” [7] He, however, said to them: “It is not yours to know times or seasons, which the Father did place in his own authority. [8] On the contrary, you shall receive power, the Holy Ghost having come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and to the last part of the earth.”**

The apostles had come together on the Mount of Olives (V. 12), whither Jesus himself had led them (Luke 24:50). When they were thus together, the

apostles asked Jesus a question which evidently had been on their minds. They address him as “Lord,” meaning their divine Lord. Various explanations are offered for the force of εἰ, “whether,” in direct questions. I consider the true explanation to be the following: αἰ is only an interrogative particle, adding a note of hesitancy to the question. So here the apostles hesitate a bit when propounding this question. They would very much like to know Whether the Lord intends to restore the Kingdom to Israel at this time.

It would seem that the apostles still cling to the Jewish idea (condemned in the Augsburg Confession as the basis of chiliasm), that the Messiah would make Israel the supreme nation of the world, dominating all other nations, including also the whole Roman empire. Jesus answers only in regard to the time: “art thou at this time restoring” etc. He does not stop to correct the idea regarding the Kingdom. In Luke 24:21 we meet the same poor Jewish notion regarding the Kingdom.

[7] Jesus tells the apostles that times and seasons are not at all their concern. The Father attends to them, he has placed them in his authority, so that all efforts of men to find them out are in vain. “Times” are stretches of years, “seasons” are periods, each of which is distinguished by what occurs during its duration. Whatever information you seek, whether just in regard to the times and their length, or also in regard to the seasons and what they contain, your inquiry is hopeless. This statement plus Mark 13:12 should settle the matter, but no, we have the time — setters who seek to figure out the date of the end, or rather of their millennium which they expect a thousand years before the end. We note that Jesus does not deny that the Kingdom shall be restored to Israel. Many, especially the chiliasts, dream that at the time of the millennium the whole nation of the Jews then living shall be converted and shall occupy the supreme, aristocratic height in the millennial Kingdom. It is even added that all the dead, obdurate Jews shall then be resurrected and converted. These dreams do violence to the Scriptures and are poisonous in their effect, the more so when they are fanatically defended. The Kingdom shall be restored to the spiritual Israel at the end of the world at the time of the Lord’s Parousia.

[8] After a negative, ἀλλά introduces the contrary. The matter about which the apostles are to be concerned is the great fact that they shall be filled with spiritual power. In a few days the Holy Spirit shall come upon

them. He is not only the source of this power but its very embodiment. Jesus is now about to leave them, but they shall be like new men filled with power from on high. What a glorious promise!

And thus the apostles shall be the Lord's μάρτυρες, his witnesses. This is more than "heralds" who announce only what they are ordered to announce. A witness testifies to what he has personally seen and heard with his own eyes and his own ears (1 John 1:1). The Holy Spirit would make them such witnesses. He brought back all things to their remembrance (John 14:26), so that they could testify perfectly. Let us note this well. That the apostles should testify thus in Jerusalem, in Judea, and in Samaria would not be difficult, but what about "the last part of the earth"? They were to testify not only during their life time in the places which they could personally reach by travel. The Holy Spirit enabled them to testify by means of their inspired writings in all the world and during all the ages. When we read and hear the New Testament, they then and there testify to us. And all of them testify thus in every word, because all of them attest the same facts and truths.

**[9] And having said these things, while they were looking, he was taken up, and a cloud took him from their sight. [10] And as they were earnestly gazing into heaven, while he was going, 10, two men were standing beside them in white apparel, [11] who also said: "Galilean men, why are you standing looking into heaven? This Jesus received up from you into heaven, shall so come in what manner you viewed him going into heaven.** The great miracle of the Ascension is described in the simplest language.

The Lord had finished speaking (aorist), the eyes of the apostles were resting upon him (present tense in genitive absolute). Jesus was not suddenly snatched from their sight. He did not vanish as he had done at other times when he meant to appear to them again. He now left in a different way, which also meant that he would not appear again as he had done during the forty days. Before their eyes Jesus slowly rises heavenward. He stretches out his hands in blessing (Luke 24:50). Majestically, mightily he ascends higher and higher. With straining eyes they follow his ascent. Then, far aloft, a filmy cloud surrounds him and they see him no longer. Not that he continued this gradual upward movement above the cloud. No; instantaneously, timelessly he was transferred into heaven and sat at the right hand of the majesty.

It has well been said that in the case of the resurrection the first part was not seen, only the last part; but in the case of the Ascension the first, part was seen, not the last. The greatest feature of the miracle occurred after the cloud hid the body of Jesus. Some have strange ideas about the cloud. It did not carry Jesus upward. It did “not make visible the gracious, saving presence of God.” It made nothing visible, it made the body of Jesus invisible. It hid him from the eyes of the apostles.

[10] Intently the apostles kept gazing into heaven while he was departing, then “lo!” another astounding thing, two men were standing beside them in white apparel. Καί before ἰδοῦ is untranslatable, and we can say no more. These men were angels. Their white apparel symbolizes their holiness. They are called “men,” and the Scriptures consistently speak of them as men. There are no lady and no baby angels, despite the artists. Yet the angels are sexless (Luke 20:35 etc.). When they assume visible form in order to be seen by our physical eyes, the form assumed is that of power, hence they look like men, even young men in the bloom of power.

[11] No word of explanation is needed, the angels are recognized for what they are without the least effort. They were sent to complete what was necessary regarding the Ascension. They are the Lord’s mouth-pieces to tell the apostles what yet should be told. “Galilean men” is the form of address less because the apostles hailed from Galilee (Judas alone was from Judea) than because the words would recall to them their long association with Jesus in Galilee. The question as to why they are standing gazing up into heaven merely intends to fix their attention upon what they are thus doing. Of course, they are gazing thus at the departing Jesus.

Now comes the statement for the announcement of which these angels had really been sent. Note the details: “This Jesus,” this very same Jesus Who walked so long with you in Galilee. A third time the Ascension is described: “received up from you into heaven” (again a passive term). “He shall come in what manner you viewed him going into heaven.” Note the emphatic words: this Jesus — so or thus — in the (same) way in which. Visibly you saw him leave, visibly he shall return. He went away bodily, bodily he shall come back. It is not added that then every eye shall see him, Rev. 1:7, that all the angels shall accompany him. There are more details. The one great fact is enough: “he shall come.” The Ascension is the Prelude

to the Parousia. First the Ascension precedes the sending of the Spirit upon his worldwide mission and then the Ascension assures the final Judgment.

## Homiletical Aid

Theo. Laetsch (*Magazin*) offers this outline:

### **The Ascended Christ Restoring the Kingdom of Israel.**

- I. For this purpose he ascended on high.
  - II. For this purpose he sends his witnesses to the ends of the earth.
  - III. For this purpose he will come again at the last day.
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C. C. Schmidt (*Weg des Lebens*) offers the following (the translation is mine):

### **The Ascension of Jesus Christ Pertains to the Completion of His Kingdom.**

- I. That he might seat himself as Lord of the Kingdom at God's right hand.
- II. That he might send the Holy Spirit to gather and to preserve his Kingdom.
- III. That he might return to conduct his Kingdom into glory.

This preacher speaks of the Kingdom as consisting of people. The King's rule is better.

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We cannot speak of the great miracle of salvation that occurred on this day without entering into the entire Gospel, yea, also into its very heart. This is not a lone event that exists by itself, it crowns all that precedes it in the work of Christ, and it introduces all that follows.

## **Our Ascended Lord.**

- I. He “who began both to do and to teach.”
  1. He manifested forth his deity and his saving power through his miracles.
  2. He taught and preached the way of salvation and the Kingdom with its grace and glory.
  3. He then suffered and died for our sins and rose again, appearing during forty days and furnishing many proofs of his resurrection.
  4. He on the fortieth day ascended visibly to heaven, to be seated in his human nature on the throne of majesty for ever.

This is our ascended Lord. Nor is this all.

- II. He who “commanded the apostles not to depart from Jerusalem.”
  1. Who promised to send the Holy Spirit and also sent him ten days later.
  2. Who filled the apostles with conquering power and courage.
  3. Who made them his witnesses, their testimony ringing in our ears even by means of this text.
  4. Who sent two angels to assure the apostles and all of us of Christ’s return in visible glory at the last day.

This is our ascended Lord.

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Every Sunday we confess in the Apostles’ Creed: “He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.” This is one of the great deeds of God for our salvation, a grand link in the heavenly chain of such deeds. We are to believe and confess with praise and glory to God.

**“He Ascended Into Heaven!”**

1. He who died on the cross.
  1. The text speaks of his passion. We cannot understand the one without the other. Approach the Mount of Olives from Calvary.
  2. He who had no form nor comeliness, who was despised and rejected of men, who had worn the crown of thorns and had hung upon the accursed tree.
  3. He now ascends in serene majesty to heaven, his work on earth completed. The apostles see the miracle of it. A cloud envelopes his body in the sky, and instantly he is on the throne of God to rule his Kingdom for ever.
  
- II. He who shall return again.
  1. As we cannot understand the Ascension without the Passion, so we cannot understand it properly without his Second Coming.
  2. The ascended Lord sent his Spirit to prepare us for the last day.
  3. He made his apostles witnesses whose voice and testimony sounds until the last day.
  4. Therefore at his Ascension he sent the two angels to proclaim the fact and the manner of his return.

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I found an outline on “The Christian’s Ascension to Heaven,” as “based on Christ’s work on earth — as assured by Christ’s exaltation to heaven — as conditioned by faithful working in Christ’s Kingdom.” No; Christ’s Ascension has no counterpart in an ascension of ours. While our souls enter heaven, our bodies never will. At the last day we shall enter the Heavenly City. — So also this matter of being “my witnesses.” Such witnesses are the inspired apostles alone. Their testimony resounds to this day, and no man can repeat their testimony.

# Exaudi. 1 Pet. 4:7-11

## Good Stewards of the Manifold Grace of God

Gospel and epistle agree. The gospel promises the Holy Spirit. The epistle speaks of what the Spirit works in us, making us *good stewards of God's abundant grace*. Little more needs to be said by way of introduction. That the Spirit is not specifically mentioned in the epistle makes little difference, for it corresponds with the gospel which certainly mentions the great Paraclete and what he will do.

**Now the end of all things has come near.** After a fashion Pentecost was the beginning. The Holy Spirit began the extension of the Christian Church. In the year 64 Peter writes that the τέλος has come. The perfect tense ἤγγικε has its present connotation, “has come near” and thus “is near.” Peter writes very much after the manner of Paul in regard to the end. It may set in at any time, again it may be delayed for a long time. This is due to the fact that the times and the seasons are in God's ἐξουσία Acts 1:7, and are not revealed even to the apostles.

It is important that we know what “τὸ τέλος of all things” is. In v. 17 we have “the *telos* of the ungodly.” Despite the claim of some dictionary this word never means merely the temporal end; the word for this is τελευτή. Even when a temporal cessation is implied, the word *telos* always contains the thought of goal, of *Erfolg*, of outcome or success. The *telos* of war is not the mere fact that war ceased, but that victory was reached; the *telos* of a man means that he has reached maturity; the *telos* of seed is its ripeness. Thus here the *telos* of all things is the final outcome, the grand goal to which God from the beginning intended to bring them. All things shall not cease to be, shall not revert to nothingness; those disobedient to the Gospel of God shall not cease to exist (V. 17). They shall reach their final goal.



It is well to know that after the sending of the Holy Spirit we await nothing more save “the end of all things,” the winding up of the affairs of the world, the final judgment. Whether this comes sooner or later makes little difference. We have an advantage over Peter, we know that after 1900 years the *telos* has not yet come. Even so we may read Peter’s words as though they had been written yesterday and “had been mailed to us as being the readers.

With the goal so near, Peter admonishes: **Accordingly, be of sound mind and be sober for prayers!** Peter begins with the mind and disposition of the Christian. “Be of sound mind” is just one Greek verb that has this meaning. The soundness is balance of thought and disposition, always producing sound, sane, properly considered judgments, never flighty, erratic, unbalanced thought, never being carried away by mere notions of our own or by foolish ideas of others.

“And be sober for prayers” repeats the idea and specifies for what especially we should be sober. Paul writes: “Be thou sober in every way,” 2 Tim. 4:5. Peter in 1:13: “having girded up the loins of your mind, as being sober.” This is spiritual sobriety, another expression for soundness of mind. Spiritual intoxication is dangerous. This would be fanaticism, morbid and excessive piety, and every extravagance in worship or life. When Peter adds “for prayers” he uses the word that is often employed for worship in general, the sacred word *προσευχή*, and this in the plural. This Christian soberness shows itself in relation to God. Prayers and worship constitute the central part of our spiritual activity. As we worship, so will we perform our other acts as far as spirituality is concerned. He who prays aright in Christian soberness will do God’s will in other respects with a steady and a sensible mind. The aorist imperatives are urgent.

**[8] Before everything else having the love to yourselves fully exerted, because love hides a multitude of sins.** “Before all things,” of course, does not mean ahead even of your prayers and worship; but when you have turned from your worship, where you have strengthened your bond with God and Christ, then let your first concern be the fullest exercise of love toward your own selves. This is *ἀγάπη*, the love of understanding and of corresponding purpose, explained in Rom. 12:9 and 13:8 (Second and Fourth Sunday after Epiphany). The predicate adjective *ἐκτενής*; does not mean “fervent” (our versions), or constant, enduring, but “stretched out,”

put to full strain, exerted to the limit of its strength. The opposite is a slack, a slight or ineffective effort. There are sins on the part of the brethren and also on our own part that tend to slacken love. Such sins make it hard to exercise the fullest love. Though the strain is great, love is to stand it.

“For yourselves” is not the same as “for each other.” The latter means from one individual to another, while the former views all of us as one body, with love for all its members exercised by this body. The thought is that of 1 Cor. 12:12 etc. Every Christian is one of ourselves, and so all are loving and loved. It is incorrect when the A.V., the commentators, and even the grammars treat ἔχοντες as equal to an imperative. Peter intentionally writes a participle, for he wants us to understand that having this love is secondary to our sober praying. An imperative would have placed the having such love on the same level with the other two imperatives. So the thought is, that this strenuous love for ourselves will blossom where our relation to God is right, where we all engage as one body in sober prayers and worship. This love will grow limp and slack where such worship is omitted or practiced without due sobriety and balance. The implication is also separation from the pagans who blaspheme our worship, since it keeps us Christians away from their idolatries (v. 5). Yes, Christians ought to know what they are doing when they diligently gather together for prayers. They are separate, a body for themselves, and thus, connected with this fact as the participle shows, they have their love toward themselves, a love they could not have for those outside. All of this thought is lost when grammars simply make the participle imperative in force.

The reason for having this strenuous love is that it “hides a mob or mass of sins,” — not indeed from God’s sight, but from our sight. Hate does the opposite; it tries to discover some sin or some semblance of sin in a brother, and then broadcasts it, also exaggerates it, and gloats over it. Love does the very opposite. But note πλῆθος, a mob or mass of sins, — Peter means the great number of daily sins and failings that still cling to Christians. These the strenuous love will hide and cover with a mantel of charity.

It is a piece of slander to say that Peter wants Christians to hush up and to hide criminality occurring in their midst. This would be the morality of Masonry. It would make the Christian *particeps criminis*. Peter’s “multitude of sins” answers this slander. Do not all of us pray daily for the forgiveness of our sins when we pray the Lord’s Prayer? Why, then, shall we not in

silence hide our sins of weakness, thoughtlessness, and inadvertence? Only when Christians become mean and ugly do they amuse the devil by dragging each other's failings out in public, smiting each other in the face.

Perhaps it will be well to say a little more. Peter is not speaking of sins against each other, so that hiding means forgiving these sins. What we are to do when a real sin of this kind has been committed Jesus tells us in Matt. 18:15 etc. In such cases too love handles the matter, so that, if possible, it need not be made public. As far as mutual forgiveness is concerned, Peter knows well what Jesus told him in Matt. 18:21 etc. How public offense is properly met by public rebuke Peter himself experienced when he was rebuked by Paul, as related in Gal. 2:12-21. But there are hundreds of sins of weakness, faults, mistakes, failings in each one of us. These we let go, dismiss, ignore, forget. We bear with them, knowing our own faults. That, where it becomes necessary, we warn, correct, strengthen each other, need not be added in a compact admonition such as Peter here offers. Yet note that ἔκτενής and πλῆθος correspond. To cover a multitude of sins, love will have to stretch itself indeed; to cover a few sins would require no strain.

[9] Peter continues with a nominative plural adjective which is as little equal to an imperative as the participle in v. 8, but is only in the same subordinate position to v. 7: **hospitable to each other, without murmuring**. Here the reciprocal pronoun is in place, not the reflexive used in v. 8. Christian hospitality played a great role in the first church. We still find occasion for it, but not nearly to the same degree. Christian travelers came with letters of commendation and lodged with their fellow Christian, who also helped them with advice for transacting their business, or helped them to find employment, or expedited their journey. The extensive travels of the apostles and of their assistants made them guests in many Christian homes. Note Acts 16:15; Phil. 22. During the persecutions Christians also had to flee from their homes, and many of these Christians were destitute. The persecution instigated by Nero furnished occasion for Peter's letter. This persecution would spread to the provinces, to which this letter is being sent. There was good reason for stressing hospitality. Note already Matt. 10:9-13.

Even the poorest would be ready to exercise hospitality. Yet in any local congregation the members who had means would be the first to open their doors. This form of Christian love is to be rendered "without grumbling,"

for this is what the phrase means. Peter does not imply that there were grumblers; he only warns, because such grumbling would mar the service of love.

[10] Peter continues with another participle: **according as each one received a charisma, ministering it for yourselves as excellent stewards of God's manifold grace.** Luther thought that charismata, due to natural endowment, are to be excluded: "Gifts you have, which are not born with you, nor did you bring them as your own inheritance from your mother's body." Yet Peter says that "each one" did receive a charisma, and Rom. 12:6 etc., shows us that many a charisma is only some natural endowment or possession sanctified by the Holy Spirit who dwells in the Christian. We should not entertain the thought that all the charismata found in the early Church were of a miraculous nature. Only a few belonged to this class, and these miraculous charismata were not given to many.

Peter agrees with Paul, that all charismata are intended by God for *διακονία*, for service to benefit the members of the Church, and not for the exaltation of the possessor of the charisma. So here Peter writes *διακονοῦντες εἰς ἑαυτούς*, "ministering it for yourselves." The reflexive pronoun repeats the one used in v. 8, which connotes that all of the Christians form one body, distinct from the world. This body is to be benefited by the use to which all of the gifts are put. There is no member wholly without a charisma. It is well to stress the point. A good deal of sloth hides behind the plea: "I have no gift." Some have small gifts, but cultivation increases them. Some have latent gifts; they are themselves surprised at what they can do when the effort is properly made. To be sure, some have outstanding charismata. Peter was so blessed.

In all our ministering with whatever charisma or charismata may be ours our aim is to be "as excellent stewards of God's manifold grace." An *oikonomos* is one to whom certain property is entrusted who is to administer it according to the owner's will, and then to render an account. We all know the unjust steward of the parable, Luke 16:1. Such stewards often administered great estates. Frequently trusted and able slaves served their master in this manner, although the steward of Luke 16 was not a slave.

The objective genitive “of God’s manifold grace” contains two points: 1) every charisma, whatever its nature, is a gift of God’s pure undeserved grace or *κάρις*, and should be employed accordingly; 2) this grace is “manifold,” because, while it is one and the same favor, it bestows the greatest variety of charismata or endowments and abilities upon the many members of the Church, so that the body of the Church may suffer from no lack. What you and I cannot do, some other member can. The word “stewardship” has at present been narrowed down to the task of Christian giving, to administration of money. Biblically this is unwarranted. The stewards of God’s manifold grace operate with all kinds of sanctified talents. Into our circles the idea of tithing has crept, and tithers imagine that they are good stewards of God. We cannot enlarge on the subject in the present connection, but the New Testament offers no support whatever for tithing; on the contrary, when the great apostle raised his large collection for the famine-sufferers in Jerusalem, although he had been reared as a Jew and thus as a tither, he did not use tithing as the mode of giving. Some try to rub off the Judaic character of tithing by giving tithing a different name and a Gospel instead of a legalistic coloring. They deceive no one but themselves.

[11] Peter continues: **if one speaks, — as God’s sayings; if one ministers, — as out of strength which God supplies.** The whole section, v. 7 to 11, is but one extended sentence. In the Greek the two apodoses have and need no verb; English translations feel obliged to insert participles. Peter divides into two groups: words — deeds.

If anyone speaks, *λαλεῖ*, Opens his mouth instead of being silent, this is to be “as God’s sayings.” Peter always uses *ὡς* as indicating realities and not as indicating only assumptions. He uses *λόγια* as we find it used in Rom. 3:2 and Heb. v. 12. “Oracles” (our versions) is too pagan. In the present connection Peter wants a plural term. But *λόγος θεοῦ* is a standard singular, which cannot well be pluralized and might cause misunderstanding when used in the plural. Hence Peter takes *logia*, a simple plural not liable to misunderstanding.

The thought is that when a Christian opens his mouth, he lets God control his tongue, so that all that he utters may be in harmony with God’s sayings, those which are especially pertinent to what is being said. Thus a Christian’s utterances will always be pure, charitable, truthful, helpful and not harmful. This is also true with regard to the subject-matter uttered.

God's saying will govern and control everything. The notion must be accounted extravagant that "a Christian is to consider, that the words flowing from his mouth are all charismatic, be they doctrine, prophecy, or speaking with tongues, produced by God, not originating with men." Did you ever see such a Christian? It is not true that all Christians spoke miraculously with tongues. All Christians never spoke by inspiration. The Scriptures are not honored by attributing to them untempered statements.

As with speech, so with deeds: any ministering is to be "as out of strength which God supplies," ἰσχύς, "strength" as a possession, irrespective of whether it is put into action or not. Gifts are permanent possessions, abilities that endure. Thus with both tongue and hand the Christian is to use what God bestows on him for the purpose of benefiting the Church. The genitive ἧς is an attraction from ἧν, and the verb χορηγέω means etymologically to pay the expenses for staging a Greek chorus, and thus in the derived sense "to provide."

The aim of all this is: **in order that in every way God through Jesus Christ may be glorified.** 1 Cor. 10:31 shows how far this glorification is to extend. To glorify God is to make him and his attributes known to men. Considered by itself, God's glory cannot be augmented. We glorify God when in all things we exhibit in ourselves the effects of his grace and his Spirit. We profane the name of God and dishonor him when we Christians speak, act, and live in any way contrary to God's grace. He has made us What we are spiritually, — let us show it as it deserves to be shown. That it will be in every way "through Jesus Christ" goes almost Without saying.

Peter himself is moved to glorify God with a doxology: **to whom belongs the glory and the might for the eons of the eons! Amen.** See 1 Pet. v. 11 for most of the details. The relative is emphatic: "he to whom." The dative with ἐστί is the common idiom for "belongs to."

A great debate is staged regarding the antecedent of the relative. Is this Christ or is it God? Generally a dogmatic interest sways those who favor "God" — they want no doxology which ascribes deity to Jesus Christ. So they seek to give a turn to the language that will suit their idea. I have no dogmatic interest. That deity belongs to Jesus is assured in so many places in Scripture that one place more or less makes no difference whatever. In the present connection the antecedent is "God." For here Peter in four

different connections places the word “God” into the emphatic position. This alone is decisive. Then the obvious sense is also plain: “in order that there may be glorified (constantly, present subjunctive) God through Jesus Christ, — to whom belongs (indeed and of right) the glory and the might” etc. He whom we are ever to glorify is he to whom the glory rightfully and truly belongs, and this is here said to be “God.” Often the relative states the reason for an action. So here: the reason why we should ever glorify God is because the glory belongs to him. With the glory goes the κράτος, “the might” as put forth in mighty deeds. ἰσχύς is strength whether in action or quiescent, but κράτος connotes activity. Truly, we should glorify the God of glory and of might.

## Homiletical Aid

Our ascended Lord sent his Holy Spirit to the Church to prepare us all for the next great step in God’s plan, namely the end, the final goal, the judgment at the last day. Through this Spirit the Lord wants to make of us

### **“Good Stewards of the Manifold Grace of God.”**

#### I.

The first thing to consider is how we have come to be stewards to whom such manifold grace is entrusted. Look at our position as stewards. God took us out of the world and placed us into his Church. We belong to him. This is the work of his grace through Word and Sacrament.

Yet our position is not merely to be ever receiving. In one way the Church is a great Alms House, where poor destitute waifs are taken care of. But another view is that the Church is a busy factory, in which all have a task and delight to perform it.

#### II.

The next thought is that not every person is fitted to be a steward into whose charge valuable property is to be placed. Stewards are carefully selected and must have certain important qualifications. So we come to our

qualifications as stewards. These are a sound spiritual mind and soberness in thought and act. You will not be a good steward, and will probably lose your stewardship altogether if you do not let the Holy Spirit by means of his Word put soundness and soberness into your mind, i.e. your thinking and judging. Erratic, flighty, trivial people are unfit for the important trust of stewardship in the Church.

### III.

We may now examine our trust as stewards, for to be a steward some rich owner must entrust us with the administration of his valuable property. To us is entrusted “the manifold grace of God.” Our task as stewards is to administer such a gift of grace as we have received from God for the good of his Church.

Every one has some gift, none is passed by. Even a cripple or a sick person can pray for the Church and the brethren. “Steward” does not mean just a giver of money. When we teach, we parents, Sunday school teachers, etc., and use the words of God, we are acting as stewards. When one works and does this or that for the Church with his hands according to the ability which God gives him, he is a good steward. Hospitality in the old Church. Love and the multitude of sins. The need is ever new.

### IV.

The excellence of a steward by no means lies only in the amount he does. It is more truly judged by the heart. So the Spirit purifies our motive as stewards. The motive must first of all be to be ever true to the words of God and to do everything according to the strength he gives us. Thus as stewards we shall ever be glorifying God alone and not ourselves.

The second motive springs from the first. It is love to the Church, the brethren. This will show itself in many ways. Note those mentioned in the text.

The motives themselves are hidden in the heart. Yet they ever keep revealing themselves. You can tell when I am anxious to follow God’s Word alone, use his strength alone, glorify him alone, and love the brethren truly.



## V.

As a good steward cannot possibly do just as he pleases, so in the end he will have to come before the great owner and render an accounting. We must ever keep before us our final accounting as stewards. This is the next thing that will face us. Note the parables of the Pounds, the Talents, and the Unjust Steward. The unfaithful steward is warned already now by what impends. The faithful and good steward is encouraged already now by his Lord's promised great reward, though this will be all pure grace, and therefore the greater.

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Define the word "grace"; wholly undeserved favor of God, for guilty sinner who deserves nothing but punishment, yet for Christ, our Redeemer's sake is pardoned and blessed.

### **"Grace is the Note my Soul Shall Raise."**

- I. Saving grace.
  1. Underlies all that is said in our text.
  2. Jesus Christ and his saving work.
  3. The Holy Spirit and his work of applying saving grace to our souls.
  4. Saved and in safety from sin, death, and hell.
- II. Charismatic grace.
  1. A charisma is a gracious gift and endowment of God, bestowed over and above saving grace.
  2. Every one has some charismatic gift, some ability to serve the Church of God. Abilities in word and in deed.
  3. The delight in using such gracious gifts for the service of the Church.
- III. Rewarding grace.
  1. Pure grace to be saved and fitted out with gifts by God. Yet when we are good stewards our reward shall be further grace.

2. Many rewards already in this life, blessings of all kinds.
3. The end and goal of all things and the crowning reward.

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The Bible resounds with the glory of God. We sing his praise and magnify his name. The Spirit is sent us that we may glorify God. It will be heaven when we all glorify God perfectly.

Skeptics scoff at all this glorification of God. They call God selfish for demanding all the glory. They glorify themselves and demand glory for themselves. But

### **When God is Glorified,**

#### **I. Then truth is honored.**

It would be a lie not to give all the glory, praise, and honor to God, for it all belongs to him.

He bestows salvation and manifold grace on us without the least merit or worthiness on our part.

We are and have nothing — all that we have we have received from God alone. 1 Cor. 4 7.

Even he must give us his Word to direct us in our speech and his ability to use his gifts (v. 11).

The facts are that all glory belongs to God alone. Only outrageous liars deny it.

#### **II. Then grace is recognized.**

The facts are not only that all that we have comes from God but that all that we have is pure grace.

We have merited and now merit no gift from God. What we do merit is punishment.

He tells us how to use his manifold grace in our text, but do we so use it? What then do we deserve? We need go no farther. Illustrate by samples from the text.

When then God continues his gifts to us is-not this pure grace?

When we recognize this grace, we certainly will sing his glory with all our hearts.

III. Then God's glory is reflected in us.

Is anyone afraid of losing something by glorifying God? The loss would lie in our not glorifying God.

It is by enriching us, by showering grace upon us that glory becomes due to God. In all this enrichment of us, in all that he enables us to do his love, grace, kindness, generosity, etc., are reflected. That is his glory indeed.

What joy then to glorify God. in all things!

IV. Then we ourselves are glorified by God.

In body and in soul we shall be glorious like God's Son, our Savior (Phil. 3:21).

The end, this goal, is at hand.

Fools they who refuse to glorify God and honor only themselves!

Blessed are they who join in St. Peter's doxology!

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Our Lord has gone up on high. He has left us here as his stewards to do his work in his Church. He has sent us his Spirit to enable us.

### **The Busy Christian.**

I. His is the greatest business in the world.

The stewardship of the manifold grace of God.

Ministering to the Church of God. In word and in deed according to God's logia and the ability he lends.

II. He knows his business.

The world would like to tell him what to do.

Mistaken church people think the business is cooking eats, making money, having entertainments, and what not, engaging in social service.

This truly busy Christian keeps sober and steady in mind, looks into God's logia, and there learns what his business really is.

Some have been awfully busy, but see what they gained, Matt. 7:22-23.

III. He is all business.

Eager to do all that St. Peter here tells him.

Happy at the coming of every new opportunity.

Wishing only that he had more gifts and talents.

Are you all business in the place where God has placed you?

IV. And let me tell you, his business pays!

Earthly profits flee. See the depression literally devour them. That is all the profit some have. Every cent they must leave behind. When you are dead, you will not own even the shroud and the coffin.

But these business stewards of God, their works do follow them, Rev. 14:13.

The profit is all grace, but none the less glorious. "Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds."

# Pentecost. Acts 2:1-13

## Jesus Sends the Holy Spirit for Us All

It has well been said that some texts are not selected for certain days, but unavoidably select themselves. The present text simply demands that it be used for Pentecost. As selected by the ancient church, the text stopped at v. 11, and thus avoided v. 13 and the unpleasant mockery. The Lutheran Church added the two verses 12 and 13. One may question whether the hostile opposition of unbelief should be mentioned at this high festival or not. The Church is always a militant Church and while in this world cannot remain undisturbed. It is a more heroic act to face the opposition and to conquer it, than to close the eyes to its existence.

**And when the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled they were all together at one place.** The image is that of a vessel gradually being filled as the days pass, and being filled to the brim when the fiftieth day is reached. This also suggests that then the Lord's promise regarding the sending of his Spirit was fulfilled. The feminine ἡ Πεντηκοστή without ἡμέρα was the name of the festival, hence Luke writes: "the day of the Fiftieth." Coming seven weeks after the Passover, it bore also the name "the Festival of Weeks." The Jews counted the fifty days by beginning with the day after the Passover. The Passover was observed on the 15th of Nisan, a fixed date. In the year mentioned in our text the 15th came on a Friday, so the count of fifty began on Saturday, a Sabbath, and the fiftieth day thus likewise came on a Sabbath. The Christians did not begin the count for their Pentecost with the day after Christ's death and did not set a fixed date for his death. They celebrated Easter on a Sunday and thus obtained Good Friday for the Lord's death, and they counted the fifty days until Pentecost from Easter, so that we always also have Pentecost on a Sunday.

Pentecost was the Jewish harvest festival, celebrating not the end but the beginning of the harvest. Long after the days of the apostles it was made a

festival commemorating the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai. When the day came, Luke says, all the disciples, men and women, were together “at one place.” “All” refers to 1:12-15, about 120 in number.

**[2] And there came suddenly out of heaven a great noise as of a violent wind borne along, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. [3] And there appeared to them as distributing themselves tongues of fire, and it sat upon each single one of them. [4] And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to make utterance with different tongues, even as the Spirit kept giving to them to utter exaltedly.**

Since the Jews stood when praying, sitting here must mean that one or the other of the apostles was addressing the assembly. The Spirit descended while the disciples were listening to a sermon. It was about nine o'clock (v. 15). Suddenly there was a great roaring noise, resembling the roaring rush of a great wind. It was such a noise, it was not a wind. The roar started in the sky and soon filled the entire house where the disciples were sitting. This was the first manifestation of the Spirit's great descent. This volume of noise signifies power, its greatness supernatural power. A noise as of a mighty wind signifies the mysterious power indicated in John 3:8. Both the Hebrew word for the Spirit *Ruach* and the Greek word Πνεῦμα signify “Wind.”

What is meant by this “house” where all of the disciples were in one place? It is argued that this must have been one of the thirty halls of the Temple called οἴκοι “houses.” This can hardly be the fact. For if the disciples were in the Temple, they would be in the courts praying and not sitting. The noise then would have brought no mere multitude, but the Temple police, their *strategos*, and the Sanhedrists to the disciples. This was a house in the city. It need not cause comment that the disciples were not in the Temple at this hour, for we see that three thousand other very devout people were also not in the Temple. In fact, there was no celebration occurring in the Temple at the time. The house where the disciples were gathered together either had a great hall, or the inner court was used. Oriental houses are built around a court that is open to the sky.

[3] The second phenomenon was that of tongues of fire which divided and distributed themselves, so that on each person's head such a tongue

appeared. The fire came in one mass, and its flashing tongues then divided and distributed themselves. Not a single individual present was without such a fiery tongue. This includes the women. The tongues were silent, while the noise from the sky roared. The Spirit fills every believer's heart and manifest himself through each of them. The roaring noise attracts the multitude, the silent flames glow for each individual. The multitude speaks about what it hears the disciples saying, not about what it also sees; it may thus well be that the tongues of fire were visible only for a short time.

The tongues of fire appear to symbolize the tongues of the different languages with which the disciples spoke. Firelike tongues recall the altar with its holy fire, sending the offering up to God. Fire, too, is the symbol of purity and of purification. Each disciple is to make his confession, prayer, praise, testimony a pure offering as coming from a holy altar burning with sacred fire.

These manifestations were miraculous. To offer natural scientific explanations or scientific denials is childish.

[4] "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit" in a miraculous manner. Here is the fulfillment of Luke 3:16 and of Matt. 3:11. The Spirit at one time descended upon Jesus when he entered upon his office, so Jesus sends the Spirit upon his Church when it begins its mission in the world.

Yet we must not think that now for the first time the Spirit came. All of the Old Testament saints had the Spirit. He wrought their faith and their godliness, he inspired Moses and the prophets. Note that in John 20:22 Jesus gave the Spirit to the eleven. The Spirit wrought through the Baptist's Baptism (John 3:5), wrought in the heart of Nicodemus. But all this contact with the Spirit was preliminary. Redemption had not yet been wrought by the Savior. The worldwide mission of the Spirit could not begin until now, when after his redemptive work had all been done, the Gospel with its power of the Spirit could go out and must go out into the world of men. For that reason the Spirit here descends upon these disciples who constitute the Church. The Spirit does not hang in the air to strike this and that person with converting power. The Spirit is in the hearts of the believers, and they have the mission to bear the Gospel with its power of the Spirit out to all men. Therefore, not in a silent and in an invisible manner was this work of the Spirit begun. It was inaugurated in a public and in a glorious manner by

the miraculous descent of the Spirit. The powers with which the Spirit works in and through the Church were publicly displayed. The gift of the Spirit extends to all of us. Not that the miraculous manifestations must ever continue and be constantly seen. When the Spirit descended on Jesus, the phenomenon was seen only at that moment, and not after. So was the Spirit's descent at Pentecost. The personal instruments of the Spirit are the believers, all of them; his spiritual instrument is Word and Sacrament. He has used both of them ever since Pentecost.

The noise and the tongues were exterior manifestations, the speaking with different tongues was an expression that came from the hearts of the disciples. We shall not devote much space to these "tongues." Those interested may examine 1 Cor. 12:10 in my *Interpretation* and also 1 Cor. 14 and what Paul there says. I record the summary results of my study, because this is what I want for my preaching.

There is only one kind of speaking with tongues. The speaking in Jerusalem, in Caesarea, in Corinth are the same. "Different tongues" are different human languages. Each speaker spoke in a language which he had never learned. Natives who spoke these languages at once understood, others needed a translation. To talk of "the language of heaven" is pure fiction and poor fancy. These tongues were a miraculous manifestation: "Even as the Spirit kept giving to them to utter exaltedly," — this the meaning of ἀποθέγγεσθαι. The gift of tongues is one of the proofs for Verbal Inspiration. The gift was transient. It served as a miraculous attesting of the presence and the operation of the Spirit; but as the Church spread, this evidence was no longer needed. It was never the divine intention that this gift should be used when preaching. Even the apostles did not use it for this purpose. When in this connection Peter preached, he used Aramaic, the vernacular of Jerusalem. Some years ago fanatics wished to revive the gift of tongues. The movement began in California, leaped to Scandinavia, then to Germany, where its leaders finally confessed that it was due entirely to Satanic influences. Poor dupes were sent as missionaries to foreign people, talked to them in a gibberish, and were disillusioned.

**[5] Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, men devout, from every nation of those under heaven. [6] And when this sound occurred the crowd came together and were confounded, because they kept hearing them speaking, every single one, in his own language. [7] And**



**all were in amazement and kept wondering, saying: “Lo, are not all these speaking Galileans? [8] And how do we on our part hear, every one in our very language in which we were born?”**

In order to explain the presence of people who spoke so many different languages, Luke states that devout Jews from every land under heaven dwelt at Jerusalem. These were not pilgrims who had come to the city for the festival, which lasted only one day, but permanent residents. They had moved from the far countries to Jerusalem, there to end their days, there to be buried. We must know that even as now so in the Roman empire there was scarcely a town in any country to which Jews had not penetrated. Many were worldly. Hence Luke inserts “devout,” — εὐλαβῆς == “one who takes hold well,” but always in the religious sense. Only such really devout Jews would leave the diaspora to end their days in the Holy City, in the shadow of the Temple.

[6] The tremendous sound from the sky, settling in the building Where the disciples were gathered, brought a great crowd of these Jews to that house. They crowded the street. To be sure, there were present also natives of Jerusalem, but Luke notes the Jews from the diaspora because these spoke so many different foreign languages in addition to their Jewish Aramaic, — often they knew this foreign language better than they did the Aramaic. These Jews were dumbfounded to hear the disciples speak in the languages in which they as foreigners had been born. Luke adds “every single one” in his own language, — no foreign Jew but heard his native foreign language. Luke is certainly plain as to the languages. It is beyond us how any honest reader can miss his meaning.

7-8) Their amazement and wondering expresses itself. First in the exclamatory question: “Lo, are not all these speaking Galileans?” We need not suppose that all of the disciples were so well known in Jerusalem among the Jews from the diaspora as at once to be identified as men from Galilee. The first question was naturally: “Who are these men?” A few who knew said that they were Galileans. This does not mean “Christians” or “unlearned,” but means that the disciples spoke the Galilean dialect of Aramaic. How then could these disciples now speak in all these many different languages? Note that they say: “every one in our very language in which we were born.” Not one who did not hear his language. The language

was his very own, each one even born in it, i.e. born in the country where he learned it as a child.

[9] Now follows the list. The names are in apposition to ἡμεῖς in v. 8, and may be translated: “we Parthians, we Medes,” etc., each group exclaiming in regard to itself. **Parthians and Medes and Elamites; and the Jews inhabiting Mesopotamia and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, [10] both Phrygia and Pamphilia, Egypt and the parts of Libya, those along Cyrene; and temporary residents, Romans, both Jews and proselytes, (II) Cretes and Arabians, we hear them telling with our own tongues the great things of God.**

The list contains three groups: 3 + 8 + 3, and the eight consists of four pairs. These countries describe a great circle around the Holy Land, starting in the east, swinging around westward to the north, and ending in the south. Take a map of the period and see where they lie. The reading “Judaea” (A.V.) has always been a great puzzle. How the country in which Jerusalem itself is situated should be listed, and listed where it appears, no one has been able to explain. The correct reading appears to be “Jews,” and the sense is that all those of the second group were Jews, while the third group consisted of both Jews and proselytes. This is eminently satisfactory.

[10] Egypt is paired with “the parts of Libya, those down along Cyrene,” all in Africa.

The third group contains “temporary residents,” Romans, Cretes, Arabians. These too were not pilgrims, but “dwelt” in Jerusalem, but not as making it their final, permanent home. They expected to go back into the diaspora. After the 3,000 were converted, it was an easy matter to gather all these data. The apposition “both Jews and proselytes” seems to belong only to “Romans.” There were two kinds of proselytes, those of righteousness who became out and out Jews, and those of the gate who were not circumcised and were bound only by the Noachian commandments against idolatry, blasphemy, disobedience to magistrates, murder, fornication or incest, robbery or theft, eating of blood (Gen. 9:4). These proselytes of the gate readily accepted Christianity. We here see how the congregation at Rome was founded. When some of these Romans returned to Rome they started a congregation.

[11] All these people confess that they hear the the disciples telling in their own languages the great things of God. For the third time we hear just what speaking with tongues denotes. Could a narrative be plainer? These people understood. They say they hear “the great things of God.” Consider a bit. The 120 disciples, men and women, did not shout together in a bable of tongues; then few could have understood anything. The Spirit loves order. The speaking was orderly, one after another spoke. Men and women spoke. This was not preaching. Peter presently did the preaching, and this was done in Aramaic. This was testimony, the voice of praise. It was no Methodistic testifying, no telling about what “I” experienced, but praise of the great deeds of God in sending his Son. See John 15:26: the Spirit, “he shall testify of me.” Did every one of the 120 speak? I do not know. Certainly all of the eleven spoke.

**[12] And all were in amazement and were in perplexity, saying one to another: “What does this intend to be?” ( 13) Others, however, scoffing, were saying: “They have been filled with sweet wine!”** Luke uses more words to express the effect of utter amazement. The miracle dumbfounded the multitude. What did it mean? It certainly meant a great deal, but what this was, these persons confess is completely beyond them. This was indeed one intent of the Pentecost miracle. The Spirit’s work is beyond our mortal powers of understanding. How can eternal life be kindled in a dead sinner’s heart? It staggered Nicodemus, John 3. This is true with regard to all the Spirit’s work.

[13] Yet among these foreign Jews, devout though they were in their Judaism, there were some of a different kind. Instead of humbly waiting until what so astonished them should be explained, they invent their own rash and hasty explanation: These disciples have imbibed too much sweet wine. Why our versions make this “new wine” remains a mystery. The last vintage had occurred four months previously. Besides, new wine is not used, wine is always allowed to age sufficiently. Γλῦκος == “sweet wine,” very tasty, of which a person may want to drink a good deal. These scoffers charge: They have filled up on such wine and did not know when to stop their drinking. How silly this jibe is Peter soberly indicates when he says that it is only nine o’clock in the morning. See 1 Thess. 5:7b. Drinkers do not get drunk at such an early hour.

There are always scoffers. Some are only smart Alecks, flippant, themselves lacking the sober mind of which the apostles say so much in their letters. Never waste much time on frivolous objectors. The Lord must cuff some people severely before they will act sensibly in the presence of great and holy effects.

## Homiletical Aid

“Let songs of praises fill the sky:  
Christ our ascended Lord  
Sends down his Spirit from on high  
According to his Word.  
All hail the day of Pentecost,  
The coming of the Holy Ghost!”

(Am. Luth. Hymnal 475)

### **“All Hail the Day of Pentecost, The Coming of the Holy Ghost!”**

- I. We hail the miracles of the Spirit’s descent.
  1. The sound that summoned the multitude.
  2. The tongues of fire that revealed the Spirit’s presence in each disciple.
  3. The speaking in foreign languages that revealed the Spirit to the multitudes in a personal way, — each heard in his own language.
- II. We hail the miracles because they endure for all time.
  1. Miracles are not everlastingly repeated. They are seals, which once affixed, stand permanently affixed. As there is no repetition of the wondrous descent of the Spirit on Jesus so there is no repetition of the descent at Pentecost. They cry in vain who shout for another Pentecost; they betray that they do not understand the Pentecost we have.

2. Why were the miracles so grand? Just because they endure for all time and once for all reveal that the Spirit is here and that his world-wide work is under way. He who works among all nations, tribes, and tongues comes in a fitting way. Parthians, Medes, etc., etc.
3. Why this miraculous descent so late? The Spirit's preliminary work until Pentecost. Now at last redemption is completed and Jesus ascended on high. Now the command to preach the Gospel to all nations. Now the Spirit takes charge. Now his power and the mystery of his work is revealed.

III. We hail the miracles because they speak to us personally.

1. Only through the power of the Spirit are we Christians and remain Christians. America is not in St. Luke's list, but it is closely connected with that list. But for Parthians, Medes, etc., there would be no America and no Spirit dwelling in us.
2. Yet not with the sound from heaven, the flames, the foreign tongues miraculously spoken were the people at Pentecost converted, but through St. Peter's preaching and the Baptism, — "even as you and I." It is thus that the Spirit by these means of grace builds and extends the Church until the day of judgment.

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William H. Eifert has this remark in his sermon in The Concordia Pulpit 1933: "There are those within the Christian Church today who, meaning well enough, are crying for another Pentecost. They tell us that what the Church needs is another Pentecost, another such miraculous Pentecost as that of the distant past. Such people seem to forget that the essentials of yonder Pentecost belong to the church today in the same measure as they were enjoyed by the forming Church 1900 years ago and that the preservation and extension of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ is in no way dependent upon the miraculous manifestations which accompanied the coming of the Holy Spirit on the first Christian Pentecost." Eifert's theme is

### **Pentecost Past and Present**

bring to mankind

- I. The same Holy Spirit, II. The same means of grace, III. The same results.
- 

I translate Appuhn with an alteration:

### **The Continuation of the Miracle of Pentecost.**

We note:

- I. The Pentecost signs, which still are valid.
  - II. The Pentecost gift, which we still receive.
  - III. The Pentecost Word, which we still hear.
  - IV. The Pentecost Church, in which we still live.
  - V. The Pentecost effects, which we still experience.
- 

Pentecost as great as Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter. Our salvation needs all four.

### **The Glory of Pentecost.**

Its full glory appears to us when we consider I. The Greatness of the Work that was to be done. How were twelve men to evangelize the world of all time? How were they to storm and overcome the Jewish bigotry, the pagan superstition? How were they to reach the ends of the earth (1:8) and all the generations of men until the doom of judgment? How were they to establish the Church of all time?

There is only one answer, and that is Pentecost.

Thus the glory of Pentecost appears to us when we consider II. The Greatness of the Person sent for this Work. He is the Third Person of the Godhead, equal with the Father and the Son. He descended upon the Son

when the Son entered upon his mission. His work is carried on in men's hearts. His are the spiritual means Word and Sacrament. He did all of the long preliminary work. He produced the Old Testament, made Old Testament believers, wrought through the Baptist and in the hearts of the disciples. The work could be done only by God's Holy Spirit, even as the Son alone could redeem us. It is the Spirit by whom we today are reborn, converted, placed into the Church, being prepared for heaven. So again the glory of Pentecost appears.

It shines forth in the Third Person, in the Holy Spirit.

This enables us to see the glory of Pentecost also in III. The Greatness of the Inauguration of the Spirit's Work. Into this immense work the Spirit was not inaugurated silently, but with three great and significant signs: the summoning sound from heaven which reached men of so many nations and tongues; the holy fire dividing into flames upon each Christian, revealing the Spirit's presence in his heart; the tongues in all the languages magnifying the great things of God. All this was followed, despite scoffers, by the conversion and Baptism of 3,000 persons. That inauguration stands for all time. When a king is enthroned, the enthronement is not repeated again and again, as if the first act were not enough. So our president is not inaugurated again every week or two.

As great as the work and the Worker so great his inauguration, and in all three we glory anew this festive day.

# The Festival Of The Trinity.

## Rom. 11:33-36

**“Oh the Depth of the Riches Both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God!”**

The ancient conception of this Sunday was originally not that of a Festival of the Trinity. It was only the First Sunday after Pentecost and the gospel text was John 3:1-15, the Holy Spirit's work of regeneration by means of Baptism. The epistle text was Rev. 4:1-11, the great throne-vision, in which occur the seven torches of fire burning before the Throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. Thus this Sunday was reckoned as belonging to the following line of Sundays, not as belonging to the preceding line and constituting its grand conclusion.

A change was made in the Middle Ages; nobody seems to know just when and by Whom. The First Sunday after Pentecost became the Festival of the Trinity. The texts were changed to Matt. 28:18-20 as the gospel, since it contains the name “the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,” and to Rom. 11:33-36 as the epistle, since it contains the phrases “of him and through him and to him are all things,” which phrases were supposed to refer to the Three Persons. This change to a festival of the Trinity continued, it was accepted by the Reformation, and we have it today. Nebe, *Evangel. Perikopen*, I, 43 etc., supplies us with the earliest references to the new festival. Pope Alexander III declined to have it introduced, but Pope John XXII († 1334) accepted it, *ut prima pentecosten dominica ab universali celebretur ecclesia*. The Catholic Church never relished the fact that this festival was in a way forced upon her and always counted the festival as one of secondary rank.

This explains how the ancient gospel text namely John 3:1-15, survived, although it was never selected with the idea of having it serve as a lesson



for the Festival of the Trinity. It is to be deplored that the great text of the ancient comes (preacher's "companion") Rev. 4:1-11, was not retained as the epistle. It might well have been retained, for it commemorates the Holy Trinity in the Trisagion, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." In my estimation the ancient text is superior to Rom. 11:33-36 as a lection for the festival of the Trinity. The preacher may well use it in place of Rom. 11.

Some dispute still remains regarding the question whether our present Trinity festival ends the festival half of the Church Year or opens the non-festival half. Most writers and preachers accept the former alternative, although they generally assume that the Trinity festival also forms a transition to the Sundays that follow. This, however, is true with regard to the gospel much more than with regard to our present epistle. It seems to me that when the choice was first made, regard was not had to a connection with the epistle texts for the following Sundays. The entire great after-Trinity cycle deals with the Christian in whom Salvation is Wrought by the Lord. I find very little in Rom. 11 that is transitional to this great after-Trinity subject.

The opinion is offered that the epistle for Pentecost Sunday, Acts 2:1-13, presents the conversion of Jews, and the epistle for Pentecost Monday, Acts 10:42-48, the conversion of Gentiles, and that now the epistle for the Trinity festival, Rom. 11:33-36, tells us that these two sets of conversion are the work of the Holy Trinity, tells us this in view of what the following epistles say in regard to erecting a Church universal, which is the common work of the Trinity. But Acts 2:1-13 and 10:42-48 glorify the Holy Spirit. The Trinity festival connects not with Pentecost alone (least of all to amplify or to alter that festival), but closes the entire festival half of the Church Year. This is the idea served by Rom. 11. The supposed missionary interest looking to the building of the Church universal is absent. Only in the most general way does this text regarding God's unsearchable judgments and ways past finding out introduce the after-Trinity cycle.

We see why the introduction of the Festival of the Trinity commended itself. We need a Sunday like this. All our confessions confess the Holy Trinity, and every Sunday reechoes the Introit: "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Therefore we want to preach on the subject of the Trinity, not merely incidentally, but grandly on a special Sunday, set apart for this purpose. There is only one true God, and he is

Father, Son, and Spirit. We deny all unitarianism, whether it be that of present-day Jews, of Mohammedans, of so-called Christian churches, of Free Masonry and other fraternal organizations, or that of philosophers. Taking the broadest possible view, no man is a Christian in any sense of the word who refuses to believe in the Triune God. You may call this a doctrinal test. It is that. Doctrine is a statement of divine saving fact, and no fact is more fundamental or essential than the fact about God's own being and person. Falsify this fact and there is nothing in religion that you have not falsified.

Luther's estimate is correct, Paul does not speak in any specific way of the Trinity in Rom. 11. He thinks the Trinity is touched upon in the prepositions ἕκ, διὰ and εἰς found in the last verse, but this is not the case. The older exegetes took it for granted that these prepositions applied to the Three Persons and for this reason chose this text for the Festival of the Trinity. In a way the retention of this text leaves us the victims of an ancient mistake, although there have been some recent strenuous defenders of the correctness of the older exegesis, notably Philippi. The opinion that this text was chosen to warn us against puzzling in regard to the unsearchable mystery of the Holy Trinity is incorrect in itself and in conflict with what the text really states.

The ancient mistake is not as grave as one might think. This text contains Paul's rapturous praise of "God," whom he also calls "the Lord," i.e. *Yahveh*. By this he means the true God, Father, Son, and Spirit, although he does not name these persons. We thus have full liberty to preach on God, the Lord, the Trinity, and to utilize whatever we desire from other Scripture passages on this subject.

Our text forms the conclusion of the fourth grand section of Romans, chapter 9 to 11, in which Paul elucidates by means of the doctrine of justification by faith alone the tragic rejection of the Jews and the blessed acceptance of the Gentiles. After contemplating also these mighty facts Paul exclaims as he does. The words are surcharged with exalted feeling. To get their full effect we should place them beside 9:1 etc., Paul's tragic sorrow for his own people Israel. The two passages reveal to us the range of the apostle's emotions and when placed side by side allow us a glimpse into his heart.

**Oh, depth of riches both of God’s wisdom and knowledge! How unsearchable his decisions, and untraceable his ways! [34] For who did know the Lord’s mind? or who became his counselor? [35] or who first gave to him, and it shall duly be paid back to him? [36] because from him, and through him, and unto him — all the things (that exist)! To him the glory for the eons! Amen.**

ὦ is used sparingly by the Greeks, and thus, when used, is so much the stronger. We should not translate as do our versions; “O the depth etc.,” for Paul is not addressing the depth; the depth is not a vocative, nor is it “the depth,” the word is anarthrous. While we might use “O” in English “Oh” is better. The interjection stands by itself: “Oh!” Paul exclaims regarding what he sees, regarding such depth of riches of both God’s wisdom and knowledge. In all their profundity and their immensity these divine attributes reveal themselves to Paul, and he exclaims “Oh” and states What he sees. One must go carefully through chapters 9-11 to see and to feel what Paul does when he exclaims “Oh!”

None of the four nouns have articles, which fact stresses the quality expressed in each. But the final genitive “of God” makes “wisdom and knowledge” specific and thereby indicates also the definite “depth of riches” here meant. Some read three coordinate qualities: 1) riches, 2) wisdom, 3) knowledge, and apply “depth” to all of them. But “riches” expresses no divine attribute comparable to “wisdom and knowledge;” “riches” signifies only great abundance, the absence of lack. “Riches,” like “depth,” is only a formal or modal term. Those who make it an independent concept define “riches” as “grace and mercy,” or as “wealth of love,” or more indefinitely as the extensive means at God’s disposal for working out his plans. These definitions themselves prove that “riches” is not an independent term, but that it needs something to tell us what riches are meant.

We never associate depth with riches alone, but we do associate depth and profundity with Wisdom and knowledge. Thus Paul might have written: “depth of wisdom” etc. Eph. 3:18 states four dimensions: breadth, length, depth, height. The apostle desires to say more, namely that God’s Wisdom and knowledge in all its depth and profundity is also infinitely rich. He thus combines limitless depth with limitless wealth. No one can sound the bottom of God’s wisdom and knowledge, and no one can estimate their

wealth. Depth takes us down, down with no point at which our mind can stop, and riches at the same time spreads out in every direction, so that we, whose minds are so poor as to reach out only in one or two directions, are at once lost.

Paul stops in adoration only of the wisdom and knowledge of God, for these two divine attributes are so prominent in the three chapters (nine to eleven). The other attributes, notably God's mercy, are directed in their operations by God's infinite wisdom and knowledge. Grace is never arbitrary or blind. Our love is often deceived, defeated in its purpose and aim. Never the love and the mercy of God, nor his punitive judgment. Also, it is well to remember another difference. The attributes of God do not merely attach to him or inhere in him, as do our attributes. We may for instance lose our wisdom and have it turn into folly. God's attributes are at once his very essence. A God who is not omnipotent is not God, is nothing, his existence an impossibility. This is true with regard to all God's attributes. Each of his attributes is only a partial view of God, afforded to us in the Scriptures, because our finite minds are so helpless, cannot possibly take in with one mental act the totality of God, but must take up now one side, now another, as if there were many when in reality there is only absolute oneness and perfect unity. Even when we thus divide in our minds, the individual attributes are each one infinite, and though we speak, say of wisdom or of omnipotence or of mercy, we only stammer and no one among us really understands. All we can do is to bow down with Paul in worship, in stammering praise and adoration.

Paul mentions "wisdom" first, although the order "knowledge and wisdom" is often used because wisdom is rightly applied knowledge. Wisdom is the ability to employ knowledge for the highest purposes in the truest way. Knowledge is the ability to provide all the means which wisdom employs. In God both are infinite, — we touch them only at their outer fringe. The apostle places no restriction upon the wisdom and knowledge employed for our salvation and for the judgment of the wicked. What he has unfolded in these chapters and in his entire letter thus far deals with these soteriological matters. Their contemplation now leads Paul to glorify all God's wisdom and knowledge.

Here is the place to speak a few earnest words to our puffed-up generation, and this includes not a few Christians and preachers. Wise in

their own conceits, do they bow in humility and adoration before the unfathomable wisdom and knowledge of God? Do they find these attributes in the Gospel and accept every word of that Gospel accordingly? The nature student (“scientist,” “knower,” if you please!) discovers a secret or two in the creature-world and makes a great noise because of his discovery, but he forgets God who made that secret and thousands more ages ago. Wise in their own conceits, men rise up and tell God what he can do, what he ought and what he ought not to do. The hand of God in their own lives they cannot and will not see. What God does in his Kingdom is a sealed book to our state universities and to the daily press. What profundity in God! — what folly in men!

Paul himself defines “depth of riches” by the next exclamation: “How unsearchable his decisions, and untraceable his ways I” “Unsearchable” means that all our efforts at searching out are utterly in vain; “untraceable” mean that we cannot discover the tracks and trace his course where God has gone and where he has done things — we are left in a labyrinthine maze. Κρίματα are actual “decisions.” We may translate “judgments,” but must not restrict the meaning to adverse judgments or condemnations. God’s “ways” are not his manners or habits, but the courses he has taken and still takes. Here the thought that his decisions and his ways are always right is not the point, but that they are full of infinite wisdom and knowledge beyond all our understanding. Two facts are involved. Since God’s wisdom and knowledge are behind his decisions and his ways they are perfect, and we should not ask to understand them before we trust them with our whole heart. Secondly, the fact that it would be worse than childish folly for our puny wisdom and knowledge to balk at God’s decisions and his ways, to criticize them, to demand that they be changed.

We heed the thought, but the wording also deserves our appreciation. The parallelism is like that found in Hebrew poetry. There is also the simplicity and the concreteness that distinguish Hebrew poetry. High exaltation appears in every line and this attains its climax in v. 36 in a manner almost incomparable.

[34] As one who lives, moves, and has his being in the Old Testament the apostle automatically expresses his thought in Old Testament language. He does not quote, but adapts Is. 40:13 and Job 41:11 (41:3 in the Hebrew) to his own thought. “Who did know the Lord’s mind (Κυρίου, *Yahveh’s*)?”

In his mind his wisdom and knowledge dwell, — speaking humanly of God; the Hebrew has *ruach*, “spirit.” To understand God’s decisions and his ways, one would have to penetrate the inner chamber of his being, his mind and his spirit. Who ever did that? Certainly no human being.

“Or who became his counselor?” Did God make some one of us his confidant, talk over with him in advance his decisions and his ways, and ask his advice, so that this person can search out and trace for us all the infinite mysteries of the wisdom and knowledge employed? That would indeed be a wonderful person!

[35] For his third question Paul abandons the wrong translation of the LXX, which reads: “or who shall resist me and remain?” Paul translates the Hebrew of Job 41:3 (v. 11 in English) independently: “or who first gave to him,” and thus put God under obligation, “and it shall be duly (this the force of ἀπό in the verb) paid back (ἀντί) to him?” God meeting the obligation by explaining to this benefactor of his all the wisdom and knowledge of his decisions and his ways. N 0, not even by way of obligation has any man been allowed to sound these depths and to explore these riches? The very idea that a human being should put God under obligation is intolerable.

[36] The entire three questions demand negative answers. No one. But Paul would not close this great paragraph and with it this great section of his epistle with anything negative. He ends with a mighty affirmative, which contains the all-comprehensive and ultimate reason for the implied negations, which at the same time is also the completest and most satisfying reason why God’s wisdom and knowledge and his decisions and his ways are unsearchably profound: “because of him, and through him, and to him — all the things (that exist)!” This too is an exclamation, no verb should be inserted. The vastness of the thought is staggering. Τὰ πάντα, definite == “all the things that exist,” while anarthrous πάντα == “all things in general,” which would not be the proper expression in this connection. The German *das All* is a unit, while τὸ πάντα denotes a plurality. Who can number and visualize them all? Who can know all their interrelations and ramifications?

Yet “all the things” that exist are unified in three ways which center in God: 1) origin — 2) medium of existence — 3) final goal. They are “from him,” ἐξ αὐτοῦ, they derive their origin from him. God is their Creator.

They are “through him,” “by means of him,” δι’ αὐτοῦ, they could not exist one instant without him. God is their Preserver, the medium of their existence. Finally, they are “unto him” or “for him,” εἰς αὐτόν, have their aim, goal, purpose in him. God is their Consummation, without him they would lose their meaning. Ἐκ takes us back to Gen. 1, the beginning, the six days of creation. This ἔκ is history. Εἰς takes us forward to Rev. 21-22, the new heaven and the new earth. This εἰς is prophetic and will become history. Between ἔκ and εἰς lies διὰ as we behold it now. Here are the facts concerning the universe of things that exist. Pagan legends are idle dreams. Philosophic notions are no better. The figment of evolution is so damnable because it is not mere ignorance which one may pity, but a deliberate attack on God’s revelation and on his very existence.

The ancients and a number of moderns have sought the Trinity in these three phrases; some hesitate and are not certain. It would be an advantage to the preacher when he takes this text for the Festival of the Trinity to have such a beautiful and direct reference to the Trinity. But we must do without this advantage. The three pronouns in ἔξ αὐτοῦ — δι’ αὐτοῦ — εἰς αὐτόν do not refer to three persons, for their antecedent is Θεός and Κύριος, “God,” “the Lord.” We dare not even say that the three phrases refer to three aspects of God, and then make these aspects apply to the Three Persons. Those who here introduce the Trinity make εἰς signify ἔν, and then attempt to make ἔν refer to the Holy Spirit. This is useless, since even ἔν does not apply in any distinctive way to the Third Person. Make a survey yourself.

In 1 Cor. 8:6 εἰς used with reference to the Father, in Col. 1:16 ἔν with reference to the Son; neither preposition can be claimed for the Holy Spirit. In 1 Cor. 8:6 ἔκ and εἰς together are used with reference to the Father, and διὰ twice with reference to the Son, yet in Heb. 2:10 δι’ ὅν and δι’ οὗ are used with reference to the Father. To call the three phrases used in our passage “Paul’s formula” is wrong, for no formula exists, either constructed by Paul or by anyone else. We find it impossible to detect a reference to the Trinity.

This, however, is what we have: Θεός == the Triune God. So does Κύριος. All that we may desire to say concerning the Holy Trinity is justified by these two terms. The latter == *Yahweh*, the God of the covenant,

and in its own way refers to the Trinity, for the covenant is executed through the Son and the Spirit. Thus Κύριος points us to the economic Trinity. Yet when the attempt is made to turn us from the ontological Trinity by restricting our preaching and teaching to the economic Trinity, we must remember that the latter could not exist without the former. The Nicene and the Athanasian Creed shall not be silenced in our churches, because they refer to the one divine Essence and to the inner relation of the Three Persons. We believe, teach, and confess all that the Scriptures reveal on these topics. Whatever goes beyond the Scriptures is dangerous speculation and is debarred. Even single attributes of God are beyond our mortal comprehension, how much more God himself? His decisions and his ways are inscrutable to us, how much more the mysteries of the being of their Author. A god whom we could comprehend with our mind would not be God, but a mental idol; for even millions of things that God has made no human mind has yet comprehended. Tell me, what is light, what is electricity, what is your own soul? We are not to comprehend the mysteries in God but to know them as far as they are revealed in the Scriptures and to worship in adoration.

The apostle ends with the brief doxology: "To him (αὐτῷ, not "to whom," A.V.) the glory for the eons! Amen." If the three preceding αὐτός refer to three different persons, to which of the three would this αὐτῷ refer? "The glory, with its article has the force of "all the glory" there is. Often "glory" signifies the effulgence of all the attributes of God, or of some of these attributes. It is then the glory that shines from God to us. Here "the glory" is the acknowledgment, honor, worship, and praise due to God from us, which by this very doxology Paul for his part gives to God. "To the eons" == to all eternity, every eon ringing with glory to God. "Amen" is the Hebrew word for "truth" or "verity," incorporated into Greek and other languages as a seal of verity. "Amen" is strongly confessional. Keep it so.

## Homiletical Aid

There is no place for an outline like this: Glory to the Triune God to all Eternity!

- I. For of him, the Father;



- II. For through him, the Son;
- III. For to him, the Holy Spirit, are all things. (Nebe)

The division would have to be:

- I. For of him, the Triune God;
- II. For through him, the Triune God;
- III. For to him, the Triune God, are all things.

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You cannot know God. State in what sense this is true, and how many men have thought they could know God and have only made a false image, a caricature of God.

You can know God. State how this is possible: by means of his Word, his self-revelation. This includes his works, but only when viewed in the light of his Word.

This Sunday opposed to all false gods and falsifications of God, and appointed to glorify the true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **The Mystery of God the Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

- I. It faces you.
  - 1. In the created works of God. Their incomprehensible nature. Examples: consider the universe and the heavenly bodies — the snowflake. The seed and its life — the countless living forms — the body, mind, soul of man — the angels. The Father, the Creator, together with the Son and the Spirit. Oh, depth of riches of God's wisdom and knowledge!
  - 2. In the decisions and the ways of God. Regarding the nations of the world, 'regarding Israel, regarding every individual person. His Kingdom of grace in Christ Jesus, all he has done in it, still does, and will yet do. The Son, the Redeemer and Savior, the Spirit, the Sanctifier. Oh, depth of riches of God's wisdom and knowledge!

3. In the infinite greatness of the Triune God himself. If the created works, the decisions and ways of God are unsearchable and past finding out for our little finite minds, what then about God himself? The absolute oneness of his infinite being and essence, the whole of which is in each of the Three Persons. There could not be another God; there could not be any but these Three Persons. Even every one of his attributes is infinite. We know them, but cannot fathom them. The Word is our only guide.

II. We must face it.

1. Overwhelmed by its unsearchable greatness. Bowed down in humility into the dust. Accepting the revelation and putting away all doubts, presumptions, questions, and unbelief. Asking ourselves like St. Paul: "Who hath known the mind of the Lord?" Etc.
2. Overawed by his unsearchable decisions and his untraceable ways. Accepting what the Triune God reveals about them in his Word, demanding no more. Dictating nothing to God, leaving ourselves and all things to him.
3. Confessing the Unity in the Trinity, the Trinity in the Unity against all who pervert and deny.
4. Uplifted by faith in the infinite goodness, grace, and love of God in his Son Christ Jesus and in his Holy Spirit. Of this our God, Father, Son, and Spirit, through him and to him are all things that exist. All glory to him for ever!

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Loy would have us preach on:

**The Unsearchableness of God,**

and asks us to give attention to the two points,

- I. Wherein this is shown,
- II. Whereto this should lead us.

We reject such categories when making the division: who, why, how, when, where, wherein, whereto. Also we should want a direct reference to the Trinity in the outline for this Festival. The sermon itself is well subdivided and has Loy's usual excellencies: clarity, simplicity, good use of Scripture quotation, etc. Let us alter the outline:

### **The Unsearchableness of the Triune God.**

#### I. The overwhelming fact.

1. "All his works are beyond our comprehension and understanding, and our knowledge is but fragmentary and dim." Passages Is. 55:8-9; Ps. 139:5-6; Ezek. 28:25; Ps. 40:5; 19:1-2, closing with Eph. 3:20-21.
2. His attributes are as unsearchable as his judgments and his ways. Brief, no passages.
3. As God's works and his attributes are unsearchable it is evident that he is so in his infinite essence and eternal being. 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 4:11; Ps. 145:1-3; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; ample quotation from the Nicene Creed: "The Father is Lord," etc. The Trinity is fully presented in this sub-part.

#### II. The infinitely blessed effect. We are led

1. "To humility." Ps. 8:1 and 3-4. The questions in the text. We note: "Why, bethink you, my brethren, does it not occur even among Christians, who have the light which nature does not give, that they sometimes find fault with God's ways, and murmur and complain of some things in their own experience as if they understood it all better than their Maker, and would have brought things to a more beneficent issue, if he had taken counsel with them? And have you never observed how men that are supposed to be perfectly sane take the credit to themselves of the good which they have been the instruments of doing and the prosperity which they enjoy, as if they had first given to God and were now only receiving what he owes them, it being recompensed to them again as their just due?"
2. "To trust in him." Ps. 37:5; 2 Cor. 5:7.

3. “To give him the praise in all things.” Ps. 48:1; Ps. 103:1-4; Ps. 57:9-11; Ps. 48:14; concluding with Eph. 3:20-21.

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This is the Sunday which is intended to draw the line between all Christians on the one side and all non-Christians on the other side. In our sentimental and indifferent era it is necessary to draw this line so that no eye can be in doubt about it and its full significance. St. Paul draws it when he points to the true God our Lord and exclaims: “To him the glory for ever. Amen!” He draws the line in every word of this text.

### **The Great Dividing Line.**

#### **I. The right side of this line.**

1. The true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is on this side. He with all his attributes, all his works, all the salvation he has wrought, the whole Christian Church, the Communion of Saints, and also all his judgments against those who deny his name, his Son, his salvation.
2. On this side are the three great ecumenical Confessions (explain), all other Christian confessions, notably our own, Augsburg Confession, Catechism, etc. (explain). All true public Christian services: “In the Name of the Father and of the Son” etc. — “The Lord bless thee and keep thee” etc. — “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,” etc. The Lord’s Prayer. Every sermon and every hymn. Complete the catalog yourself.
3. Of this God all the Scriptures testify. St. Paul does it in our text in exalted strain. To him alone all glory belongs. No human being on earth should fail to know, trust, confess, obey God the Father, Son, and Spirit. There is no other God. In him alone is our salvation.

This cannot be proclaimed too loudly, too constantly, because there is also

#### **II. The wrong side of this line.**

1. The true God, Father, Son, and Spirit, is not on this side. On this wrong side are nothing but idols and false, fictitious gods, invented by men, or no god of any kind. Not a single true Christian is here, not one of the Communion of Saints. There is no salvation, no Lamb of God slain for the sins of the world, no blood of expiation and atonement. On this wrong side the devil and the power of the darkness hold sway. Here is the dragon of Revelation, with the' beast and the false prophet and the harlot. Here is Babylon. On this side is only damnation.
2. On this wrong side are all pagan people with their countless idols, all Jews and all Mohammedans, all Free Masons and many other secret orders, all modernistic churches and preachers who cling to the Christian name but not to the Christian truth, all antichristian sects and cults, among them Russellites, Christian Scientists, Mormons, etc., all agnostics, atheists, infidels, unitarians, skeptic evolutionists, — add the rest. They must be named, lest you be deceived.
3. Not one of all these on the wrong side of the line could repeat St. Paul's praise and adoration in the sense in which St. Paul utters it. When you hear them say "God," be not deceived; they use the same word as you do, but do not mean the Triune God whom you mean. They say "Father," but do not refer as you do in the Lord's Prayer to the First Person of the Holy Trinity, or as in the Creed to the Creator, the Father of the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Expose similar falsifications.

Confess, then, with new faith and valor: "I believe in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen." "To him, the only true God, be glory for evermore! Amen."

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This Festival is to make you think of God, the true God, and is to move you to accord to him the glory due to his Name (i.e. revelation of himself).

**Glory For Ever To the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit!**

- I. Contemplate his infinite wisdom and knowledge with adoration!
- II. Behold his unsearchable decisions and ways with humility!
- III. Ask who has the least claim upon him, with conviction!
- IV. Rejoice that of and through and to him are all things, with great joy!  
So will you in a small way glorify him on your part.

# **The Non-Festival Half Of The Church Year**

**The Twenty-Seven Sundays After Trinity**

**The Christian**

*In Whom Salvation is Wrought by the Lord*

# **The First After-Trinity Cycle**

## **The Christian in the World**

### **The First Sunday After Trinity**

*In The Midst Of God's Love*

### **The Second Sunday After Trinity**

*The World Hates You*

### **The Third Sunday After Trinity**

*We Suffer A While*

### **The Fourth Sunday After Trinity**

*We Wait For The Ransoming Of Our Body*

### **The Fifth Sunday After Trinity**

*How To Live In This Present Evil World*



# **The First Sunday After Trinity. 1**

## **John 4:16-20**

### **In the Midst of God's Love**

I group the five Sundays which comprise the first sub-cycle of the after-Trinity line of texts together and find that the idea of this sub-cycle is to present

### **The Christian in the World.**

The subjects of the texts for these five Sundays thus form a distinguishable and satisfying line of thought. The terminus of this cycle, as anciently conceived, was June 29th, the commemoration of the martyrdom of Peter and Paul. This is a fixed date, and thus fewer than five Sundays may come between Trinity Sunday and Peter and Paul's Day. We now make no adjustment in this sub-cycle; we usually make an adjustment toward the end of the church year, when we see that we shall have fewer than twenty-seven Sundays after Trinity in our calendar. Of course, an adjustment could still be made right here in this first after-Trinity sub-cycle.

The subjects of the five Sundays, as presented by the chart on a separate page need no special discussion, save to note that the first two texts: 1 John 4:16- 20, and 1 John 3:13-18, both taken from the great letter of John, evidently constitute a pair: God loves us — the world hates us. The next two likewise form a pair, although they are not taken from the same letter. The last text is 1 Pet. 3:8-15. This particular text, treating this particular subject was chosen from this letter because this Sunday would be near Peter and Paul's Day. Yet the text itself very appropriately rounds out this first series of five texts regarding The Christian in the World.

We dismiss the idea that the after-Trinity series must begin with regeneration and the beginnings of the Christian life. The ancient epistles do not begin in this way. This first text treats entirely about love, God's love and the love for and from our brethren. This first text refers even to the final judgment. Because of the other texts that follow in this sub-cycle we add the idea of the world: *The Christian in this World is Altogether Surrounded by Love*. Yet note well v. 17 of the text: "we in this world." A magnificent thought! The more so when next Sunday we get the companion text: *The Christian in this World is Altogether Surrounded by Hate*. Yes, this is his situation, and it is well to examine it in detail.

John is writing about love. In v. 14 he says that the apostles have seen and thus testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. And then he adds that whoever accepts this testimony and believes that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him and he in God, which is the fellowship of the *unio mystica*. The thought is now carried forward: **And we on our part have known and have believed this love which God has in connection with us. God is love, and the one remaining in the love, remains in God, and God remains in him.**

In v. 14 the "we" means the apostles, as we see from the predicate; the "we on our part," also with an emphatic ἡμεῖς, means John and his readers, as the predicate of this "we" shows. Note the duplication and the intensification of the predicate: "we have known and have believed." The tense implies that the knowing and the believing have had their continuation and their continuous effect to the present moment. The verb used is not οἶδα, to know through the mere contact of the intellect, but γινώσκω, to know with affect and effect upon the person knowing, which itself already involves the act of believing. No such knowing with inner realization can be without corresponding confidence, and no true confidence can be without such realization.

The object of the verbs is "this love (τὴν ἀγάπην) which God has in connection with us." On "love" see Rom. 12:9, Second Sunday after Epiphany. This is the noble word that indicates the love not of mere affection (φιλία) but of full comprehension and understanding, which reaches out to the loved object with a corresponding purpose. It is here the love which fully saw and realized that "the one remaining in connection with (ἐν) love, in connection with (ἐν) God remains, and God in connection

with him (ἐν) remains.” This also indicates where the emphasis lies, namely on the last two ἐν phrases. The one connection is this that our hearts embrace all of the love of God to us. The other connection is this that God enfolds and embraces us with his love. This is the *unio mystica* or mystical union. The A.V. translates the verb “dwell,” but the Greek has its own verb for that, and here it uses “remain” or “abide” (R.V.).

[17] In v. 12 John says that God’s love has been brought to its goal in us, τετελειωμένη ἐστὶν ἐν ἡμῖν, when we come to love not only God, but also all of his family, our brethren. Yet this is not the only goal: **In this has this love been brought to its goal with us (τετελείωται μεθ’ ἡμῶν), that we have boldness in connection with the day of the judging, because even as that One is we on our part also are, (though still) in this world.** The ἵνα clause is in apposition to ἐν rofitop- This too is the goal to which God’s love has been brought μεθ’ ἡμῶν, “in company with us,” in its companionship with us, namely that with God’s love as our companion we have boldness whenever we think of the day of judging (the day when God will judge), and have no fear whatever. Certainly this is one great goal which God wants to reach in\_us.

We must get the sense of the verb aright, else we shall go astray like so many do both in v. 12 and here. Τελειόω == to bring to a goal, and not to perfect or make perfect (our versions). This wrong conception makes many think that our love to God must be meant, not God’s love to us, since his love always is perfect and cannot be perfected. Therefore also they change the meaning of μετά; the A.V. even translating “our love” — as if a μετά phrase ever meant “our.” No; this is God’s love for us, and μεθ’ ἡμῶν places this love in company with us. Picture it as walking arm in arm with us and you see at once that when we are in such company, we can certainly be bold and fearless when we think of the day of the judging, κρίσις, the word expressing an action. Let God’s love lead you by the arm to the judgment seat, and you shall not be judged. As far as the thought of getting our love perfect enough to face the judgment day is concerned, I would despair, for we still sin daily and often greatly against love.

Here is another ἐν that upsets so many, ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ. This does not mean “in or on the day of the judging,” so that we shall have boldness when that day arrives. The tense is not a future, but present: “we have now” this

boldness, and ἐν means “in connection with” this day. This clears up also Rom. 2:16 where so many misunderstand and offer impossible solutions. Every serious-minded person must think of the day of his final reckoning. When we, in company with whom God’s love walks, think of it, we rightly have no fears. Whatever, for we shall not come into judgment, John 3:16-18: “he that believeth on him is not judged.”

The ὅτι clause is elliptical and lacks a predicate; for this reason many miss John’s meaning. The sense cannot be that “that One,” ἐκεῖνος, Christ, is “in this world” as we on our part are now in it. For Christ is in heaven, in glory. This shows that “in this world” is not the predicate. Moreover, even if this could be said, his being in this world just as we are is no reason (ὅτι, “because”) why we should have boldness when facing the day of judging.

John writes: “even as that One is we on our part also are,” — there is a likeness. In what respect is not stated, but it is to be inferred from the context. The context points us to the love of God. This love sent the Son as our Savior. This same love saved us through him and attained its goal. We may paraphrase: “because even as that One is, God’s love in company with him, also we ourselves are, God’s love in company also with us, though we are still in this world.” The last phrase modifies only “us.”

[18] John has already mentioned this boldness in 2:28 and 3:21, and now he dwells on it. **There is no fear in connection with this love; on the contrary, this goal-attaining love throws out fear, because this fear has punishment; moreover, the one fearing has not been brought to the goal in connection with this love.** John’s proposition is not a general one about all love, as our versions and various commentators think. This idea overlooks the article. John speaks of “the love,” the one he is here discussing, “this love” of God to us. Another mistake is the idea that this is to be regarded as our love to God. No; his love to us removes all fear on our part. How can we be afraid when God’s love walks arm in arm with us?

Why, this goal-attaining love of God to us throws out this fear (the article of previous mention) and in its place puts “boldness” into our hearts. How this love does this has been stated. God’s love does not let the children born to him quake with fear at the thought of the judgment; his love pulls up this fear by the very roots and throws it out as one would throw out a poisonous weed. Now John adds the adjective τελεία to “this love,” so as to

include all that he says about this love attaining its goal in us. To be sure, if by our unbelief this love is kept from reaching its goal, none of the blessed effect would follow. Judgment must ever have terrors for those who are not in companionship with God's love in Christ Jesus.

The reason why this fear is thrown out by God's love is because it has "punishment," κόλασις, torturing punishment, "torment" (A.V.). The verb ἔχει == "has to do with" punishment. Necessarily then God's goal attaining love frees us from all this fear.

Δέ adds the thought which is here so pertinent: "the one fearing (such punishment) has not been brought to the goal in connection with this love" of God for us. If you still fear punishment from God, you have prevented his love from attaining its goal in you, you have prevented it from forgiving your sins and thus planting sure confidence in your heart in the place of fear. When elsewhere God's children are told to fear God, this is no contradiction, for this is childlike fear which always goes with love, and would not offend the loved one by a wrong deed.

[19] Now at last John speaks about our love to God. **We on our part continue to love, because he has as a first one loved us.** We had no love at all (v. 10). God is πρῶτος, "the first one," who did the loving. Verse 10 states what his love did for us. So great is this act of love that all the world has never seen its equal. And this love kindles our love and keeps it burning. The objects of this our love are not yet important, hence are omitted. God's love wrought our love. Let that sink in. The pronoun inlet; is emphatic, but not in contrast to those who do not love, but in emphatic companionship with God.

[20] We now come to the object of our love. **If someone says: "I am loving God!" and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one not loving his brother, whom he has seen, God, whom he has not seen, he cannot be loving.** Our supreme obligation is to love God, and our loving the brethren may be considered as the evidence for our love to God. Hence every claim that "I am loving God" becomes a rank lie the moment I hate my brother for any reason whatever. Of course, this love to God must be taken in the Christian sense, not in the Jewish, Mohammedan, Mormon, Masonic, modernistic sense, — God in Christ Jesus, the God of v. 11. John

uses strong language: “he is a liar.” His love is fiction, and in all likelihood his God is also fiction, a self-made idol-God who lets him hate his brother.

You can easily test yourself as to whether you really love God who first loved you. Do you hate any one of your brethren? Of course, you must tell the truth. Yet note well, this is not *φιλία*, the love of affection. You need not kiss your brother, make a special friend of him, although you are always to be a *φίλος* or friend to him, — and that without first swearing a horrible oath. This is *ἀγάπη*. You are to see the faults of your brother, to realize the spiritual need he may have, and your purpose is to be according, to help him in every way, especially spiritually. Now where hate fills the heart and controls the actions, where this love is absent, the love for God simply cannot be present, — claim it as much as you may.

When John writes regarding the brother that I can see him and regarding God. that I cannot see him, many take this to mean that it should be much easier to love a person Whom one sees than a person whom one does not see. But is that true to fact? The person whom I see, I see with all his faults, and this person may even seriously offend me. We can say, it is easier to love an unseen person. “Has not seen” reverts to v. 12: “No man has seen God at any time.” This seen and not seen is not the whole matter. The objects are: “his brother whom he sees — God whom he does not see.” John explains his words more fully in the following verses, especially in v. 1-2. This brother, whom we see right beside us, is born of God, is one of God’s children, a member of God’s family. Now it is impossible to love the unseen Father of this child of his, as long as we hate this child, our brother. The point of John’s statements is not that the Father is in the brother, so that hating the brother would be hating also the Father. What John actually says about birth and brotherhood in relation to God is entirely sufficient.

## Homiletical Aid

Like the sun shining in the heavens and lighting up this dark world, so is this fact for the Christian: “God is love.” Make clear what *ἀγάπη* means. But not only is our life here in this world lit up by this divine love, God’s love fills all his children with love, so that as they return his love they all love each other. While in this world we are thus doubly surrounded by love.

Both kinds of love are in connection with Jesus Christ, hence unknown to the world which remains so dark and loveless.

### **The Christian Surrounded by Love.**

- I. By the love of God.
  1. “God is love,” this is his attribute, his very being.
  2. The supreme historical evidence in v. 10.
  3. We have known and have believed this love. We have tasted, experienced it.
  4. All our fear of the final judgment has been removed, we greet that day with confidence and joy.
  5. We face that day, do not like so many try to forget it and never speak about it. There shall be no judgment for us who have walked arm in arm with God’s love.
- II. By the love of his brethren.
  1. We love God in return for his love. His love kindles ours.
  2. The evidence for this is that we love the brethren, and that means that literally thousands love us as God’s children. We are surrounded by the great volume of their love.
  3. It could not possibly be otherwise. A man would be a liar and no brother at all who would claim: “I am loving God,” while he goes on hating his brother. To love the Father you must love his children.
  4. So Christian love radiates from all of us toward each other in this otherwise cold and loveless world.
  5. This makes the Christian’s situation happy indeed, if only he himself will respond in true Christian love.

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The wonder and mystery of God’s infinite love. His love began in all eternity. Our love to him and to our brethren in this loveless world is the

result.

### **“We Love Because He First Loved Us.”**

- I. This is inevitable.
  1. God himself is love, and no one can be in fellowship with him without love.
  2. The supreme proof of his love, making our love possible (v. 10).
  3. How shall we not love him who thus loved us? Here is the fountain of our love.
- II. This is delightful.
  1. Our sins are wiped out by the expiating blood provided by God’s love.
  2. All fear of penalty is removed.
  3. We anticipate the day of judging with boldness (confidence) .
  4. No ignorance, no bravado here.
- III. This is easy to prove.
  1. Do you hate a brother? Then you do not love God, and you lie if you say that you do.
  2. Can you love a brother who injures you? Yes, with the love of comprehension and corresponding purpose.
  3. God loved you long before you loved him.
  4. With so many loving you, who are certainly no angel, you should love and never hate and thus prove yourself one of God’s true children and family.

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### **The Oasis in the Desert of the World.**

- I. God’s love the fountain that makes this oasis.



- II. We with our love the plants that fill this oasis.
  - III. God wants no plant in this oasis to die.
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Note: This text invites to a homily. See my The Sermon 112 etc. A homily has its theme and a unity, but the theme does not control parts arranged in a logical manner, but allows a free descriptive development of the parts, none of which are formally announced as so many parts. A homily is a beautiful painting, harder to execute than an analytical or synthetical sermon. Try a homily now and then.

The world is godless. For this reason it is so loveless, hateful, cruel. There is much talk of bettering the world. No betterment until men become Christian and thus

### **Lovers of God.**

1. Knowledge and faith in their hearts (v. 16a). To know and to believe the love God has to us. This changes men.
2. God and they remaining in connection (v. 16b). The link is the Word. A connection that lifts them out of sin and sordidness and gives them all the gifts of God's love.
3. Baldness for the day of judgment (v. 17) . God's love reaches one of its great goals when it produces this boldness. He bestows forgiveness of sins. Now and at the time of death God's lovers are full of joy.
4. All fear thrown out (v. 18). Not by the perfection of our love, for it is often anything but perfect; but by the love of God which causes no fear. Note: Get the correct exegesis.
5. God's love makes lovers of God (v. 19). He who is love began loving, and by his love we are made his lovers. The joy of living in this love.
6. The evidence of their love of God (v. 20). This is love of the brethren. By this the test of our love is easily made. Hate one of the Father's children and you lie when you say: "I am loving God."

7. Love multiplied by the lovers of God (v. 20). What 3 volume of fraternal love added to God's love for each of us when all love each other! This, is what we need in this loveless, hateful, cruel world.

# The Second Sunday After Trinity. 1 John 3:13-18

## “If the World Hate You”

Our text is evidently a companion piece to the text for the preceding Sunday. As the Christian is surrounded by God’s love in this world, so also is he *surrounded by the world’s hate*. This hate may come to him even from those who call themselves God’s children, yea, his own brethren. Cerinthus and his following, against whom this letter is written by John, claimed to be in fellowship with God, yet they had not the true God. And one great evidence for this fact was that Cerinthus and his followers hated John and the true believers. Like the entire letter, this text has its historical basis and it is for this reason the more effective.

The gospel for the day is the Great Supper, Luke 14:16-24. It shows us those who have no use for Christ and the Gospel, who prefer to stay in the world and are satisfied with what it offers. While the relation between epistle and gospel is not close, the two texts nevertheless offer the same general line of thought, the gospel showing the difference between those who reject and those who accept.

The paragraph does not begin at v. 13 (R.V.), but at 10 b and it extends to v. 24; the subject is the New Birth and our Relation to the Brethren. The negative side deals with the murderer Cain, and thus our text begins: **Be not marveling, brethren, if the world keeps hating you.** This is not at all strange nor need it cause the least surprise. Jesus has already told us about it in John 15:18-21. The world being the world and being ruled by the devil, the first hater, is bound to hate us. It is not born from God and does not consist of “the children of God” (2:29 — 3:1); it is made up of “the children of the devil,” who are “from the wicked one,” so that their deeds are “wicked” (v. 10-12). All the antichristians belong to the world, and it is

their delight to break up the fellowship of the true Christians. It is because of this hostility that John says so much regarding our relation to each other, and therefore also he addresses his readers as “brethren.”

[14] **We on our part** (emphatic ἡμεῖς) **know** (the fact, οἶδαμεν) **that we have stepped over out of the death into the life**, (we know it by this evidence) **because we are loving the brethren.** Ὅτι states the evidential reason, and it may be translated “seeing that” etc. Here we are told what it means to be born from God, namely to step over out of death into life (μεταβαίνω). God’s grace, his Spirit, his Word lifted us from the terrible power of “the death” into the gracious power of “the life.” Note the articles, like “the truth,” “the Word,” “the righteousness,” etc., all definite, hence here not death and life in general. Of course, this transfer has made us alive. We are God’s children, members of his family. Like the physical life, so the spiritual life is not seen directly; we know its presence from its activity. A corpse has no activity whatever. The evidence of spiritual life here adduced is our love to the brethren.

This evidence is most natural and inevitable. Born of the same Father, into the same family, and having the same spiritual life, it is impossible for us not to love one another. This is (ιθδν, the love of comprehension and intelligence which realizes its corresponding purpose, — see further on Rom. 12:9, Second Sunday after Epiphany and on Rom. 13:8, Fourth Sunday after Epiphany. In fact, this love to our fellow believers is the essential evidence for the existence of spiritual life in us.

**The one not loving** (thus) **remains in the death.** He may try to simulate life as much as he pleases, it is not life but a sham; he remains in the death, in the grip of this terrible death-power, and thus is dead. John here uses the verb “remain,” on which he already rang the changes. Just as we may judge from the presence of love, so we may judge from its absence. All that is here said on the subject has its direct historical application to Cerinthus, the heretic, and to his following, who denied the deity of Christ and the efficacy of his blood, who were not brethren, who hated John and the true brethren, who also tried to break up their churches.

[15] It startles us when John carries the thought to its climax: **Everyone hating his brother is a man-murderer.** So the world and the special enemies of the true faith hate us and thereby attest their Cain-nature (v. 12).

Whether actual blood is shed or not makes no difference (Matt. v. 22). Ἀνθρωποκτόνος is the very word which Jesus used with reference to the devil in John 8:44; it applies to all of the devil's children (v. 10b), included among them the antichristians, who have gone out from us (2:19), in particular the antichristian Cerinthians. John has called the latter liars (1:6, 10; 2:22); he thus imitates Jesus who called the devil both a liar and a man-murderer in John 8:44. Let the present day deniers of the deity and of the blood-expiation of Jesus (1:7; 2:2) read this divine verdict on themselves.

**And you know** — I need not tell you — **that every man-murderer does not have life eternal remaining in him.** Not to have life eternal remaining in him means that his lot is eternal damnation. It is shallow to interpret: the government executes man-murderers. John is speaking of hate toward the brethren, and this hate is no crime in the eyes of the world or of secular governments. These governments themselves have often instigated hatred toward the Christians and have persecuted and even executed Christians. “Has not remaining in him” is not to be restricted to one who once had the spiritual life and then lost it; whether he has had it hitherto or not makes no difference.

In v. 14-15 John speaks of loving and of hating “a brother” and hence his words apply to church members. Yet v. 13 precedes, where he speaks of “the world.” The church member who hates is not really a brother, for he is devoid of the life that makes us God's children and relatives to each other. He really belongs to the world. John is speaking here in the common way according to which every professing church member is termed a brother. In the present connection his readers understand exactly what he means.

[16] John describes “the love” which marks the children of God. **In connection with this we have known** (with the strongest affect and effect upon ourselves, which still continues, ἐγγώκαμεν, perfect tense) **the love** (article: the love that is love indeed), **that that One in our behalf laid down his life.** When speaking about ἀγάπη it is first of all necessary to understand what is meant. Paganism had little use for the word. In the LXX it still lies on a low level, being at times employed to designate erotic love. In the New Testament it expresses only intelligent and correspondingly purposeful love, and thus the higher and the highest types of love.

Now this love (ἡ ἀγάπη, note the article, — not merely love in general) is like “the life,” — neither is visible to the eye or tangible to the hand, both are known to be present from the evidence that proves this presence. The love which we Christians have realized by having experienced it has furnished the highest possible evidence which could be demanded: “that One,” ἑκεῖνος, with this pronoun pointing to Christ as John has repeatedly done, “he laid down his life in our stead,” ἡπέρ ἡμῶν, — see the exposition of the phrase in 2 Cor. 5:14 etc. The day is past when the idea of substitution can be denied this phrase, — the papyri have spoken most decisively. Rom 5:6-10 tells in detail why this evidence of Christ’s love is indeed supreme. John borrows the expression “to lay down the life for someone” from Jesus’ own lips (John 10:11:17) . The expression includes the voluntariness of Christ’s sacrifice, even as Jesus himself adds that no one takes his life from him. By a mere word he could have had twelve legions of angels descend on his captors.

Such was the evidence of his love for men who were his enemies which Jesus furnished. **And we on our part** (emphatic ἡμεῖς) **ought in behalf of the brothers to lay down the lives.** We ought to be able, if the call should come and the necessity should arise, to furnish the same evidence of our love. When danger threatens our brethren in the faith and you or I could save them by sacrificing our life, our love ought to be able to make the sacrifice. Of course, our love could save our brothers in the faith only from physical death; no sacrifice of ours could do more. Hence also the comparison with Christ’s love and sacrifice speaks only regarding believers, brethren. Yet ὑπέρ has the same sense as it had above, “instead of,” no matter how we translate it into English. The entire discussion revolves about fraternal love, not about loving our fellow men in general.

17. Cases calling for the supreme sacrifice are rare. Only a few are privileged to lay down life itself for the brethren. But here are the common, everyday cases. **On the other hand** (δέ), **whoever has the life-sustenance of the world, and beholds his brother having need, and locks his compassion away from him, how does the love of God remain in him?** Δέ puts this different case beside the other. Beside the supreme evidence of love, the lack of even ordinary evidence of love. In Hebraistic fashion, John has three finite verbs, subordinating none of the actions, leaving them all on the same level:

this brother "has — beholds — \*locks." The Greek writer would use two participles and leave one main verb. Βίος == *Lebensunterhalt*. This brother has a good living. He "beholds," does not merely casually "see," his brother having need, lacking enough to live; he lets his eyes rest on the case of great need and thus notes that it is such a case. Here is a brother in hard straits, without the "sustenance of the world" to keep him alive bodily in the world.

With a coordinating καί the next point in the picture is added: this man "locks his compassion away from" his needy brother. The implication is that his compassion naturally reaches out to extend help in such a case, but this man interferes with his own compassion, locks it away from the needy one, so that no help is extended. Yes, that is hard hearted, but such lovelessness is common enough. Σπλάγχνα == the nobler viscera, heart, lungs, liver, which the Greek considered the seat of the nobler feelings, and the word is thus used to designate the "feelings" themselves, and, according to the context, to denote the tender, compassionate feelings, hence "compassion." "Bowels" (A.V.) makes us think too much of the lower viscera, the intestines. Compare the picture as James 2:15-16 draws it, the heartless one puts the needy one off with mere empty words.

John asks the readers to answer for themselves how "the love for God" remains in such a man's heart. The genitive is objective, not subjective, not God's love for this callous man, but this man's love for God. When even this cheap and easy kind of evidence of love is absent from his acts, its absence is proof that the man does not love even God whose Son furnished the supreme evidence of love by dying for this man. John gradually develops this subject of love. He begins in 2:9-11; in our text he has the first expansion; in 4:7 — 5:3 we learn much more.

**[18] Little children, let us not be loving (John includes himself) with word, neither with the tongue, but in connection with deed and with truth.** I have heard the love of God preached with fierce violence by a preacher who roared through his sermon from the first sentence to the last. John's voice is all gentleness as befits love speaking of love. "Little children," τεκνία, is the diminutive. "Children" carries the connotation of dearness, and this is intensified by the use of the diminutive. It is the aged John who writes this letter; all of his readers without exception are his

“little children.” His voice of love speaks to them, and they will hear. Yes, this old, venerable John, often called the apostle of love, who here speaks so lovingly and tenderly to his “little children,” he is the man who hurls “liar” at the heretics, and “murderer” at the haters. Nothing flabby about his love! No; the Scriptures present this sentimental love only in men like Eli, who did not even remonstrate with his wicked sons. Remember, this is *agape* that made John so tender and yet so stern.

Love is pretended when its evidence consists only in “word or tongue” (datives of means). “With word” (no article) == with something that we may say; “with the tongue” (article) == the tongue which each person has for saying something (your tongue). Here James 2:15-16 applies with greater effect. The idea is not that true Christian love never uses word and tongue to express itself, but that it never stops with these two. That would be hypocritical, the appearance of love without its substance.

No; deeds must follow, — -they always speak louder than words and not only louder but more truly. Here John writes ἐν, “in connection with,” i.e. the connection being deeds as evidence of love. Yet here too John has two terms: “deed and truth,” both qualitative, no articles. ἀλήθεια == truth in the sense of reality. This may be imitated but cannot be attained by the hypocrite. Deeds may even be done, which look like evidence of true love to us shortsighted men, but truth, reality, is another matter. To love with word and tongue (to employ only these means) is no *agape*. To love in connection with deed and truth (which is more than using mere means), this alone is love.

## Homiletical Aid

The Christian in this world is certainly in a bad place. The world hates him. Often this hatred makes itself painfully felt. Think of the fearful open hatred and persecution found in Russia at the present time. There is much quiet hatred in our own land. Many jobs and positions are closed to faithful confessing Christians. In many places their presence and their influence is not wanted. When we consider it well, it is no wonder at all that we find

### **The True Christian a Hated Man.**



In the eyes of the world the Christian deserves to be hated because:

- I. He has left the world.
  1. He has turned to Christ and to his self-sacrificing love (v. 16).
  2. He has passed from the power of death to the power of true life.
  3. He has no more use for the world and for what it loves, a gulf separates him from the world.
  4. The world thus hates him, and by that fact acknowledges his escape from the world.
- II. He is different from the world.
  1. Radically different. Through Christ's sacrifice (v. 16) he has eternal life abiding in him (v. 15) and he means to keep that life. The world abides in death (v. 14).
  2. Manifestly different. He loves whom the world does not love, — Christ, the brethren. The latter he loves in actual deed and truth.
  3. The world resents this difference. It thus, however, attests our Christianity.
- III. He is a rebuke to the world.
  1. His very existence in the world as a true Christian, so different from the world.
  2. His voicing such judgments as that the hater abides in death (v. 14) and is a murderer (v. 15), and that this includes even pretended love (v. 17).
  3. His open condemnation of the world, that it remains in death, and has not eternal life, which means that the world and even all pretending Christians must end in hell.
  4. All this arouses the hatred of the world, which, even when you say little, senses what you mean and reads also what the Bible says. Yet its hate for this cause is a badge of honor for us.

- IV. He and his company are not headed for the same place as the world.
1. They go different roads, in opposite directions, as opposite as life and death, God and the devil, having eternal life abiding in a person, and not having it so abiding.
  2. They end at different places. The world must end where its prince and ruler is. The children of the Father must end in his home in heaven.
  3. Though the world could also end in heaven, it prefers hell, and thus often hates and rages against those who are going in the opposite, the upward direction.
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How afraid we are of physical contagious and infectious diseases! Take smallpox as an example. But do we fear such moral diseases as the tuberculosis of covetousness, the yellow fever of greed, the smallpox of lasciviousness, the cancer of hypocrisy, the blood-poisoning of hatred? Our text speaks concerning the latter.

### **The Cure of Hatred.**

- I. We must know the disease.
  1. Its home and source is the world where it is native, fashionable, unchecked, whence its contagion often spreads, or is it the infection?
  2. Its symptoms: it shuts the bowels of compassion, it hardens the heart, it produces murderous thoughts, words, deeds, it compels one to do all possible evil to the one hated. A sneaking form of the disease occurs among Christians in the pretense of love.
  3. Its course. Destroys and renders impossible spiritual life, keeps one spiritually dead. Morally the hater is a murderer (Matt. v. 21-22), who therefore cannot have eternal life. Hatred and heaven are like fire and water.
- II. We must apply the remedy.

1. The remedy is the love that laid down its life for us all. Leaves no ground for hatred, enmity, animosity, by loving us even to the death of the cross while we were yet enemies, Rom 5:8 and 10; supplies all grounds for love and its sister virtues.
2. The application. This love must enter our hearts by faith and lift us out of the death into the life. Thus God must dwell in our hearts, fill us completely with his love, and kindle constant love in us, with no place ever open to hate.
3. The result. Matt. 5:44-45. When special danger threatens, in general service, lay down the life for the brethren. Ever glad to bestow alms.
4. Sometimes a sporadic outbreak, but the cure is really permanent, for the remedy is divine and cannot fail where applied.

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In this wicked world we are surrounded by God's love. What a protection and a joy (last Sunday)! But God insures us also of the help, protection, stimulation, and joy of the love of our brethren. The Church is ever to be the House of Love. So we may summarize our text: The Christian in this World of Hate is Surrounded by the Love of his Brethren.

### **Love's Refuge.**

This Refuge is the Christian Church in this hating world.

- I. Love built it, v. 16. It cost the life of Jesus who was killed by the world's hatred.
- II. Lovers dwell in it, v. 14. They who have faith in Jesus and thus hearts kindled by love.
- III. Hatred is barred out, v. 15 and 17. The strongest bars against it are put up and they are effective. Little outbreaks of hatred in the visible church, but the Word squelches them or drives the haters out.

IV. Love is made to flourish, v. 14:16:18. Love is the evidence of true spiritual life. Jesus is made the glorious model. Hypocritical love is made a warning.

Conclusion: Love has its refuge only here, for the world is full of hate and in particular hates also us. Heaven will be the abiding Home of Love, and no longer a mere refuge.

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Love has been called “the greatest thing in the world.” What then shall we call hate? It is the most devilish thing in the world. Yet in this wicked world you run foul of hatred almost everywhere. If you are a true Christian, you will be served extra doses. Whether you wish it or not, you are confronted with

### **The Inevitable Alternatives.**

Which shall it be for you?

I. Christ or the world?

The Christ who laid down his life for you, v. 16; or the world which hates the Christians as it hated Christ?

But this is really a choice between

II. Life or death?

Surely you should want to escape from death to enter life, v. 14.

This brings us to the evidence involved and by which we must judge, the alternative of

III. Love or hatred?

To choose love is to follow Christ’s example, and to do that means faith in him, the root of true Christian love. To indulge in orgies or outbreaks of hate means to cast away Christ who loved us unto death.

Face the alternative squarely whenever the flesh prompts you to hate or makes a brother hate you.

Thus we come to the ultimate alternative, which also is inevitable, for you shall receive either the one or the other, either

IV. Heaven or hell.

You cannot choose the World, death, hatred, and then expect the angels to carry you into Abraham's bosom. You will eventually wake up in hell and in torment. You are choosing every day between *inevitable* alternatives, — you cannot evade them. The choice is forced upon you. The choice should by no means be difficult, unless you let the devil blind your eyes.

Note: Glance again at the Psychological Norms in *The Sermon* 262 etc.

# The Third Sunday After Trinity.

## 1 Pet. 5:6-11

### “We Suffer a While”

The theme of this sub-cycle is *the Christian in the World*. We see him surrounded by God’s love (First Sunday after Trinity), surrounded also by the love of his brethren (Second Sunday after Trinity), but this does not lift him above *suffering a while*, which is the subject for this Sunday. It links into the text for last Sunday where we are told not to marvel that the world hates us. You cannot go through this wicked world unscathed. This is the idea entertained by many Christians today, especially also by the young Christians.

The philosophy is correct enough: Christians are the best people in the world, and while not perfect, yet none else are so honest, kind, meek, helpful, etc. They should therefore be admired, honored, treated with distinction. It is unnatural that such people should be hated and made to suffer. They ought to be rewarded. Jesus has given us the full answer in John 15:18-25. To be persecuted by the world is strong evidence that we belong to Christ. It is the world’s way of honoring us for what we truly are.

This is the Sunday of “the roaring lion” whom we defy. The epistle is taken from Peter’s first letter which was written a few months before his martyrdom in order to fortify the Christians in Asia Minor in advance relative to what was coming. Rome had been burned, Nero had been blamed for it, but he was shifting the blame onto the Christians in Rome. A great persecution broke out. But the murder of the Christians in the capital of the empire was a signal for the provinces to follow suit. The governors would imitate Nero. Forewarned is forearmed. This letter does both. The text forms its closing section. The Christians remain undismayed despite all the suffering that may come.

Luke 15:1-10, the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin, is the gospel for the day. Gospel and epistle are not directly connected. The gospels for this first sub-cycle deal with the entrance into the Kingdom; the epistles deal with those who have entered and as children of God find themselves in the world yet not of the world. The line of thought in the gospels and in the epistles is not the same, is not parallel. The gospels and the epistles are related only in a general way. The epistles tell us how those who are called into the Kingdom fare in the present world. For one thing, they cannot escape suffering.

Our text might begin with v. 5: “Moreover, do you all with respect to each other apron yourselves with lowly-mindedness! Because God resists haughty ones, but gives grace to lowly ones.” But we have the substance of this admonition in v. 6: **Accordingly, be lowly under the mighty hand of God, in order that he may exalt you in due season, etc.** Note how “lowly-mindedness” and “lowly ones” in v. 5 is continued in “be lowly” here in v. 6. The repetition emphasizes the word. To be lowly is used also in regard to men. Here the word describes our attitude toward God. “Under his mighty hand” means under his omnipotence as actively operating. This is the force of both the adjective “mighty” and the noun “hand.” The Christian is lowly when he never questions what this hand does, never objects or rebels against this hand, comes with no claims or demands, and when he asks, does not expect God to answer at once and in the way in which we think he should, but ever bows down in the dust before God, and when he lets our enemies have power to persecute us, or when he otherwise sends affliction upon us, does not murmur but accepts it all as his will.

Your purpose in being lowly is “that he may exalt you in due season.” This is not a wrong purpose, for it is God’s own will to exalt us. It is not a mercenary purpose, for our being lowly springs from the consciousness that we are sinners who deserve nothing but punishment from God, and who ever realize that any exaltation by him is due only to pure grace. Who are we, that we should be exalted and crowned? Ἐν καιρῷ is one of the many Greek phrases which need no article. “In due season” means that God will let the lowly remain in their lowliness here on earth. As he did in the case of Joseph in Egypt, God may now and then exalt a lowly child of his also in an earthly way, but he has made no promise that he would do so with all of us.

The exaltation here meant will take place at the last day and will be exaltation indeed.

[7] We have more than the promise of final exaltation. In our lowliness we are not left to worry along as best we can, for Peter adds: **all your worry casting upon him, because he is caring for you**, lit. in the Greek idiom: “there is care for him (impersonal verb) concerning you.” Μέριμν == “worry,” “distraction,” as when one does not know whether to do this or to do that. The example is Martha of Bethany, who was distracted, did not know to what to turn her hand first, finally in desperation going to Jesus to induce him to order Mary to help her.

Everything of this kind we are to throw upon God. It is not our business to worry, because God cares for us. We are his concern, he does not for one moment neglect us. He thinks of everything, makes provision for everything. Our hand is puny, his hand is omnipotently mighty. How foolish for us to try to attend to what is beyond us, when God is ready to attend to all of it in the most perfect way. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee,” Ps. 55:22. Comp. Ps. 37:5; also Luke 12:11-12.

[8] Yet this care that God has for us does not mean that we can lean back in the rocking-chair, drowse and take it easy, and simply let God do everything. This is not the Christian’s position in the world. **Be sober! Watch!** is the order. Danger threatens, we must meet it, overcome it. The soberness of a balanced mind is meant; thought and action steady and not flighty; never carried away by notions, either by our own or by those of others. The thought of γρηγορεῖν is that of being aroused to watch; while that of ἀγρυπνεῖν is merely that sleep is absent, that one is awake.

Peter adds, in Greek with abruptness because without a connective, what should keep every one of us on guard: **Your opponent, (the) devil, as a lion roaring, walks around seeking to swallow someone.** Ἀντίδικος is the word for an opponent in a court trial before a judge (Luke 18:3); but here the imagery of a roaring lion, out for prey, generalizes the court term and leaves the idea of opponent in general. “Devil” needs no article in the Greek, being treated like a proper noun.

A good deal lies in the participle “roaring.” At the time when Peter writes, this lion is not silent, stealthily prowling around; he is letting his frightful roar sound forth. At this very time, under Nero, the roar of bloody



persecution was being heard. The whole empire heard it. In October of the year 64 the storm broke. After a time Peter himself became a Victim. What Nero did to the helpless Christians, the governors in the provinces would very likely copy; the enemies of the Christians would bring charges. Ἀντίδικος carries that suggestion. Καταπιεῖν == “to drink down,” thus “to swallow,” and may suggest the victim’s blood. One wonders whether Peter thought of the victims cast before actual lions in the arena..

[9] Peter adds: **whom stand against firm as regards the faith, knowing that the same" kinds of sufferings are being executed upon your brotherhood in the world.** Στερεοί == firm, hard, stiff, unbending. The dative expresses relation: “as regards the faith.” This is the faith which we believe, *fides quae creditur*, hence also the article. The faith *qua creditur*, by which we believe, is expressed by “stand firm.” Here we have one of the many passages in regard to which we must challenge the dictum of Cremer-Koegel, *Woertb.*, that *fides* is never used in the objective sense. Peter here calls upon his readers not to deny the faith, the Christian doctrine, for fear of a martyr’s death. When haled before judges, they are to confess and to stand firm and unbending, when torture would be applied to them and when sentence of cruel death would be pronounced upon them. Note that in James 4:7 resisting the devil means resisting his assaults in temptations; hence also such resistance makes him flee as a defeated warrior. In the case of this roaring lion such resistance is not possible; nor does he flee. Quite otherwise, he seizes and devours his victim.

To encourage his readers Peter points them to others of the brethren who undergo the same ordeal: “knowing that the same kinds of sufferings are being executed upon your brotherhood in the world.” Peter sees a great wave of persecution sweeping through the empire. There will be martyrs in many places. Death will not always follow, but there will always be much suffering. Christianity will be a *religio illicita*, an unlawful religion, and this fact alone will make it a capital crime. Τὰ αὐτά here has the exceptional genitive τῶν παθημάτων in the sense of “the same kinds of sufferings.” The sufferings will vary in many respects, but they will none the less be of the same kinds. Peter writes with exactness: “are being executed (brought to completion) upon your brotherhood,” not “your brethren.” The brotherhood as a body is affected, even all those who are not arrested, tortured, tried, condemned. “In the world” means among hostile men where suffering is so

often the Christians' lot, as it was the burden which Christ bore. Note well that Peter promises no cessation of suffering to his readers. The mighty hand of God controls the entire infliction.

[10] The Christian has the one help he needs, no matter what the nature of the persecution that attacks him. Δέ adds, but adds something different. So here: **Moreover, the God of all grace, the One who called you unto his eternal glory in connection with Christ after having suffered a little while, will himself equip, firm, strengthen (you).** [11] **To him the might for the eons of the eons! Amen.**

“The God of all grace” is he who is the fountain of all grace. Grace is one, yet manifold in supplying us with what we need in varied circumstances. Amid persecution we need other gifts of grace than those needed in tranquil days. Grace always denotes undeserved favor, to be humbly received from God. The apposition “the One who called you unto his eternal glory in connection with Christ after having suffered a little while,” states the wondrous thing which God has already done by his grace. By means of the Gospel he has successfully called us to his eternal glory. Heaven is our hope. We shall be decked with crowns of glory. “Eternal” is added in contrast with “the little while” we must suffer here. Rom. 8:18. Note εἰς: “unto his glory”; and ἐν: “in connection with Christ,” our Savior. We are to reach this glory ὀλίγον παθόντας (accusative because modifying finds), “after having suffered a little while.” Read the whole expression in one breath.

The aorist participle cannot possibly be drawn to the main verbs to mean that God will himself equip, firm, and strengthen you after you have suffered a while. When all of the suffering is over, glory is our lot, and we need no more strengthening. This we need right here and now properly to endure the suffering. Translate with no optatives of Wish (A.V.), but with future tenses of assurance and promise. The addition of αὐτός, “will himself” etc., indicates that these are not merely futuristic tenses: “shall equip,” etc., but voluntative futures: “he himself will most assuredly equip” etc. We can rely on this as being what he has willed to do.

At most we shall have to suffer only “a little while,” — what is that compared with “eternal glory”? That is one important point. Yet even during this little While God himself Will in his grace do what we need. He

“will equip” us, fit us out with what we need. We suffer for his Son’s sake and God will not leave us unready, unequipped for the ordeal. “He will firm” us, make us solid, unbending. In v. 9 we see where we are to obtain the firmness against the devil. Finally, “he will strengthen” us to endure Whatever is inflicted upon us. If left alone, we should soon be crushed and overcome; but with God as our help we can overcome.

[11] Peter seals this comforting assurance with a doxology, comp. 4:11. It is exclamatory and needs no copula. Note that the emphatic αὐτῷ matches the emphatic αὐτός in v. 10: “God himself — to him” etc. Peter speaks of the “mighty” hand of God (v. 6), and the acts here predicated of God are all acts of might. The doxology is both a wish and a confession. It acknowledges that “the might” belongs to God and it wants this to be thus. By means of this doxology we humbly but trustfully and thankfully put ourselves under the mighty hand of God. “For the eons” etc. == “to all eternity,” or “for ever and ever.” Eternity is really timelessness, a concept beyond mortal conception because it is infinite. Hence Scripture condescends to our low mental estate and uses terms expressive of time to indicate what is not time in any sense. In the Greek the Scripture takes “eon,” a very, very long extent of time, pluralizes this and then multiplies it by its own plural: “the eons of the eons.” Take eons of eons, and to the extreme limit of all of them God has the might. The genitive is superlative in effect. “Amen” is the Hebrew word for verity, and is placed at the end like a seal of faith, confession, and certainty. The word and its use has been taken over unchanged into many languages.

## Homiletical Aid

This is the Sunday that has the text about the roaring lion. Recount the persecution under Nero in Rome, and Peter’s warning to the churches in the provinces. The devil fights in two ways, sneakingly with temptation; James tells us how to meet him. Roaring loud in bloody persecution; Peter here tells us how to meet him when he attacks in this manner. Christians always suffer some persecution. We must be ready to suffer as severely as did those in Rome, and those in Russia recently and even at present. How shall we meet

## The Roaring Lion

if ever he attacks us? The text points out

- I. God's call to his eternal glory. On account of this the devil hates us. He wants us to be slaves in his power. Hence brings on even bloody persecution. We are to keep our eyes on that eternal glory and are to be true to God's call of grace.
- II. God's mighty hand that cares for us. The hand that rules in the midst of our enemies and holds the devil in check. The great hand that covers our lives under which we must bow in humbleness, whatever it sends us. The hand that intends to exalt us.
- III. The Faith that we must ever maintain. The blessed faith we constantly confess. The doctrine on which our very life rests. How the martyrs refused to deny it to save their lives. How in our lesser tests we must not sell it for thirty pieces of silver, or to gain an earthly advantage.
- IV. The help God's grace extends to us. He himself equips, firms, strengthens us by means of Word and Sacrament, through his ministers and the brotherhood of fellow believers. Without his aid we would be lost; but use that aid, not waiting for the evil hour but daily, in advance.
- V. The power we must exercise. Soberness, vigilance. A sane balance of mind, made so by the Word; watchfulness, the opposite of ease and indifference.

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We are in a world full of sin and that means suffering. There are three kinds: 1) Aches, pains, losses, tears. No one escapes this suffering. 2) Punishment for crime and wickedness. The guilty suffer in this way. They have no reason to complain. 3) Suffering for Christ's and the Gospel's sake. Only the true Christian suffers in this way.

Do not expect to get through the Christian life unscathed. That would prove that you are no Christian. To suffer thus an honor, Matt. 5:10-12. The

martyrs. Be brave, then, while

### **“We Suffer a While,”**

really the word means only “a little while.”

I. We must.

We are called to eternal glory.

The devil and the world want us to lose that glory. In spite of them we hold to the faith.

II. We can.

We have God’s mighty hand over our humble heads.

We cast all our cares on him.

We are equipped, made firm, strengthened by God himself through his Word.

III. We will.

We will be sober, vigilant, not to be caught unready.

We will not expect to be exempt when we look at the brotherhood in the world.

The more we are honored by God in being allowed to suffer, the more will we join in St. Peter’s doxology.

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We sing: “Be a hero in the strife!” There is something gentle, sweet, and lovely about the Christian life. But there is also something stern, bitter, and at times bloody about the Christian life. Not always do we lie down in green pastures, sometimes we go through the valley of the shadow of death where only Christ’s rod and staff comfort us. Hence we speak of

### **The Valiant Christian.**

I. Unafraid of the roaring lion.

1. Generally he sneaks about by means of temptation, James 4:7, but sometimes he roars for blood.
  2. No illusion as to what this lion means, no false bravado, but also no cowardice, no thought of giving up the faith.
- II. Supported by God's grace and care.
1. The grace that called us to God's eternal glory, and certainly now cares for us so that we shall not lose the heavenly crown.
  2. The grace that equips, firms, strengthens us to bear what God allots to us. All the help in his Word.
- III. Fortified and ready in advance.
1. Not depending on self, ever most humble as regards self.
  2. Yet ever sober and vigilant, heeding the warnings, using God's means for strength in the hour of trial and danger. The valiant Christian is not asleep, dull in mind, indifferent, worldly. He is brave and strong. True to Christ. Soon to be crowned.

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This text really speaks of martyrdom. The "roaring" lion refers to the persecution under Nero. Describe. Peter was crucified only a short time after writing this letter. Paul was beheaded two years later. The ancient church celebrated their martyrdom on the same day, June 29th.

### **The Glory of Christian Martyrdom.**

- I. God wants only a limited number of martyrs.

Rev. 6:9-11, till their number is full. To attest with their blood the faith and doctrine. For this reason there are none among us at present. Otherwise in Russia.

The high distinction conferred by martyrdom, Matt. v. 12: placing us in the noble company of the martyred prophets. The souls of the martyrs under the altar, again sitting on heavenly thrones ruling as kings.

## II. God helps his martyrs.

He helps them to achieve the eternal glory, to uphold the banner of the faith.

He equips them, makes them firm and strong, by means of the Word.

He keeps them humble under his mighty arm, takes their cares on himself, makes them sober, vigilant.

Thus they are enabled to suffer martyrdom when the time comes.

## III. God makes the martyrs a blessing to his Church.

“The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church,” an ancient saying.

Since we suffer so little whereas they suffered unto blood, all complaint should be stifled. Must you be unscathed?

Their heroic example inspires us to hold firm to the faith, to be brave and strong with the Lord’s help.

The flabbiness needs to be taken out of our soft Christianity.

“Tho’ devils all the world should fill,  
All watching to devour us,  
We tremble not, we fear no ill,  
They cannot overpow’r us.”

American Lutheran Hymnal 486.

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Jesus, the Good Shepherd, laid down his life for the sheep. He gathers them and cares for them. They follow his voice. Some of the sheep, however, stray away and straggle at a dangerous distance from the Shepherd. Beware! Stop! Look!

## **The Footprints of Satan.**

### I. His footprints which we are to look for.

- II. Where they can be clearly seen.
- III. What caution they should arouse.

H. W. Bartels, *Magazin* etc., vol. 35.

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### **The Victorious Cross-Bearer.**

- I. He humbles himself under the mighty hand of God.
- II. He casts all cares upon God.
- III. He is sober and vigilant.
- IV. He keeps the eye of faith fixed on Jesus and eternal glory.

E. H. Fackler, *Concordia Pulpit* 1933.



# **The Fourth Sunday After Trinity.**

## **Rom. 8:18-23**

### **The Sufferings of this Present Time or The Wait for the Ransoming of our Body**

The text for the preceding Sunday speaks of our suffering for a while under the afflictions brought upon us by our adversary the devil. These are the sufferings that are inflicted upon us because of our Christian faith, properly called “our cross.” There are other sufferings besides these. As creatures in this sinful creature-world we share them with all other creatures. This is the great text of the Scriptures which deals in so grand a way with this vast subject. In this sub-cycle, which deals with the Christian in the World, our present text finds a deserved place.

The gospel text, Luke 6:36-42, states how we should live in this sinful world, exercising mercy, judging and condemning not, forgiving, giving, etc. The epistle is thus not a parallel to the gospel. The latter admonishes as to what to do in this sinful world both toward men generally and toward our brethren, while the epistle instructs us concerning all of the suffering which we see in the whole earthly creature-world. We do not seek a special connecting thought between the gospel and the epistle. Each has its place under the subject of this sub-cycle, and the subject of the epistle texts in this sub-cycle is not the same as that of the gospel texts. Both the gospel and the epistle for this Sunday place us into a world full of sin, one tells us how to treat men the other how to regard all suffering.

Rom. 8:18-39 deals with the Consolation of Hope and DiVine Assurance. It constitutes the final section regarding the result of justification by faith as depicted by Paul. Our text is the opening paragraph of the great consolation section of Romans.

Here we have a world-view at once so lofty and so profound as to leave behind all non-scriptural conceptions. Although they too have had the same suffering world before them, neither the scientist nor the philosopher have seen what the apostle sees. Due to Adam's fall the whole world suffers, and we Christians share this suffering. But there shall be an end of suffering. For the whole creature-world the end depends upon what God has in store for us, his children; yet this end is no mere cessation, but an end coupled with a great hope for all save the ungodly. Our text is the *sedes doctrinae* for the doctrine that the world shall not be annihilated, but shall be transformed.

The explanatory γάρ means to say: in order that you may understand the better what has just been said about our suffering together with Christ and also about our being glorified together with him. All this will become clearer when we view ourselves as in the midst of the entire suffering creature-world which longs for our glorification at the last day. **For I reckon that the sufferings of this present period are not worthy to be compared with the glory about to be revealed in us.** Distinguish between our suffering together with Christ (V. 17, see the Eighth Sunday after Trinity) and what the apostle now calls “the sufferings of this present period,” ὁ νῦν καιρός, which does not mean this world age (οὗτος ὁ αἰών), nor just time in general (χρόνος), but the definite period of our earthly life. Of course, Paul is thinking of us Christians, for others cannot think of comparing their sufferings with future glory, for no such glory awaits them. Suffering for Christ's sake is distinct, yet since it is a certain form of suffering it may be included in all of the suffering in this world, especially in all that comes upon us as creatures in this sin-cursed world.

Paul says, take all of it together, the cross you bear after Christ and every other ache, pain, grief, sorrow, disappointment, and frustration, all of them taken together are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory. In οὐκ ἄξια the idea is that of weight. The two cannot be compared in weight. Place all of the suffering into one pan of the scales and the glory into the other pan; the former will fly upward as if it held only a feather, the latter will drop downward as if it held a bar of solid gold. Paul says: “I reckon,” λογίζομαι. He offers his estimate in order that we may accept it as our own. In πρὸς lies the idea of “face to face,” placing the sufferings over against the glory. Paul's estimate is true. When severe suffering befalls us, we are

apt to lend it too much weight, to forget about the glory, losing our balance and sense of proportion. We need Paul's corrective: the glory should fill our heart and soul. It outweighs all the suffering, however severe or long.

Yet the point in this *πρός* is not duration, as though at best even the longest earthly life is short, especially when compared with eternity. Let us learn that eternity has no length at all, as the dogmatists say, it is a *fixum*, not a *fluxum*. All deductions which you may draw from the length of eternity are childishly false, just as are all deductions drawn from the idea of space in the other world. While our mundane thinking is inexorably bound to the notions of time and of space as we live in them, neither time nor space exist in the other world. What then does exist there? No man can tell you; the heavenly reality cannot even be conceived by our earthly minds. Paul is even careful not to set over against his *νυν* an *αἰώνιος*, all he has is an unemphatic *μέλλουσιν*, placed between the article and the noun.

All that is indicated by *μέλλουσιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι* is futurity. Since the infinitive is an aorist, the revelation referred to is a single act, which will occur at the last great day. Some try to find more. "About to be" is made emphatic as though it signified certainty, yet the certainty has already been taken care of in v. 11 and 17. Even the simple futurity is left unemphatic. So also "to be revealed" is pressed, as is done also in connection with this word when considering 1:17. We are offered the philosophy that a thing must be present before it can be revealed. Hence all of the heavenly glory must already now be in us, and all that is necessary is to draw aside the veil which hides it. Straining the meaning of words when engaged in exegesis produces bizarre ideas, and false emphasis adds dislocations. The R.V. must be pardoned for translating *εἰς ἡμᾶς* "to us-ward," injecting motion where there is none. When this version was made, the new light on the Koine was not yet available, a circumstance which was unfortunate indeed. The A.V. understood its Greek better when it translated: revealed "in us," static *εἰς*. Even Robertson (*Grammar* 535) speaks of a "pregnant" construction and shows that even his mind is not entirely free from the old notions which under cover of a "pregnant" construction introduced motion: *εἰς* being made to mean motion followed by rest. *Εἰς ἡμᾶς* == in us," and nothing more.

[19] Another "for" sheds fuller light on both the expression "the sufferings of the present period" and on what is meant by "the glory about

to be revealed in us.” **For the creation’s watching with outstretched head is waiting it out for the revelation of the sons of God.** The translation is awkward, the words contain so much. Here in one short sentence are three compounds with ἀπό: ἀποκαραδοκία — ἀποκάλυψις — ἀπεκδέχομαι. Ἄπο plus κάρα (head) plus the noun derived from δοκέω (in Ionian “to watch”) == watching with head stretched away from (ἀπό) the body, like one leaning far out to get the first glimpse of something coming into sight. The second compound: taking the covering from. In the third, ἀπό plus ἔκ plus δέχομαι, the ἔκ makes the verb mean “to wait it out” (Thayer), i.e. to keep waiting until the expected actually appears. The thought is: the head stretched forward in intense watching, waiting and never tiring or desisting until the thing expected comes.

This is what Paul says regarding the κτίσις, “the creation,” a word expressing action (with suffix -σις), denoting the action of creation, but also used concretely: the creation as reflecting the action, i.e. the creature-world. Here the context limits “the creation” to the irrational world of creatures, excluding the angels, godly men, and also ungodly men. The tremendous fact here stated is that all of God’s inferior creation was from the very beginning bound up with man, was not independent, but wholly dependent. And now, since the fall, the creature-world in its ultimate destiny is bound up not with the ungodly who shall perish in hell, but with the godly, the sons of God, and with their coming revelation of glory in heaven.

“The revelation of the sons of God” resumes “the glory about to be revealed in us” in v. 17. Comp. 1 John 3:2. Paul has used both “the sons of God” and “the children of God” in v. 14:16-17. He now writes “sons,” the connotation of which harmonizes best with this revelation of glory. There is no thought of sex. Sons are the opposite of slaves (v. 15; John 8:35); sons are mature, conscious of their standing in their Father’s house; sons are the ones for whose service the inferior creation was made. Children connotes dearness, immaturity, hence we also have “little children.” Who told this entire irrational creature-world about the difference among men, some being “the sons of God,” others “of their father the devil” (John 8:44)? Who informed this creation concerning the coming glory of God’s sons and concerning its blessed meaning for this entire creation? Here are profundities that escape the blind naturalists and philosophers of the world. The evolutionist has neither a sensible beginning nor a sensible ending of

the world, if he has a beginning or an ending at all. He calls himself a “scientist” (one who knows), and his ignorance is monumental. Where did the apostle obtain his knowledge concerning the creation and its universal expectation? Superficial minds call his words poetical imagination or mystical speculation, — not even knowing what mystical language is, see on Rom. 6:3 etc., the Sixth Sunday after Trinity. Paul knows the Scriptures, from Genesis 1, onward. He speaks by revelation and inspiration. He says even much more about the wondrous unity of God’s creation, Christ being the head of all things in heaven and earth (Eph. 1:10, also v. 22-23), all God’s sons being supreme in and with him.

[20] How the creation comes to be waiting in this way is explained by another “for” statement. **For to vainness the creation was made subject, not of its own will, but because of him who made it subject, on the basis of hope [21] that also the creation itself shall be liberated from the slavery of the corruption for the liberty of the glory of the children of God.** Here is the tragedy of the creation, and along with it the hope. A calamity struck the whole earthly creature-world when its head, Adam, fell into sin and death. Then was the creation made subject to “vainness,” — the dative “to vainness” is placed forward for emphasis. The moment God called the creation into being, even before the fall, it was subject to man, subject to the opposite of vainness, namely to effectiveness, to the perfect fulfillment of the purpose for which God had designed it.

Ματαιότης is the noun derived from μάταιος, the adjective meaning “vain” in the sense of failure to attain the proper end, inability to accomplish the intended result. The synonym is κενός, sometimes also translated “vain,” but denoting “empty,” hollow, with no inner content. The creature-world retained its content well enough, but after Adam fell its high purpose of glorifying God by serving man in a perfect way was frustrated. It was man himself who brought about that sad frustration.

The world is full of sinners, steeped in ungodliness: God’s wrath is revealed against all of man’s unrighteousness (1:18-32). How can the creature which was made for man while still in the image of God, for man still in holiness and righteousness, fulfill its divinely designed purpose for man now corrupted by sin and subject to death? Man himself had lost the power to use God’s creatures aright; he abused them instead of using them for God’s glory and his own true service. This forced the creation itself into

what we may call a false position. It turned against man, the sinner, it made his life bitter and hard. “Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life,” Gen. 3:17. You may find an endless number of illustrations. Man eats of the fruits of the earth — and dies. But these fruits were not made for this purpose. Man manufactures weapons and kills his fellow man. Were metals and chemicals made for this purpose? Now there exist poisons, death-dealing germs and all kinds of diseases. The sin and the death (in v. 12 and the following both are articulated, as if they were fearful powers) use the creatures for their baneful ends. “Vainness” is written all over the creation, has entered it and made it destructive and deadly. The earth quakes, typhoons devastate, plagues kill great numbers, famines take their toll.

The riddle of evil and destruction in the world is solved by no natural philosopher or scientist. Although they may be spelled with capital letters, the words “Nature” and “Mother Nature,” solve nothing, explain nothing. Much beauty and much beneficence remains in the creature world, permitting man to exist, but a woeful dissonance, a dreadful discord runs through it all and this includes man himself since he is also a creature. Here is the true solution: “To vainness the creation was made subject.”

The apostle adds more: “not willingly,” οὐχ ἔκοῦσα, not by an act of its own will, not by a deed on its own part, like Adam who willed to sin against God. Man is evil and is cursed because of his own guilt, the creatures have no guilt. Man suffers justly, the creatures unjustly. Our restoration is pure grace, that of the creature-world simple justice.

Not by a volition of its own was the creation made subject to vainness, but “because of him who made it subject.” Some imagine that this is man, that he through his sin so subjected the creation. This is a mistake. The agent of the second passive ὑπετάγη is the agent of the active participle τὸν ὑποτάξαντα and is again the agent of the future passive ἐλευθερωθήσεται (v. 21), and this agent is God, the Creator. To say that God cannot be the reason (διὰ, “because”) and that God cannot be the opposite of οὐχ ἔκοῦσα (ἄλλά requiring an opposite) overlooks the fact that the participle names an act of God. “Not willingly” means not by an act of the creation; “on the contrary” (ἄλλά) states by whose act.

Various questions clamor for answer. Paul answers them by the brief phrase ἐπὶ ἐλπίδι, “on the basis of hope,” and with exegetical 5n he tells us what this hope is. Subjecting the creation to vainness in consequence of Adam’s fatal act was not arbitrary on God’s part. The entire creation had been made for man, it had no other purpose. If man had fallen beyond all hope of restoration, then the continuation of both man and the creatures would have been purposeless. Thus, because of the hope, God left the creatures in their original connection with man. They shared in the calamity of man, were thrown into “vainness” because they were now serving sinners, but as they were in this manner made to share the calamity, they also were made to share in the great coming hope. The injustice to the creatures originates in man, not in God. The sin and the death were allowed to enter into the world, not by God, but by Adam (5:12). God’s actions were necessitated by Adam. But it was wholly God’s grace and mercy that set up the “hope.” As the sin produces the vainness for the creation, so God included the creation in this hope.

[21] What is this “hope” that sheds so much light on all that we now see about us in the creature- World? “That (ὅτι, not “because,” A.V.) also the creation itself shall be liberated from the slavery of the corruption for the liberty of the glory of the children of God.” The liberty of these children shall include also the creation which God originally called into being for them. The original intent of God when creating a perfect creature-world for a perfect man shall be carried out in spite of man’s fall. God’s creation is not a grand failure. Great was the destruction, greater is grace and the restoration; the grace abounded, exceeded (5:15).

“Also the creation” places the creation at the side of “the children of God.” “The creation itself,” i.e. for its part, is emphatic and again joins the creation to “the children of God.” So everything about this hope centers in these children. The fate of the universe turns on them. Why do we forget that so constantly? What about the ungodly? They act as if they owned the world, yet here they are left out of the great hope entirely.

In v. 14 and 16 (see the text for the Eighth Sunday after Trinity) Paul alternates between “sons of God” and “children of God.” He does so also here in v. 19 and 21. Many disregard the difference in the use of these terms. As sons who stand so high in dignity, far above slaves or servants, the glory shall be revealed in us (v. 19). As children, so near and dear to

God, whom their Father will not and cannot leave in an alien bondage, the liberty of the glory shall be ours. The two designations, sons and children, are complementary. Liberty is the opposite of being subjected. “Shall be liberated for the liberty” duplicates the terms for the sake of emphasis, and it uses a phrase since the verb does not permit a cognate object. Oh, the battles that men have fought to gain a little liberty, and the jubilations when some bit of liberty was attained! But think of the absolute, perfect, eternal liberation that shall be granted to the whole creation together with the children of God!

“The slavery of the corruption” contains more than “vainness” used in v. 20, for it states the cause for this vainness, “the corruption” that is decay and death. The opposite is “the liberty of the glory.” The one is the worst slavery possible, the other the greatest liberty imaginable. Note the articulated terms, each one definite, — not some slavery or some glory, but the specific ones here meant. Both genitives are alike appositional: the slavery consists of the corruption, the liberty consists of the glory. The A.V. makes the latter qualitative: “the glorious liberty.” By “the glory” is meant the effulgence of perfection which never declines or ends. This glory belongs to the children of God, the creation only shares in it.

Paul here tells us that the earthly creation, now so sadly deranged, shall at last be glorified. Hence passages like Ps. 102:27; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 20:11; Is 34:4; Luke 21:33; Job 14:12 are not to be interpreted as teaching the annihilation of the present creation. “The liberty of the glory” cannot have a double meaning: blessed, eternal glory for the children of God, but annihilation for the creation. It would be a vicious abuse of language to call annihilation a liberation and a great and glorious hope. Not the κόσμος shall pass away, but the σχῆμα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου (1 Cor. 7:31), the form of this present world. The fire mentioned by Peter is the fire of purgation. Read my comments on Rev. 21:1. The heaven of God and of the angels shall be united with the earth and together they shall form the Holy City described in Rev. 21:10 etc.

Like curious children we clamor to know many things. Will all the animals, insects, and plants be raised to life? What about the noxious ones, the bacilli, for instance, and all the vermin? Wait! It is silly to operate with our logic in a field absolutely above human logic. We should be drowned in fallacies. Do we know what it means to create? So little do we know what it



means “to make all things new” (Rev. 21:5). He who made Paradise for Adam will make all things new for his children and for all creation. Let the evolutionist sneer and cling to his progress which ends — nowhere. I rest on this divinely assured hope.

[22] Two γάρ statements follow. The first substantiates what Paul says about the sad condition of the creature-world; the second (V. 24) what he says in regard to hope. Our text does not include the latter. **For we know that the whole creation is groaning together and suffering birth-pains together up till now. [23] Moreover, not only (the creation), but also we ourselves who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves in ourselves are groaning, waiting out adoption, the ransoming of our body.**

In his Church Postil, the Fourth Sunday after Trinity, Erlangen ed. vol. 9, p. 118, Luther asks: “Here tell me now, who could see this now in the creature that it is lying in childbirth? No reason or human wisdom, let it be as high as it will, can conceive of such a thing or believe it. No, it says, the sun is such a beautiful, lovely, comforting creature that it could not be more beautiful or lovely. So also, what is wrong with the moon, the stars, the earth, etc.? Are they not all finely and daintily created? Who then would say that the creature lies in travail or is loath in being what it is? St. Paul says it, that in what it serves now it is quite weary and would like to be out of it as a woman would be glad to be delivered of her child. This is what we call true apostolic and spiritual eyes which see all this in the creature.”

We cannot agree. Paul writes: “we know,” meaning the Romans and himself, and the Romans did not have “true apostolic eyes.” Luther’s examples are incorrect: the beautiful sun, moon, and stars. All the fairness has not departed from the creatures. But as illustrations for what Philippi calls *die grosse Seufzersymphonie*, the great symphony of sighs, Luther should have taken the shrieks of stricken and dying animals, the moans and groans of the suffering, the writhing of the trodden worm, the crash of the riven tree, etc. It is common Christian knowledge to which Paul refers, — one cannot expect to find it in non-Christians. Only this is true, namely that Paul states this knowledge in his own words, and thus besides “is groaning together,” he uses the significant “and is suffering birth-pains together,” οὖν in the verbs referring not to mutuality with us but to collective action in the creation. The latter verb must not be reduced to mean only that as a woman

wishes to be done with her travail, so also the creature wishes to be done with its groaning. Paul means that the travail of the creature precedes a birth, the coming forth of a new heaven and a new earth. This too is general Christian knowledge. Even Luther has said of the sun, that now it wears only its work-a-day dress, but shall eventually put on its Sunday robe. “Up till now” contrasts with the future deliverance and glory and brings out the idea of a long time of past waiting until the present moment.

[23] We abide by the accepted reading, which Zahn alters for no acceptable reason. “We ourselves in ourselves are groaning” does not restrict our groaning to inaudible, repressed groaning, while that of the creation is audible. The audibility or inaudibility is not the point. Δέ, “moreover,” points to some difference between the creature and us. What this is the apostle states: “we have the firstfruits of the Spirit,” the creatures have nothing of the kind. This participle ἔχοντες is merely descriptive, not concessive or causal; it states on what a high plane we children of God stand. The creature-world has not even an immortal soul, has no reason, no spiritual life.

Ἀπαρχή == firstfruits, an idiomatic plural in English. Fausset, *Bible Cyclopaedia*: “At the Passover, on the morrow after the Sabbath, a sheaf of green barley (which is earlier than the wheat), of the first fruits of the crop, was waved before the Lord. At Pentecost, fifty days later, two loaves of Wheaten bread... Besides these national offerings the law required that the first of all ripe fruits and liquors should be offered by individuals. A cake of the first dough baked was to be a heave offering. The firstfruits of the oil, wine, and wheat were to be offered to Jehovah, for the benefit of his priests as his representatives. The Talmud fixed on the 60th as the least to be given of the produce, a 30th or 40th as a liberal offering.” When used figuratively “the firstfruits” signify the assurance of much more to follow, here the revelation of the glory, or the liberty of the glory.

In effect “the firstfruits of the Spirit” == “the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts,” ἄρραβων, the first down-payment, assuring the rest of the payment in due time (2 Cor. 1:22; v. 5; also Eph. 1:14). The genitive in “the firstfruits of the Spirit” is by no means partitive; for the Spirit is not divided, so that we have a piece now, and all of the pieces at last. Like “the earnest of the Spirit” the genitive is appositional: the earnest, the firstfruits are the Spirit as he is now given to us. What his possession now by faith

through the Word guarantees to us is not still more of the Spirit at the last day, but the glory, down even to the ransoming of our body.

Paul leaves no doubt on this score, for he adds: “waiting out adoption, (namely) the ransoming of our body.” We groan “while waiting out” (the verb found also in v. 19). The idea is not that we are not yet adopted and are waiting for this act. We are adopted (v. 15), but are not yet in possession of all that our adoption guarantees to us. When a child is adopted, it does not at once possess and enjoy all that its adoption assures; as an adopted child it waits until these things eventuate in due course. Especially is this true regarding the inheritance (v. 17); the heir waits out the time until the inheritance is turned over to him.

The anarthrous “adoption” is followed by the specific apposition “the redemption of our body.” This redemption of our body is not the entire gift at the last day; it is here named as the climax, — even our mortal body shall be raised up and glorified. The word ἀπολύτρωσις always involves the payment of a λύτρον or ransom. We must resist the attempt of some dictionaries and some commentators to emasculate the word, to make it mean only “deliverance” without payment of a ransom price. See Warfield’s elaborate essay in *Christian Doctrine*. Note also that in English “ransoming” is more expressive and exact than “redemption,” which has become pale and worn by constant use.

“Ransoming” and “liberation” harmonize: a price is paid to set the slave or the captive free. The word “ransoming” is used soteriologically when it refers to our entire person, purchased and won by the price of Christ’s blood. Here it is used eschatologically to indicate the last blessing that Christ thus purchased, namely the blessing for our body. The body remains a captive slave held in corruption in the grave, in death and in decay. The resurrection finally brings the liberation. The exactness and the richness of the term “ransoming” as here used has seldom been fully perceived.

## Homiletical Aid

Excerpts from Luther: “For instance the dear sun, which for the least part serves the godly. Where it shines upon one godly person, it must shine upon a thousand and again a thousand rascals, such as God’s enemies,

blasphemers, persecutors, of which the world is full; likewise murderers, robbers, thieves, adulterers. To these it must furnish light for all their godless doing and baseness, and let its most beautiful and purest service go for the most unworthy, shameful, abandoned knaves. St. Paul says, it hurts the sun to do this, and if it were a creature with reason, and if it were to be in accord with its will, not in accord with our Lord God's creation, who without its will subjected it to vainness, it would allow that all wicked knaves would get not one glimmer; but that it must shine for them, this is its pain and cross, at which it sighs and groans."

"Therefore in times past it was rightly said in the pulpits, that at the last day all creatures will cry murder upon the godless, that here on earth they misused them, and will accuse them as tyrants to whom they had to subject themselves contrary to all right and fairness."

"The heaven, the sun, moon, and stars would like to be free of their service, yea, would like to be dark and dull because of great suffering, the earth fruitless, the sea and all waters would drain away and dry up, only so that the wicked world would not have their benefit. Likewise, a sheep should more properly bear thorns than wool, a cow furnish poison rather than milk for the wicked world. But they must do it, St. Paul says, this they do because of him who subjected them on the basis of hope."

"St. Paul makes out of the entire creature, sun and moon, fire, air, water, heaven and earth, and out of all that is in them, nothing but poor bound servants. Whom then do they serve? Not our Lord God, also not primarily our Lord God's children, for these have the very smallest share in the creatures. Whom then? The vainness; that is they do not proceed in the right service, which they would like, as for instance the sun which would rather supply light for St. Paul, St. Peter, and other godly persons; on the other hand, the wicked knaves such as Judas, Pilate, Herod, Annas, Caiaphas, etc., it does not like to favor with the least ray of its radiance. For it is all a vain service, that is not applied to them. But there it would have pleasure and would count it gain, if it should supply light for St. Peter, St. Paul, etc. For to such godly people its service would be well applied. Yet it must supply light just as well to the wicked knaves as to the godly; yea, where it serves a single godly one, there are about a thousand who misuse its service."

“So it is also with all other creatures, as for instance gold, silver, brass, wine, beer, grain, meat, fish, butter, wool, etc., these serve whom? despicable rascals, who in return blaspheme and disgrace God, condemn his holy Gospel, murder his Christians. Therefore their service is all lost. . . . For the sun does not shine for the reason that a bandit may commit murder by its light, but it would much rather see that he serve God and do good to people. But since he does not do this, the dear sun’s service is lost, and it does it with hearty unwillingness. But what can it do about it?”

“So also a wicked tyrant or a wretched whore wear a golden chain or a golden ring. What can the dear gold do about it? It is our Lord God’s good creature, and would prefer pious people; but the noble creature must suffer such things and serves the wicked world without its will.”

Here are samples of true, popular preaching which every man must understand, and full of simple, compelling interest, provoking the bearer to see hundreds of things in the light the preacher has furnished him. Yes, men flocked to hear Luther preach.

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The Christian lives in this creature-world and is himself one of God’s creatures. Something is terribly wrong with all these creatures including the Christian himself. He is amid the sufferings of this time. The entire creation about him is groaning as if in distress, and the Christian himself often groans in himself. The Gospel, however, shows us the glory that shall be revealed in us, the revelation of the sons of God, the coming glorious liberty of the children of God, the final blessing of our adoption, the ransoming of our body in the resurrection. We must see all this clearly, so that in spite of all our creature sufferings we may live the days of our life with assurance, with rich comfort, and thus with undimmed joy.

### **The Groaning That Shall Be Stilled.**

- I. Vast groaning indeed.
  1. The whole creation groans [22]. Description.
  2. The creatures were made subject to vanity. [20]. The effect of sin.

3. The creatures in the slavery of corruption [21]. All its service ending in death and decay.
4. We ourselves groan [23], amid the countless sufferings of this period [18].

II. Thank God, a vaster hope!

1. Hope of deliverance of the creatures into the liberty of the glory of the children of God [21], the glory that shall be revealed in us [18]. The new heaven and the new earth, Rev. 21.
2. Sure hope, — we have the firstfruits of the Spirit [23]; adoption, the ransoming of our body follows.
3. The groaning thus is travail, a waiting in earnest expectation for the day when the hope shall be realized.

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### **The Groaning of the Creature.**

- I. An accusation against sinful man.
- II. A longing for liberation.
- III. A prophecy of final redemption. (Haag)

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The views of nature taught in our schools and by our so-called scientists brutalize our children. Here is the divine truth regarding nature and man.

### **An Outline of Biblical Natural History.**

- I. Nature was created by God.
- II. Nature was deprived of its original perfection.
- III. Nature is now subject to vainness.
- IV. Nature will finally be restored.
- V. The history of nature is bound up with the history of man. (Nebe).

The Christian in this world is certainly

### **Living in a World of Groans.**

How few, brief, fleeting the pleasures of earth, none of them perfect. We enter life with pain and we leave it with pain. This groaning extends to all creatures, in fact we brought it upon them.

I. Significant groans.

1. Telling of the sufferings of this present time.
2. Of the vanity (endless frustrations).
3. Of the slavery of corruption (everything full of decay and death).

II. Longing groans.

1. The creatures long for the fulfillment of the hope promised them.
2. We, having the firstfruits of the Spirit, long for the glory that shall be revealed in us, for our revelation as the sons of God, for the redemption of our body.

We cannot want to remain for ever in this world of groans.

III. Groans that shall turn to hallelujahs.

1. How we will sing in the new heaven and the new earth, Rev. 21, where every tear shall be wiped away, where there shall be no more death, sorrow, crying, pain.
2. How all creation will sing with us in the new world.

Note: Luther describes the groaning well, but fails to say much about the glory, liberty, etc. These deserve description just as fully, if not more.

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Unbelievers and skeptics are not waiting. This life is their all. But all creation is waiting, and its waiting depends on our waiting.

## **The Great Waiting.**

- I. To escape. The suffering [18], the vanity [20], the bondage of corruption [21], the groaning.
  - II. To attain. The creature its hope [20], which rests on our attaining the glory, etc., as the sons and the children of God.
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Consider the boundless grace of God that he permitted the world to continue and man to live on after the sin brought the death into the world (Rom 5:12). Yes, it was now a world of vanity and of groans, of suffering, of bondage, of corruption. But it enabled God to send his Son into the world, to redeem it, and thus at last to restore it to glory. Let

## **The Groaning of all Creation**

- I. Remind you of sin and its results.
  - II. Keep you uncomplaining in suffering.
  - III. Make you thankful to be God's son and child.
  - IV. Intensify your earnest expectation.
- 

## **“The Sufferings of this Present Time are not Worthy to be Compared with the Glory which shall be Revealed in Us.”**

- I. The sufferings of this present time are short, but we hope for eternal glory.
- II. The sufferings of this present time distress chiefly the outer man, our future glory refreshes body and soul.
- III. In the sufferings of this present time we already have a foretaste of the coming glory, but in the glory there shall be no sorrow, no memory of sorrow shall cloud our bliss.

G. St. in Magazin\_etc. vol. 8.



# The Fifth Sunday After Trinity. 1

## Pet. 3:8-15

### How to Live in this Present Evil World

This Sunday closes the first sub-cycle of the after-Trinity half of the Church Year. As already stated, the ancient Church had no Trinity festival and counted no after-Trinity Sundays. It counted only Sundays after Pentecost, and stopped its count of these with the Sunday nearest to June 29th, the Peter and Paul Festival commemorating their martyrdom. Hence when the late date of Easter caused also the date of Pentecost to be late, there were fewer Sundays between Pentecost and June 29th. The ancient Church had no designations for the remaining Sundays of the Church Year.

“Finally” in v. 8 shows that now Peter’s directions to special groups in the congregations are concluded and his directions now pertain to all without distinction. We see that the admonitions pertain to us as individuals living in this sinful world. The text thus completes the line of thought of the sub-cycle. The gospel (Luke v. 1-11) records Peter’s wonderful draught of fish. It was chosen to honor Peter, the anniversary day of whose martyrdom was so near. The gospels follow a line of thought that is different from that of the epistles, hence the lack of correspondence.

Peter tells his readers *how to live in this evil world*, both as Christians in contact with Christians and as Christians in contact with Gentile, non-Christian neighbors. But the admonitions take on a specific character when we remember the purpose of this letter: severe persecution is impending and Peter wants his readers to be forewarned and forearmed. The thought underlying the general admonitions is thus the conviction that genuine Christian conduct not only silences all vilification that may cause the authorities to look with suspicion upon the Christians, but such true conduct also helps to win many people for the Church.

**Now, finally, all, same-minded, sympathetic, fraternally friendly, compassionate, lowly-minded [9], not giving back a base thing for a base thing, or reviling for reviling, but contrariwise, continuing to bless, because for this you were called that you inherit blessing.**

With “all” we supply nothing. The adjectives are naturally predicative and mildly imperative or hortatory. “All” without exception are first of all to be “same-minded,” intent on the same thing. Sentiment, aim, purpose identical. No difference in anything, even inwardly. As we continue we note that Peter is referring to the Christian’s influence on the world. When all are same-minded, this is of great value for the Christians themselves and it is also highly impressive and beneficial to the world. Nothing counteracts the influence upon those outside as do the contradictions and the divisions of the Christians, when some preach and practice one thing, some another thing. To be contrari-minded in the Church is the great evil of our day.

For this oneness and same-mindedness in the Word Jesus prayed in his high priestly prayer, John 17:17:21:23. For this is what Peter means, not same-minded in earthly affairs and opinions, but in the Word. Peter, then, does not agree with those who claim that “different tendencies are justified in the Church,” as when one teaches chiliasm, the national conversion of the Jews, two resurrections, etc., on the ground that these matters are “open questions.” Such and similar opinions rend the Church inwardly, if not outwardly.

Next is “sympathetic” (a hapaxlegomenon): sharing the feelings of others, whether these be joyful or painful. To have fellow Christians share our feelings with us cheers and comforts. Divided joy is doubled joy, divided grief is half grief. Third is “fraternally friendly” 2: “love as brethren” (A.V.), the noun found in 1:22. As brother is affectionate to brother, so should one Christian be to another. Note that the word contains (Mia, the love of affection, not ἀγάπη, the love of comprehension and purpose. We ought to make it a delight for anyone to be a brother in our midst, since he has so many brethren all around him as friends.

Next is “compassionate,” full of tender feelings toward any who suffer, whether brethren or not. The Good Samaritan remains the great example. And then “lowly-minded,” unassuming, not proud and haughty, not high-minded in this sense. For pride separates, divides, and is bad for anyone.

[9] Peter continues with participles: “not giving back ’a base or mean thing for a base or mean thing,” not retaliating, not offering tit for tat, or taking revenge. This is the nature of the old Adam, which must be eradicated. Κακόν is any meanness. Peter becomes more specific: “or reviling for reviling.” This is not the disjunctive but the conjunctive “or,” which the grammars do not treat. When some one calls you a name, you call him a name, ἄντί with the idea of exchange. See the example of Christ mentioned in 2:23: “when he was reviled, reviled not again,” etc. “The very contrary” is to be your reaction as a Christian in this world: “continuing to bless” (Matt. v. 44; Rom. 12:14), calling down good from heaven upon those who revile and ill treat you. This will astonish your worldly enemy and may win him for Christ.

Why bless? “Because for this you were called that you inherit blessing.” “Iva introduces a clause in apposition to τοῦτο:”for this that” etc. Our call through the Gospel made us believers and Christians. This call caused us to inherit blessing, the infinite blessing of salvation in Christ Jesus. People who have inherited blessing on so grand a scale are far above resenting evil and mean words. They can afford to bless even their enemies. The exposition is found in the parable recorded Matt. 18:21-35.

[10] Γάρ does not prove, it elucidates by incorporating Ps. 34:12-16 a. We are called to inherit an immense blessing; let us not lose it by unchristian conduct.

**For "He who wants to love life, And to see good days, Let him stop the tongue from any base thing, And lips from uttering guile; [11] Moreover, let him incline away from baseness, and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. [12] Because the Lord's eyes (are) upon righteous ones, And his ears for their begging; But the Lord's countenance (is) against such as are doing things base."**

“To love life” has the verb ἀγαπᾶν and thus does not mean merely to want to live, or to wish for an easy, pleasant life. This verb means to love life in an intelligent way, to love it with a purpose corresponding to this intelligence. It means to want a life really worth living. The synonymous line speaks of seeing “good days,” which means “good” in the sense of truly beneficial, days that bring us what is good for our souls and that enable us to bring such good also to others.

He who wants such a worth-while life, “let him stop the tongue from any base thing,” from anything that is mean, κακόν, the word used in v. 9. What ruin the tongue is able to cause James 3:6 etc., tells us. The synonymous line has the word “guile,” δόλος, originally bait for fish, hence craft, cunning, intended to deceive and to harm others and to gain some wrong advantage for ourselves. In 2:1 Peter too combines “all baseness and all guile.” We see what would spoil a truly good life.

[11] Instead of baseness either in word or in deed, “let him do good.” This, however, is not meant in the sense in which the world does good and praises those who have done good after her fashion. The world calls “good” whatever is not criminal, whatever benefits the earthly life. God and the Scriptures call that good which benefits the soul, the spiritual life. The word “good” has the soteriological sense. The difference is so material that it should be carefully inculcated. Even Christians are deceived and think that a good life, as the world reckons it, insures getting to heaven.

The Psalmist himself explains in the next line: “Let him seek peace and pursue it.” This is not worldly peace, such as statesmen seek to preserve between nations, a peace which is the opposite of fighting. As “good”= good for the soul, so “peace” is peace for the soul, *shalom*, German *Heil*, when all is well between God and us, when he is our friend. Such peace is the result of salvation. To pursue this peace (aorist, pursue it successfully) is a drastic way of saying that our entire aim must be to capture, hold, and possess this true peace. As far as men are concerned, he who has captured peace with God through Jesus Christ will not begin to fight in a sinful manner.

[12] We see that the Psalmist is not speaking in a superficial manner like common moralists, when now he states the great reason for his prescription for a worth-while life: “Because the Lord’s eyes (are) upon such as are righteous” (anarthrous, qualitative). He delights to see them. It is his judgment that declares them righteous. Hence “his ears (are) for their begging,” whenever they need anything. He never fails them. Surely, to have God thus disposed toward us makes for a good life and good days.

“But the Lord’s countenance (is) against such as are doing base things,” whether they admit it or not. No; theirs is not a good life, irrespective of the

world's judgment. When God's face is hostile to us and to our doings life is the most tragic failure.

[13] Doing good as Peter understands good is by no means always appreciated by men in the world. Peter takes up this side of the matter. **And who is he that will treat you basely, if you get to be zealots for the good?** The rhetorical question needs no answer. For the sense of it is, that people whose passion it is to do spiritual and moral good to their fellow men make it exceedingly difficult for anyone to treat them basely, say by lodging charges against them, by denouncing them, etc. Peter is thinking of impending persecution. Nero accused the Christians in Rome of having set fire to the city in July of the year 64, and in October the killing of the martyrs began. Peter warns his readers living in the distant imperial provinces of Asia Minor that the governors will very likely follow Nero's example. Christianity will be considered an illegal religion, persecution will set in.

Peter's meaning thus is not this, that by being zealots for good the Christians will succeed in escaping all molestation. Quite the contrary, as the next verse and the following discussion show. Only this is meant, that Christians who are zealots for that which is truly good cut off just cause for harming them. Note the substantivized future participle ὁ κακῶσων, which agrees with the ἐάν clause and its aorist subjunctive tense and its force of expectancy. The future participle is rare. Note also "zealots for good," objective genitive, which expects more of the readers than that they merely do some of this good now and then. How many such "zealots" have we in our midst? In the Greek the genitive is made emphatic by being placed before "zealots."

[14] **Nevertheless, if also you should be suffering for righteousness' sake, blessed (are you)!** While nobody can really make zealousness for good a crime worthy of punishment or a reason for mistreatment, Christians may have to suffer "for righteousness' sake." The unrighteous world cannot tolerate it to be constantly confronted by a large measure of righteousness in the Christians. The worldlings feel this as an intolerable rebuke to themselves, a silent and a strong condemnation of their notorious unrighteousness. Hence the Christians may be made to suffer in milder or in graver ways.

We should not confuse εἰ καί with καί εἰ. The latter equals “even if” and implies improbability; the former == “if also” and implies that the thing is really a matter of indifference. See Robertson’s *Grammar*. Carefully note the condition of potentiality, εἰ with the optative, rare in the Koine: “if also you should be suffering,” “might have to be suffering.” Peter is not speaking of improbability, he is not thinking of greater or less likelihood. Peter is expressing the hope that his readers may not have to suffer. In looking at the future he prefers to reckon only with the potentiality that his readers might have to suffer.

Yet if after all this proves to be reality, what of it, it makes no difference. Why judge suffering so lightly? Because “blessed” are you. Jesus himself pronounced this verdict on those who suffer for righteousness’ sake, Matt. v. 10. “Blessed” is *’ashre* as found in Ps. 1:1; it is always a divine verdict: fortunate in the highest sense. The opposite is “woe,” also a divine verdict. How blessed the sufferers and the martyrs are Jesus himself states.

**And do not fear their fear, neither be disturbed** (shaken, upset), [15] **but sanctify the Lord, Christ, in your hearts, ready always for defense to everyone asking you reason concerning the hope in you, but with meekness and fear.** “Do not fear their fear!” is a strong expression because of the cognate object, repeating the idea of fear in verb and noun. The sense is: Do not let them frighten you! “Neither be disturbed” means that the readers are not even to be annoyed in their minds when suffering does come. That it is entirely likely to come is implied, although Peter wishes it may not come. If Peter meant, suffering is not likely to come, then these strong admonitions would not be in place.

[15] In the face of suffering for righteousness’ sake, and in order to keep out cowardly fear, the readers are “to sanctify the Lord, Christ, in their hearts.” This means to keep him ever in our hearts as our only Lord and as the Christ our Savior, so that we fear and obey him alone and are not afraid of what men can do to us, and ever keep on doing good even to those who make us suffer lest we injure the name of our Lord, Christ. The objection that Peter should say: “sanctify him in your conduct,” because here the point of consideration is conduct before the world, forgets the truth that all conduct comes from the heart, and certainly that sanctification of the Lord occurs in the heart,

The reading “Lord God” (A.V.) follows an inferior text. “Christ as Lord” (R.V.) considers “Christ” as the object because in the Greek it has the article, and “Lord” as predicative. But Κύριος is a proper name and needs no article in order to be the object; but with “Christ” we must here have the Greek article, so that the apposition is recognized, else we should have only a unit designation in the Greek: “Lord Christ.” Peter alludes to Is. 8:13, but wants us to understand “Lord of hosts” as referring to “Christ,” hence he adds this term in apposition. The R.V. fails to note this. Of course, the deity of our Lord is thus expressed. With our Lord sanctified in our hearts we shall be ready to suffer as we should.

“Ready always for defense to everyone asking you reason concerning the hope in you” means: let whoever will constitute himself a judge in your case and demand of you a legal answer, do you be ready to give that answer to him. Peter’s language is altogether legal, for ἀπολογία is the formal defense of a defendant in court (Acts 22:1; 25:16). After the indictment comes this “defense.” Λόγος is likewise juridical, the German *Rechenschaft*, an account or sensible statement regarding the charge lodged against a man. But the legal terms are dropped when Peter adds: “concerning the hope in you.” The pagan judge will not ask about this hope, but the Christian will testify regarding this hope, — that he hopes for everlasting life through his Lord, through Christ, through his blood and righteousness. The entire Gospel centers in this hope. Called on to defend his religion, the Christian will be only too glad to remove ignorance and prejudice, to show how groundless are all slanders, and thus also, if possible, to attract all who hear to embrace the same hope.

Hence the defense must be made in a Christian way, “with meekness and fear.” Luther expounds in his simple and telling way, and he certainly had experience enough: “When you are asked about your hope, you are not to answer with haughty words and carry things off with audacity and force, as though you meant to uproot trees, but with fear and humility, as though you stood before God’s judgment and were making answer. For if now it should come to pass, that you were to be called before kings and nobles, and had equipped yourself a good while with statements and thought: Just wait, I will answer them right! it may well come about that the devil take the sword out of your hand, and before you are aware give you a thrust, so that you stand disgraced and have equipped yourself in vain, might also snatch

out of your heart the statements which you fixed best, so that you would be left even if you had them well in mind, for he has noted your thoughts in advance. Now God lets this happen to dampen your haughtiness and to humble you.”

Meekness assumes no high airs, but it also does not cringe. It is gentle, but does not yield. Fear is care lest we say anything that our Lord would not want us to say, anything that might injure his name and cause. The Christian is afraid of doing that.

## Homiletical Aid

Do you love life? Do you want to see good days? This does not mean: Do you want to live long and have a good time while doing it. It means true intelligence and the real purpose in life and days filled with what is good for the soul, your soul and the souls of others. This is

### **The Worth-While Christian Life.**

Let us see

- I. What it offers, and
- II. What it obtains.

It offer to all our fellow Christians:

- Sameness of mind in all matters of the Word.
- Sympathy in joy and grief.
- Brotherly friendliness in all contacts, so that it is a pleasure to be together.
- Compassion for the suffering.
- Lowly-mindedness, unassuming humbleness.
- These virtues make a life worth-while.

It offers to all men:

- No return of meanness for meanness.
- No reviling for reviling.



- Nothing but blessing from God.
- Always pursuing peace.
- Willingness to suffer for righteousness' sake.
- Fearlessness of men.
- Readiness to defend our hope.
- To live such a life in this wicked world is worth-while.

It obtains:

- All the benefit, comfort, and joy from the same virtues in the fellow Christians. This is no small return!
- It inherits the blessing.
- It is assured of the divine approval (v. 12).
- Persecution ennobles this life.
- Its hope is crowned with realization. O Lord, help us all to live such worth-while lives in this wicked world!

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Through all the ages men have sought “good days” in this wicked world. So many have sought in vain. The days they secured proved no good after all. We must not seek in vain.

### **Good Days in This Wicked World.**

- I. Say not they are impossible.
  1. Fall not into the mistake of mistaking what is good and what is evil.
  2. Make not the further mistake of trying to attain good days by your oWn efforts.
- II. There are indeed many evils.
  1. Few realize how evil they are.
  2. Or what the real cause and root of all these evils is.
  3. And why men vainly fight against these evils and yet are torn by them.

4. To attain good days we must know all about these evils.
- III. But there is the Lord and his blessing.
1. Here is the fount of true goodness, salvation, peace, etc.
  2. Here are the righteous, with Christ sanctified in their hearts.
- IV. And thus lives that are good indeed.
1. Inheriting the blessing, enjoying the peace, happy in love.
  2. Living well with their brethren.
  3. Enduring nobly and bravely any meanness, reviling, persecution.
  4. Such lives are good indeed.

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Sommer offers the following:

The desire for good days is general among men; but the conceptions regarding what are good days differ. For the Christian a good day is one in which he knows himself at peace with God and in which he succeeds in doing good by the power of God. Men would like to have the good days come of themselves; the Christian does not forget the obligations which he must meet if God is to present him with good days.

### **How the Christian Who Would See Good Days Conducts Himself.**

- I. He loves the brethren.
  1. He cultivates humility, the source of brotherly love.
  2. He manifests oneness of mind, sympathy, compassion.
- II. He blesses his enemies.
  1. In general he turns from the bad, he does not retaliate.
  2. In general he does good, controls his tongue, seeks peace, prays for his enemies.
- III. He fears the Lord.

1. He considers how God looks down upon the righteous, but pours out his wrath upon the wicked.
  2. He sanctifies the Lord in his heart.
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### **In the World, Not of the World.**

- I. Separated. By belonging to
  1. The righteous.
  2. The followers of the good.
  3. The heirs of the blessing.
  4. Those who suffer for righteousness' sake.
  5. Those who have a sure hope.
- II. Kept segregated.
  1. By affection for all true brethren, whom the world does not like and embrace.
  2. By the meanness inflicted upon us for which we do not retaliate.
  3. By suffering for righteousness' sake, even martyrdom if necessary.
  4. By the hope we are called on to defend.

# The Second After-Trinity Cycle

## The Christian as the Child of God

### **The Sixth Sunday After Trinity.**

*Baptized in Christ Jesus*

### **The Seventh Sunday After Trinity.**

*A Slave of Righteousness*

### **The Eighth Sunday After Trinity.**

*The Christian Prays: "Abba Father!"*

### **The Ninth Sunday After Trinity.**

*"He that Thinketh he Standeth"*

### **The Tenth Sunday After Trinity.**

*The Christian Richly Endowed with Gifts*

### **The Eleventh Sunday After Trinity.**

*By the Grace of God the Christian Is What he Is*

### **The Twelfth Sunday After Trinity.**

*The Christian is Blessed with the Able Ministry of the New Testament*

# The Sixth Sunday After Trinity.

## Rom. 6:3-11

### **Baptized in Connection with Christ's Death The Second Section of the After-Trinity Cycle.**

The section extends from the commemoration of the martyrdom of Peter and Paul, June 29th, to the festival of Saint Laurentius, August 10th. This reckoning according to two fixed dates posits a normal year, when the date of Easter is such that all the Sundays after Trinity occur in due order, namely five until June 29th, and seven during the period from June 29th until August 10th (the Sixth to the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity). If the first after-Trinity section should be shortened, if only three or four Sundays should occur in this section prior to June 29th, then the Sundays of the second section would be moved forward, the Sixth becoming the Fifth or the Fourth, and all of the following Sundays would be advanced in the same manner. At present we disregard the fixed dates, and when Easter comes late omit the final after-Trinity Sundays and their texts. A better way would be to examine the entire after-Trinity series of texts and to drop a text here and there so as to shorten the series sufficiently. To lop off all of the texts to be omitted at the end of the Trinity season, looks like a mutilation. We have the eschatological texts at the end of the after-Trinity cycle and these texts are of special value for our people.

**In the World** is our caption for the first sub-cycle, the First to the Fifth Sunday after Trinity.

**The Christian as the Child of God** is our caption for the second sub-cycle, the Sixth to the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.

[1] *Baptism made him a child of God* and ushered him into a new life, Rom. 6:3-11, the Sixth Sunday after Trinity.

[2] Instead of being a slave of sin with death as wages, he is *the slave of God with eternal life as the final gift of God*, Rom. 6:19-23, the Seventh Sunday after Trinity.

[3] We have received *the Spirit of adoption* who bears witness that we are the children of God, Rom. 8:12-17, the Eighth Sunday after Trinity.

[4] Old Testament examples *warning us lest we lose our standing as children*, 1 Cor. 10:6-13, the Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

[5] The child of God *richly endowed with spiritual gifts*, 1 Cor. 12:1-11, the Tenth Sunday after Trinity.

[6] “By the grace of God I am what I am... *not I, but the grace of God* which was with me.” 1 Cor. 15:1-10, the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

[7] The glory of the Christian ministry seems to have been selected on account of the nearness of this Sunday to the commemoration of the martyrdom of Laurentius, who was most highly honored in the ancient church *propter praedicationis officium*, as the *Aurea Legenda* reports. Yet apart from this casual reason for selecting 2 Cor. 3:4-11 for the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity, *the glorious ministry of the New Testament is the precious gift of God to all his New Testament children* and this thought rounds out this sub-cycle of seven texts on the Children of God.

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Rom. 6:3-11 is an admirable epistle text for the opening of the second sub-cycle of the after-Trinity series. When considering ourselves as *the Children of God* we should begin with *Baptism*, with what this has done to us, in particular also how it has ushered us into an entirely new life (V. 4), the life of the Child of God.

The epistle text harmonizes with the gospel text Matt. v. 20-26: “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees,” etc. Baptism bestows this better righteousness upon us.

The approach to our text is the question regarding our still continuing in sin, so that more grace may be needed to save us. The very idea is impossible, even absurd. How can we who are dead to sin at the same time live in sin? Can one be dead and alive at the same time? Both this death and

this life and newness of life are such great effects of justification by faith that they deserve to be unfolded in detail and even these details are tremendous. So Paul asks: **Or are you ignorant of the fact that we, as many as were baptized in connection with Christ Jesus, in connection with his death were we baptized? [4] We then were entombed with him through this (our) Baptism in connection with this (his) death, in order that just as Christ was raised up from the dead through the glory of the Father, thus also we on our part might come to walk in newness of life.**

— “Or are you ignorant of the fact” is a litotes for: “I am sure you know the fact.” “As many as were baptized” does not imply that some of the Romans were not as yet baptized, but this expression connects them with Paul and all other Christians, all of whom were duly baptized. Ἐβαπτίσθημεν is a passive: “we were baptized,” not a passive form for a permissive middle: “we let ourselves be baptized.” The aorist indicates the past historic fact. It is important here since it is in agreement with the other aorist “we did die.” The death to sin occurred in the Baptism.

All of the recent grammarians tell the story of the use of εἰς in the Koine, how originally this preposition came into use and relieved ἐν in the phrases that contain verbs of motion (classic period), how thereupon εἰς expanded and began to take over the phrases that go with static verbs and even verbs of being, so that the New Testament has εἶναι and ὄν εἰς (Koine period), how this process of expansion continued until in modern Greek εἰς has the entire field, as originally ἐν had it. I call this the tragic story of ἐν and εἰς. The present grammarians label this εἰς used with static verbs and with verbs of being “the static εἰς.” We see how wrong the old grammarians and the older commentators were when they forced this εἰς to mean “into” and found motion in its meaning. The mass of material furnished by the papyri, the ostraca, and also by the inscriptions has removed the former ignorance. Our versions still suffer from it. Three times and also in Matt. 28:19 εἰς is mistranslated “into,” as if it denoted motion. Rambach’s hymn: *Ich bin-getauft auf deinen Namen*, is translated in the American Lutheran Hymnal 539: “Baptized into thy name most holy.” This is a great warning to all exegetes and all grammarians. The thought of being carried by Baptism “into the Name” of God, “into Christ,” “into his death” is an impossible and unthinkable thought, and yet the learned linguists of another day forced it upon us and did it with the claim of exactness and literalness

as demanded by the Greek, — when it was nothing of the kind. A similar thing is true regarding ἵνα: every occurrence of this conjunction was regarded as introducing a purpose clause, whether it actually did so or not. No; here εἰς is static; it means “in” in its original sense “in connection with.” The thought is perfectly thinkable and even simple: in Matt. 28:19 “baptizing in connection with the Name (= revelation)” of the Triune God; here: “we were baptized in connection with Christ Jesus,” “in connection with his death,” “we were entombed in connection with his death.” Baptism makes this blessed connection with Christ and with all the saving power of his death. Christ and his death are not a great receptacle into which baptism propels us. Because of these its saving connections Paul can call Baptism “the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Tit. 3:5).

When Paul here refers to Christ’s death we must recall all that he has already said in regard to this death, its expiatory, sacrificial, substitutionary character, in 3:25; v. 6-11, plus all that he has said on Christ’s mediation. The death of Christ is thus the basis for our justification by faith, but it is more. Here we see that it is likewise the cause of our newness of life, i.e. of our sanctification, so that we no longer respond to and live in sin. Let us remember our dogmatics, retaught here by Paul, that when the verdict of justification is pronounced upon us, in that moment the new life of sanctification begins. Note the chiasm in the Greek: “we were baptized in connection with Christ Jesus, in connection with his death were we baptized,” — the two verbs outside, the two phrases inside, an arrangement which throws all the emphasis on the second phrase, “in connection with his death.”

Paul reminds the Romans: All of you certainly know that Baptism already made for you this vital connection with Christ Jesus and his death. The passives are essential to the statement, for not we do something for Christ or for ourselves when being baptized, but he does everything for us, he with his death, as also with his entombment and his resurrection. Paul is not yet using mystical language when he writes: “in connection with his death were we baptized,” but he is close to the mystical form of thought.

[4] A τάφος is a tomb, and in the modified sense a grave, and thus συνθάπτω == to entomb together with someone or something. Palestine is full of rocky hills; instead of graves, dug out of the soil and closed by filling in the earth on top of the corpse, tombs were cut into a rocky cliff. These



were either regular chambers large enough to permit the entrance of several persons or spaces large enough only to receive the corpse. These tombs were closed by means of rock slabs. Translate “entombed” instead of “buried” (our versions).

Paul is now using mystical language, the nature of which is often not understood, so that commentators ignorantly call it symbolical, allegorical, or figurative. We must not be influenced by such mistakes. Let us define: what occurred physically in the experience of Christ and what occurred spiritually in us is combined as though it were the same act, and the interval of time is disregarded. The difference between Christ’s death which was sacrificial and vicarious and ours which was an escape from sin and its dominion is fully conserved. It must be, for only upon the verity of this difference rests the mystical predication. This mystical language is not merely beautiful rhetoric, it is language expressing concentrated facts. More is said here than that Christ died for us, that God regarded his death as ours, as if we ourselves had died, more even than that by Baptism and faith all the benefits of Christ’s sacrificial death were made personally ours. The sanctifying spiritual effect upon ourselves is included, but this with all that we have mentioned is concentrated in one expression as being virtually one act: “we were entombed with him.”

The means (διά) was “the (our) Baptism in connection with the (his) death,” — Βαπτισμός with the suffix -μός signifying the baptismal act. It is this sacred act that so entombed us. While Paul uses the mystical statement with reference to the entombment, this reacts on the death, as if he had said also: we died with Christ. For the entombment only verifies and, as it were, seals the death. For this reason we say in the Creed regarding Christ: “dead and buried.” In order to be entombed, we must die and be dead with Christ.

In the light of the apostle’s words it is impossible to conceive of Baptism as being only a symbol picturing something that is to occur at some future date and by some other means. With διά Paul positively makes the baptismal act the means, not only for delivering us from the guilt of sin, but at the same time also from its dominion. With regard to no symbol could this διά be used. The moment that Baptism becomes for us what it is according to the apostle’s statement, its mode ceases to dominate our estimate. To be entombed with Christ by Baptism in no way requires that

the Baptism be administered by immersion. The resemblance between laying a dead body in its place in a tomb and tilting a person backward under the water is a Baptist fiction. In order to have a symbol we need no picturing, no duplication. The function of this Sacrament is neither to picture nor to symbolize. Its function is to act as a most effective, divine and spiritual means, the power of which is to connect us with Christ and his atoning death for the death of sin in us, for the production of a new life, regeneration (John 3:5; Tit. 3:5) or a new birth, and thus newness of life for ever.

Paul drops the mystical language when stating the purpose of our entombment with Christ. He might have drawn the act regarding Christ and the act regarding us together into one act and written the mystical statement: “in order that we might be raised up with Christ.” He keeps the two acts separated: “in order that just as Christ was raised up from the dead through the glory of the Father, thus also we on our part might come to walk in newness of life.” By using this ordinary comparison Paul helps us to understand the mystical expression about our being entombed with Christ. We also have v. 5: “we have become grown together with the likeness of his death.”

Ἡυέρθη must be passive, not a passive form with middle meaning, because the means (διά), the glory of the Father, points to the Father as the agent. It is, of course, true that the Scriptures say both: Jesus was raised, and he himself arose, even as all the *opera ad extra sunt indivisa aut commana*. Death, entombed, raised up from the dead belong together. The Father put his approval upon his Son’s death by raising him up. Christ’s resurrection seals the atoning efficacy and sufficiency of his sacrificial death. The anarthrous phrase ἐκ νεκρῶν is much abused by chiliasts, yet to one who knows the Greek it means only “from death”; see my *Interpretation* of Matt. 17:10. Since δόξα is the shining forth of the divine attributes, the omnipotence, etc., we see that the Father raised up Jesus from the dead.

Instead of stating the ordinary counterpart to Jesus: “thus also were we on our part (emphatic ἡμεῖς) raised up,” Paul at once advances to the result of our spiritual resurrection: “thus also we on our part came to walk in newness of life” (ingressive aorist). Life itself, whether physical or spiritual, is invisible, intangible. It is known only from its activities, all of which are

absent in death. Thus to walk in newness of life involves a resurrection to this new life, analogous to Christ's physical resurrection from the tomb. The fact that Paul at once advances to this activity of life reveals the penetrating power of his mind. Failure to see that has led to puerile criticism.

The Greek has two adjectives for the concept "new": *καινός* which is the opposite of *παλαιός*, "old," and *νέος*, "new" as never having existed before. Both words are used with reference to the regenerate man; he has both a life that he never had before and a life that is the opposite of his former life. So here *καινότης* is the opposite of the blind, indifferent life in sin (v. 2), the old life to which the Christian is dead. In the expression "newness of life" the genitive has been considered adjectival, although stronger than an adjective in force: "living newness"; in my opinion the abstract word is adjectival: "new life."

Paul tells his readers that they know these great facts about Baptism, how it already by its connection with Christ's death, entombment, and resurrection, effected their death to sin, their entombment as being dead to sin, their resurrection to the new life and the walk in its newness. How impossible, yea how monstrous, then, even to entertain for a moment such a thought as for some reason or other to remain in sin!

[5] So important is all this that Paul explains more fully (*γάρ*) by a restatement in other terms. **For if we have become grown together with the likeness of his death, indeed also shall we be (grown together with the likeness) of the resurrection; [6] we realizing this that our old man was jointly crucified, so that the body of the sin was put out of effect, for us no longer to keep being slaves to the sin; [7] for he that died has been declared acquitted from the sin.** The "if" statement is only a variation of the "just as" statement (v. 4), and *εἰ* with the indicative speaks of this growing together as a reality.

"Baptized were we in connection with Christ's death" (v. 3) == "entombed were we with Christ through Baptism" (v. 4) == "grown together have we become with the likeness of his death." All three statements speak about the same fact, but the second advances beyond the first and the third beyond the second. The advance in the third is so valuable because it shows that what is expressed in mystical terms is not merely something that we think, but something that is fully based on reality. When

we use mystical language, “entombed together,” “crucified jointly,” we express only the actual fact. This we ought to note as we consider v. 5.

In v. 4 “even as Christ — thus also we” introduces the idea of likeness. When making further explanation Paul retains this term “likeness of his death.” For the two deaths are only alike, not identical, as we have already shown above. We must not speak of type and antitype, for never is the type greater than the antitype. As Trench has explained it, εἰκῶν is *Abbild*, presupposing a *Vorbild*, and the former may be far less than the latter. Our little inward death to sin, made possible by his mighty death for the world’s sin, only resembles his death and nothing more. The resemblance lies in this, that as he died and rose again, so we died to sin in order to enter a new life. The perfect “have become grown together” reaches from the past, the day of Baptism, forward to the present, and σύν in σύμφυτοι governs the dative.

Ἀλλά, non-adversative, is here copulative and even climacteric, hence also καί is added: “indeed also.” Supply all that is needed to complete the sentence as we indicate in our translation. Σύμφυτοι, “grown together,” states how intimately we are connected with the likeness of Christ’s death, and adds that we shall be joined equally intimately with the likeness of his resurrection by living the new life. It is worth noting how carefully Paul avoids calling our coming to the new life an ἀνάστασις or “resurrection”; it is never so called in Scripture; for in the case of Christ’s resurrection his soul returned to his body, and in the case of our conversion and regeneration nothing that we previously had returns to us. This too shows that between Christ and us there is only a “likeness.” The tenses are important: what “we have become” in Baptism extends to this day, and what “we shall be” continues as long as we shall live.

[6] Paul returns to the point that the baptized Christian cannot go on in sin: “we realizing this that our old man was jointly crucified, so that the body of the sin was put out of effect, for us no longer to keep being slaves to the sin.” “Realizing” means that we are fully conscious of what has happened to us in Baptism. Paul now employs the fullest form of mystical highly concentrated language: “our old man was jointly crucified,” συνεσταυρώθη. “With him” (Christ) is understood in the Greek. The aorist points back to the day of Baptism, and the passive to God as the agent. Paul completes the thought of v. 3 “we died,” and of v. 4 “we were entombed,”

— a crucifixion took place. So many fail to see all that the word implies. Our old man did not fall peacefully asleep in Baptism — he was literally murdered. He did not die willingly, he was slain. More than this, since those who were crucified hung on wood, they were considered accursed of God (Gal. 3:13), our old man was slain as one accursed by being crucified. The law of God had damned the old man.

“Our old man” is the opposite of “the new man” (Eph. 4:22-24) and of “a new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:5). “Our old man” is more than a personification, for it denotes our entire being as it existed before regeneration, “old” pointing back to that former existence. In us there was nothing even to sicken and to weaken our old man, much less to kill him by crucifixion; God had to do this.

The climax of this mystical expression is reached in the fact that it joins together even the form of Christ’s death with our inward death in Baptism. The difference between the two deaths remains, otherwise our death could not follow Christ’s. But our spiritual death depends so utterly upon Christ’s sacrificial death by crucifixion, that when stressing this connection Paul is able to say that Baptism nails our old man of sin upon Christ’s cross to perish in and with the sins for which Christ died on his cross. Modernistic Germans destroy all this by claiming that Christ’s death is *ein schlechthin vergangenes Ereignis*, that “the crucified Christ does not exist any more.” As the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world, so he is the Crucified One for ever, all modernism and rationalistic vaporings to the contrary notwithstanding.

Read ἵνα as denoting result: “so that the body of the sin was put out of effect.” Paul is reciting facts. Rid yourself of the old grammatical inhibition that ἵνα cannot denote result. “The body of the sin” is our physical body that is used by the evil power of sin which has enslaved our entire being and thus works out its will through the body and its members. Observe that the articulated nouns “the sin,” “the death,” “the darkness,” “the light” always denote the power so named, a fact often overlooked or disregarded.

This power of the sin operating in our body was put out of commission or effect by the crucifixion that took place in Baptism. “To destroy,” “to annihilate” is too strong an expression for καταργέω. The aorist states that once for all the power of the sin was broken, “for us no longer to keep being

slaves to the sin” (the sin-power, this tyrant master). We are set free (v. 22), our bodily members become slaves of righteousness unto sanctification (v. 19), and our body becomes even the temple of the Holy Spirit. We ourselves are not our own, but belong to him who bought us, we glorifying God in both body and spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

While by means of the crucifixion the curse of the old slavery has been broken, the battle with the sin is not altogether completed in Baptism; the admonitions in v. 12 etc., indicate what is left yet to be done. But the decisive victory has been won. The sin is dethroned, the new man has taken the place of the old man in us, and our task now is to prevent the sin from usurping that throne again.

[7] Death means release and acquittal from all further slaving. Paul says: “For he that died has been acquitted from the sin” (has been when he died and remains so ever after). The tyrant sin can get no further slaving from a dead slave. This is true when a slave dies physically, his master can get nothing more out of him. Paul applies this to our death in Baptism: the tyrant sin has lost a slave, — the sin can shout itself hoarse, it gets no obedience from the dead slave. From the first person plural Paul changes to the third person singular: “he that” etc. This makes the statement general and axiomatic. Paul uses the forensic verb δεδικαίωται, “he has been declared righteous,” that is “has been acquitted from the sin.” This verb gives the statement a legal sound; it is like a judge’s verdict before which the sin is helpless.

It ought to be plain that the apostle is not speaking about the guilt of the sinner and about his justification from that guilt. This subject is treated in ch. 3:20 etc. The death in Baptism is referred to. The great effect of our justification is this, our spiritual death to sin in and by Baptism.

[8] Δέ (neither “and” nor “but”) introduces something different (“moreover”), namely the other side, the living ushered in by this our dying in Baptism. **Moreover, if we died with Christ, we believe that we also shall live with him, [9] having come to know that Christ having been raised from the dead dies no more; death no more is lord over him. [10] For what he died, to the sin he died once for all; but what he lives, he lives to God. [11] Thus also do you on your part reckon yourselves to be dead to the sin, but living to God in connection with Christ Jesus. Once**

more, as in v. 5, Paul uses the “if” of reality, with the future tense in the apodosis. “If we died with Christ” includes all that has been said on this score, died to the sin (v. 2), were crucified, were entombed, were planted in the likeness of his death, “we believe that we also shall live with him.” Instead of asserting the fact: we shall live etc., Paul confesses faith in that fact, in which faith all his readers agree with him. We are to embrace by faith all the great facts of salvation and thus also to confess, “we believe.” This faith and this confession form the inner oneness of the Church. None of us should believe and confess anything to the contrary.

The future: “we shall also live with him,” is not to be dated at the end of the world and to be referred to our physical resurrection. This future tense begins at the moment of the death and speaks of our spiritual life here on earth. Σύν in both phrase and verb are mystical, as already explained. It is our connection “with” Christ in his death, his entombment, and his resurrection that makes our spiritual life the blessed reality that it is.

[9] Paul brings out fully Christ’s part in this our living. With εἰδότες, “having come to know,” he refers to the knowledge which is part of our believing or faith. Let no one slander this faith as a blind faith: its very basis and first essential is clear knowledge. Concerning Christ we know, that since he was raised from the dead, he dies no more. No more does death lord it over him. Once, when he assumed our sin and our guilt, he voluntarily stooped to the death power of sin. But his death atoned for all the sin and thus by dying Christ robbed death of all its power. Death thus can no longer touch Christ. These are the elementary facts known to every believer, who knows at all that Christ died for our sins and was raised up because his death had made full atonement. The great point here stressed is the resurrection which lifted Christ into a deathless life. Αὐτοῦ is genitive after a verb of ruling.

[10] “For” explains by putting the death and the life side by side: “For what he died, to the sin he died once for all, but what he lives, he lives to God.” The two neuter relatives ὃ do not mean “in that” he died — “in that” he lives (A.V.); or “the death” he died — “the life” he lives (R.V.). “What he died”: both his death and all that it involved: “what he lives” == both his life and all that his living now involves. “What he died, to the sin he died once for all” means that until the moment when he died Christ bore a relation to the sin, the sin had a claim upon him, for he had assumed the sin

with its guilt; but this came to an end once for all, — the moment he died, it was to the sin he died, he was for ever done with it.

Yet Christ's relation to sin and our relation to it differ vastly. We were sinners, helpless under its curse and dominion; he was the sacrifice for our sin, the sinless Lamb of God without spot or blemish who died for our sin. Because of this very difference, and because we were united to Christ's death, we were through with sin, just as Christ was through with it. As ὄ is the cognate object of the first ἀπέθανε, so this whole clause "what he died" is the cognate object to the second ἀπέθανεν. These tenses are historical aorists.

Now come durative present tenses: "what he lives, he lives to God," for his living goes on for ever. Both the death and the living refer to Christ's human nature. This helps us understand the relation expressed by the dative "to God." When the relation to sin ended in Christ's death which bore the sin away, he did not lay aside his human nature as though it had finished its purpose when he died for sin; by the resurrection and the ascension Christ's human nature was glorified, and now in his glorified humanity he is living to God. Both his death and his living pertain to us. As our entrance into communion with God is mediated by the death which Christ died, thus making an end of sin in us, so our continuation in this communion is mediated by the life which Christ now lives to God. Christ reaches out to us by means of his human nature through his death and his living to free us from sin and to sanctify us in a new life.

[11] Instead of proceeding with a further didactic comparison the apostle rounds out the paragraph with an effective hortation. First he bids his readers also on their part (emphatic ὑμεῖς) to reckon themselves to be dead to the sin. Αογιζεσθε must be the imperative; if it were indicative it would have to be the first person plural like all the preceding "we." The emphatic "you on your part" suits an imperative. Here also is no hortative subjunctive: "let us reckon ourselves." Paul lets his readers know that he does not need this hortation, he does most decidedly reckon himself to be dead to the sin. His readers and we should attain the same condition. The verb does not mean "to conclude" in mere logical fashion, but count on certain facts as facts, so as to act upon them because they are facts (durative imperative). "Take it ever and ever as a settled fact that you are dead to the sin, but alive to God in connection with Christ Jesus." Let the sinpower call,



coax, threaten you, you must be like a dead man from whom the sin gets in response not even as much as the quiver of an eye-lash.

Μέν... δέ balance the negative and the positive: as completely dead to the sin, so completely alive to God, even the slightest will and wish of his receiving instant, joyful response. “In connection with Christ Jesus,” with whom both our death in Baptism and our new life through Baptism connect us, we cannot do otherwise, — unless we would break away from him.

Ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ is the phrase so often used by Paul, here used for the first time in Romans. It is badly interpreted. Calling it mystical betrays the fact that mystical language is not even understood. Ἐν introduces no element. Paul wrote after Christ was glorified, but to restrict the phrase to the glorified Christ is misleading. Deissmann, who is so supercilious toward other students, perpetrates the following: as living creatures “in” the air, as fish “in” the water, as plants “in” the earth; man living and breathing “in” the air and the air also “in” him. As an example of crudity this is the climax, yet the man wrote a monograph on the phrase, and men like Robertson quote from it. The phrase simply means: “in connection with Christ Jesus,” or “in union and communion” with him. Ἐν is used in its first and original meaning. What forms this connection, the context invariably indicates. Often it is faith that puts us “in connection with (ἐν)” Christ. Here it most evidently is our Baptism. We need no book on the phrase, which also certainly is no more a “formula” than other frequently used phrases are.

## Homiletical Aid

During every church year at least one sermon should be preached on the subject of the Sacraments. This is one of the great texts of the New Testament. Every preacher should be glad to study it adequately and then to preach it to his congregation.

The subject of this chapter is Newness of Life and Sanctification, the fruit of justification. Baptism, as the washing of regeneration, saves both by justifying and by leading to sanctification. This text does not stress Baptism as to its justifying effect. In his sermon the preacher must add this, for its sanctifying effect rises out of its justifying effect. Paul has mentioned the

justification in 3:20 etc. The introduction to the sermon may speak of the justification.

A mistaken exegesis does damage all along the line. Thus the notion that at; here means “into Christ,” “into his death.” That idea has suggested to one preacher the theme: “The Meaning of Holy Baptism,” and his second part is: “That it grafts us into Christ.” Another preacher has these two parts: 1) A Baptism into his death; 2) A Baptism into his life. The outlines of others show similar traits. Some misconceive v. 5 “the likeness of his resurrection” as pointing to our resurrection on the last day. Thus we meet as the third part of some outlines: “The Hope of Eternal Life, which is Guaranteed by Christ’s Resurrection,” or “The Completion through the Glory of the Father,” or “The Hope of a Blessed Completion” of the Life in Christ. These unnecessary mistakes are easily avoided.

Baptism is a single act, without possibility of repetition. He who tries to repeat a validly administered Baptism enacts a travesty. This means that Baptism has a permanent effect, as strong as though I were baptized every day, yea every hour. The fact of this permanency must underlie all that is said in the sermon.

Beginning with this Sunday the epistle texts speak of the Child of God. Thus the first of these texts deals with Holy Baptism, for it is Baptism that makes us God’s children. Once baptized, you are to be God’s child for ever. Baptism washes away all the guilt of our sins through the blood and the death of the Savior; but it does more, it ushers us into a new life, the truly Christian life which every one of us must lead, if he truly means to be a child of God. Of course, a child of the world and of the devil will live as he pleases. This second great effect of Baptism is the subject of our text. After our sin and our guilt have been washed away, Baptism keeps us in the Christian life.

### **Baptism and the Christian Life.**

- I. In Baptism we die unto the sin. We are made like a corpse that is unresponsive to the great sin-power that would demand our obedience as its slave.
  1. What dies? “Our old man is crucified,” “The body of sin is put out of effect,” “we reckon ourselves dead unto the sin.” The old

desire to sin is killed.

2. What kills? We are crucified with Christ. Baptism joins us to Christ crucified, to his death, to his tomb, just as if we were crucified with him on his cross, died there with him, and then were laid with him into the tomb. He died physically to take away our sins; we spiritually so that we are like dead men whom the tyrant sin can no longer command as its slaves. Christ's death does this in us.
3. With what result? We are freed (v. 7), we are no longer slaves of the sin-power. If we still sin, these are sins of ignorance, weakness, precipitation, which daily repentance and confession remove.

But Baptism has another side as regards the Christian Life.

II. By Baptism we are alive to God. So alive that we joyfully and eagerly respond to every Word of God.

1. The new life. "We walk in newness of life," "in the likeness of his resurrection," "alive unto God in Christ Jesus." In us there is the joy to do all that pleases God and our Savior.
2. The power. "Through Jesus Christ our Lord," the power of his death and resurrection. Baptism joins us to him who dies no more, but ever lives to God. Thus joined to him, we are spiritually alive and furnish the full evidence of it.
3. The result. These effects of Baptism make us truly God's children. Rid of the old slave master, we have a loving heavenly Father. All the newness of our life is beautiful and blessed.

Ever let the power of your Baptism keep you in the new life as God's child!

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### **Christ's Way My Way.**

- I. With him I go down into the death.
- II. With him I rise up to the true life.

(Ahlfeld)

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## **The Baptized Christian.**

I. Dead to the sin. II. Alive to God.

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Many think very little of their Baptism, forget it altogether. In their lives some act as though they had never been baptized. Yet I have known persons who at the approach of death literally begged for Baptism. They did not want to die unbaptized. During all their past years they should have had both the pardon from sin in Baptism and also the power of the new life which Baptism grants. Appreciate your Baptism, as We consider

## **The Miracle of Christian Baptism.**

I. A miraculous connection is made.

1. Christ was crucified, dead, entombed, raised up from death over 1900 years ago. Yet your Baptism so connects you with Christ that you are nailed to his cross, die in his death, lie in his tomb, and are in the likeness of his resurrection.
2. How can a little water do that, or, for that matter, all the water in the world? It cannot. This is a miracle of grace. In Baptism there is the Word besides the water. The Word of grace works this miracle in your Baptism. By choosing water for the Sacrament Christ made it accessible to all, even to babes.
3. Christ's crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection atoned for sin, conquered death, and wrought life and salvation. Because of this you and I can through Baptism be so joined with Christ's crucifixion, etc., that we are crucified, etc., with him. This miracle is real and blessed beyond expression.

II. A blessed murder is committed.

1. In Baptism our old man is crucified with Christ. Thus we die with him and are entombed with him.
2. This is the old tyrant that firmly held us in sin and dragged us toward eternal damnation. Lo, through a handful of water and a few divine words the miracle is accomplished, he is murdered, crucified, and we are freed.
3. State it another way: we ourselves are dead and entombed in and with Christ's death and entombment, so that the old sin-power finds no more response in us than in a decayed corpse. This entire deliverance through a bit of water and a few divine words is a miracle indeed. Yet this is not the whole of it.

### III. A new life is wrought.

1. Christ who died was raised up nevermore to die. Baptism places us "in the likeness of Christ's resurrection." [In the exegesis we have explained why Paul does not use ἀνάστασις regarding us]. Baptism implants a new and spiritual life in us.
2. This is a miracle indeed that although wholly corrupt and eaten through with sin, you and I by so simple a means as Baptism should receive a life that is again pure, holy, and fit for heaven.
3. We can now live to God, respond to his Word and will, conquer sin and temptation, and if through weakness we fall, rise at once by repentance and confession. "We live with him," he shares his life with us. A blessed miracle indeed!

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Physically we are first alive and then we are dead. In Baptism we have almost the reverse, the murderous act of crucifixion crowned with the spiritual life that is to endure for ever.

### **Have You Been Crucified?**

- I. Look at your old man and what your Baptism did to him.
- II. Look at your spiritual life and how your Baptism planted you in the likeness of Christ's resurrection.

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The text naturally invites a two part division of the sermon, yet we may have more than two.

### **Baptism: The Story of Death and Life.**

- I. Alive to the sin.
- II. Dead to the sin.
- III. Dead to God.
- IV. Alive to God.

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### **How Can We Live Any Longer in the Sin?**

- I. The tyrant. The old man has been crucified.
- II. The Deliverer. Our Lord Jesus Christ crucified, dead, entombed, raised from the dead.
- III. The Baptism, placing us in connection with Christ's crucifixion, death, entombment, and the likeness of his resurrection.
- IV. The child of God. Dead unto the sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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### **Ever Rejoice in Your Baptism!**

I. Sin cannot condemn you. II. Sin cannot rule you.

G. in Magazin\_etc. vol. 8.

I have made the theme an imperative.

# The Seventh Sunday After Trinity. Rom. 6:19-23

## Slaves to Righteousness

Three consecutive texts are taken from Romans. The sequence in thought is obvious: last Sunday “dead to the sin,” but “alive to God” through Baptism, the entrance into the newness of life; this Sunday, no more slaves of the sin, but slaves of righteousness, and not the wages of sin, death, but the gift of God, eternal life. Sommer misunderstands the gospel when he correlates the epistle with it, claiming that the gospel deals with the preservation of the earthly life, beside which the epistle places the gift of the eternal life. The feeding of the five thousand, Mark 8:1-9, prepares for the great discourse on the Bread of Life, as John 6 teaches us. The miracle of the loaves and fishes which points us to the Bread of Life is well accompanied by these slaves whose wages are the gift of God, eternal life.

Our text forms the end of the sixth chapter which deals with Sanctification and Newness of Life as the Result of Justification by Faith. In this series of texts which deal with the Child of God (Sixth to Twelfth Sunday after Trinity) the last verses of Romans six draw a strong contrast between the two kinds of lives, the one the slave of the sin and the end death, the other the slave of God and the end everlasting life. How the norms of the religious will are here utilized by the apostle is obvious, — see *The Sermon* 262 etc. What normal, unblinded, and sane will would choose the former, the slavery of the sin, and not the latter, the slavery with life everlasting as the goal? It is the preacher’s task to drive home these strong opposites, securing the full volition in every one of his hearers.

Paul excuses himself for speaking of our state under grace and righteousness as God’s children in terms taken from our former state under the power of sin. It surely is highly paradoxical to speak of our condition as

children of God as if it too were an enslavement and made us slaves. Paul does it here in order to show strongly how our belonging to God is the utter opposite of our having once belonged to the sin. The basic thought, of course, is that we never are or can be independent. Our true place is with God, never under ἡ ἁμαρτία, the sin-power (note the article)-

**Humanly I am speaking, because of the weakness of your flesh.** This is the ordinary weakness that clings to all of us, against which we must always be on our guard. It manifests itself in our intellect, which loves to draw false deductions from the Gospel facts, deductions which have a show of logic and of soundness, but are covertly contrary to the facts. One way to meet this false reasoning is to state the facts in a rough, drastic fashion. That is what the apostle means by saying: “Humanly I am speaking to you.” When referring to “the weakness of your flesh” as the reason for speaking in this fashion Paul is not intimating that the Romans are on a low spiritual level. To such people one could not write a letter as grand and as exalted as this one. Many times he uses higher forms of language; he now descends to speaking ἀνθρώπινον, so that no one may possibly misunderstand.

Paul has already been speaking in this human fashion in v. 16-18. His present tense λέγω, “I am speaking,” includes these verses. With an explicative γάρ he repeats the previous thoughts in the human form, but now he uses the admonitory form: **For just as you presented your members as slaves to the uncleanness and the lawlessness for the lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to the righteousness for sanctification.** The human feature appears in paralleling the strongest opposites by speaking of two kinds of slaves, as if the devil could be placed beside God. In v. 13 the apostle approached this strong expression when he spoke of ἄπλα, presenting our members as “utensils.”

Our versions translate δοῦλοι “servants,” which is incorrect. These are “slaves” in the full and complete sense of that term. Recall that the Roman and even the Jewish world was filled with slaves and forget not their status. Even so δοῦλοι does not mean chiefly that the slaves labor hard. Many did, especially the galley slaves. The chief idea is that the slave has no will of his own but follows and obeys without hesitation or question the will of his master. This thought must always be retained. Paul is more detailed when he speaks of presenting “our members” as slaves. Of course, between



presenting ourselves and presenting our members as slaves the difference is only formal. For we present the members, not they themselves. These are all the bodily members and organs, hands and feet, eyes and ears, taste and smell, throat and stomach, sexual organs, etc.

What did we do at one time? Ourselves and all these members we presented as slaves to the uncleanness and the lawlessness for the lawlessness. These two terrible masters we willingly made the lords and masters of our bodily members that they might command them as they pleased. The reason for the neuter plural δοῦλα is the agreement with the neuter plural μέλη. Paul often uses “the sin” (almost a personification) to designate the power opposed to God and ruling in the world; he now employs two terms showing what “the sin” is, namely “the uncleanness and the lawlessness,” — note the articulation, again almost a personification. These were the former masters of our members, their slaves.

“The sin” is in one respect “the uncleanness,” for it reeks and stinks as does the worst filth. They who let their bodily members run at the beck and call of this master, whose name is uncleanness and stench, are certainly not to be envied, for all that this master orders is also unclean and foul. By “the uncleanness” is meant not merely the vices that the world finds filthy, but all sins. In God’s sight they are all utterly foul and thus intolerable, abominable. This filthiness of sin cannot be made too clear to our people. The lady may be washed, perfumed, clothed in finest silks in finest fashion, bedecked with jewels, yet her soul may not be given to God and her members will thus be foul with the filth of the sin that has her in its power. Filth belongs in a pit; perhaps for that reason hell is called a pit.

“The sin” in another respect is “the lawlessness,” namely the casting off of the law of God, a challenge to God’s law, rebellion against it, moral anarchy. We hear about the crimes of public enemy number one, number two, etc., and we shudder. These men trample under foot all the laws of our government, laugh at the idea of law and run their wild and deadly course. Yet they illustrate just what “the sin” is in this respect, it is “the lawlessness.” Since the master is lawless, all that he orders his slaves to do is lawless. Again, do not restrict your thoughts to crimes and to infractions of human laws, but consider God’s law with what it forbids in thought, word, and deed. This too should be brought fully to the consciousness of our people. The lawless man has the agents of the law on his back. Never

for a moment is he safe. Prison and execution await him. Thank God that you are free from these horrible masters, that they no longer control your bodily members, the instruments of your soul.

“For the lawlessness” emphasizes the truth that this is a definite vicious power in the world, and the phrase means that the interests of this power are served in order to increase its domain and the number of its slaves. Shall our bodily members be abused for such a purpose? Paul could also have added “for the uncleanness,” — he lets us make this addition.

Although it is addressed to true Christians, to say: “so now present,” seems to lower this act by making it a parallel to the criminal act. Yet the very act of paralleling moves the Christian ever to keep his members as slaves to God alone, and never to permit them even for a day or for an hour to sink back again into the slavery of “the uncleanness and the lawlessness.” To secure this practical result is the apostle’s aim. The aorist imperative is peremptory: “present once for all,” with decisive finality, no wavering about it. Yet, since it is addressed to Christians who have already obeyed this command, the aorist is constative, combining all that is done throughout the entire life into one act.

We are to present our members as slaves “to the righteousness,” to do the will of this master alone. Here the one term is enough. “The righteousness” is conceived as a power, the complete opposite of “the uncleanness and the lawlessness.” As these latter express what condemns them before God, so “the righteousness” expresses what is acceptable to God. The word is always forensic, always refers to a judge who pronounces a verdict in accord with the norm of right, the *6km*. To present our members as slaves to “the righteousness” means with all our members to do nothing but the will of “the righteousness,” which is the will of God. This is slavery, but it is voluntary slavery, the slavery which Paul is able to call an emancipation, a liberty. All men at last regret having been slaves to the uncleanness and the lawlessness, — who will describe the regrets and the remorse of hell? In the end all men delight to have been slaves of righteousness, — who can describe the bliss of the heavenly reward of grace?

Paul says: “to the lawlessness for the lawlessness,” but he does not say: “to the righteousness for the righteousness,” i.e. for the interest and the

augmentation of this blessed divine power. He writes “for sanctification,” without the article. Ἁγιασμός with its suffix -μός denotes activity, yet not our activity but God’s, exercised upon us. Thus the sense is passive. Noting the fact that to sanctify means to set apart for God, and that the Scriptures call us ἅγιοι, “saints,” sanctified ones, whom God has set apart for himself, we may circumscribe this phrase “for sanctification” as follows: “for (in the interest of) God’s work of setting us apart for himself also in our conduct.” This is the work God has set himself to do in us. Shall we oppose it? Instead of falling in line with God’s blessed work in us, shall we support the devil’s agencies in their work of destroying us? Only fools would do that. We usually call this work “sanctification in the narrow sense” and distinguish it from “sanctification in the wider sense” which includes also bringing us to contrition, conversion, faith, and thus the narrower sanctification of good works. This work is progressive, we grow in holiness. It is imperfect in this life, but attains perfectness when we enter the life to come.

[20] In further explanation Paul takes up first the state of the slaves of the sin, next (v. 22) the state of the slaves of God, and finally (V. 23) he summarizes both in a terse and effective manner. **For when you were slaves of the sin, you were free in regard to the righteousness.** True, you had this liberty before you became Christians, when you lived as “slaves of the sin.” You snapped your fingers at the commands and the threats of “the righteousness.” This was not your master, “the sin” was your lord, the will of this lord was your lord. This liberty, however, will not bear examination. Nobody can free himself from “the righteousness” and the divine verdict. He can only appear to do so, act so, think so; but in the end “the righteousness” will bring him to account before God’s judgment-bar. You may call this freedom, when you merely disregard “the righteousness,” but it is a sorry freedom indeed. Note that Paul now substitutes for “the uncleanness and the lawlessness” the single summary term “the sin”; that he substitutes for the members as δοῦλα the persons as such: “you were δοῦλοι (now the masculine). The dative of relation, τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ,” in regard to the righteousness” shows what kind of freedom this was.

Thank God, Paul can use the imperfect tenses in this statement! This slavery and this false liberty are ended.

**[21] What fruit then were you having at that time of those things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things — death. All**

one needs to ask is this little question: “What fruit were you having at that time?” The sense is not that Paul’s readers had some kind of fruit, but that they had absolutely none whatever. For we must note that Paul uses καρπός (“fruit” produced by trees, vines, fields) only in a good sense: “fruit of the spirit” (Gal. v. 22), “of the light” (Eph. v. 9), “of righteousness” (Phil. 1:11), and thus “the unfruitful works of the darkness” (Eph. v. 11), which has no “fruit” at all, and lest we be “unfruitful” we must do good works (Tit. 3:14). We thus understand Paul’s question regarding fruit. At that time the Romans had none. Nor were they exceptions while in their unconverted state. Without faith in Jesus Christ no man ever produced a single good fruit. Such a thing is utterly impossible. All the good works of the world are not fruit.

The relative clause does not give the answer. Paul does not say that the fruit which the Romans then had consisted of things of which now they are ashamed, i.e. of bad fruit.

Resolve ἔφ’ into ἐκείνων ἔφ’ οἷς, and note that ἐκείνων follows in the next clause. The claim that ἐπαισχύνεσθαι is never construed with its own preposition ἐπί lacks real proof. See the best dictionaries. The point here is that Paul does not say that the Romans are ashamed of the fruit which they had from their slavery to the sin, — they had none whatever; he says they are ashamed of “those things” (speaking of them as lying far in the past) which were so entirely fruitless. That they were thus utterly fruitless is evidenced (γάρ) by the terrible fact that their end is death. No copula, only the terrible predicate — θάνατος.

**[22] But now having been liberated from the sin, and having been enslaved to God, you are having your fruit for sanctification, and the .end — life eternal.** A mighty change took place, a glorious liberation or emancipation from the sin, this tyrant power. Here Paul need not detail how this liberation was wrought. The aorist passive participle implies that God acted as the emancipator. But paradoxical as it may sound, this emancipation was a new enslavement: “having been enslaved to God,” again an aorist passive with God as the agent. The two acts are really only the two sides of one act. By being freed from the one master we become slaves of the other. It is a poor fiction that a man thinks he is his own master; he never is or can be. Either he belongs to “the sin” (and the devil), or he belongs to God. *Tertium non datur.*

Now in this divine slavery there is fruit at last. Paul's readers were having it at this very time. Once more we have the phrase εἰς ἁγιασμόν in the same sense as in v. 19. Since "sanctification" is God's action upon us, we must identify: our fruit 2 good works == sanctification. In other words, God produces the fruit in us. This consists of Christian virtues and graces implanted in us by God (Gal. v. 22-24), from which spring thoughts, words, and deeds acceptable to God. And what about the end to which this enslavement brings us? "Life eternal" names it, the glorious life with God in heaven.

[23] One more γάρ brings the final explanation. It is typical of Paul's mind that he brings the discussion down to a final point beyond which nothing more can be said. **For the wages of the sin — death, but the gracious gift of God — life eternal in connection with Christ Jesus our Lord.** Regarding both the slavery of the sin-power and the slavery of God Paul has used τὸ τέλος, "the end," the final goal. Yet "the end" of the one is "wages," and "the end" of the other is "the gracious gift of God."

Note well that Paul does not say: "the wages of *our sins* is death," but: "the wages of *the sin* is death." Since v. 12 Paul speaks of "the sin" as a monstrous deadly power. This tyrant pays wages, namely death. But slaves are never paid wages for the work they do. If slaves and wages go together, the slaves of God would also receive wages. The matter is not helped by calling ὀφώνια "subsistence money," such as soldiers received for their rations; for this would be strange subsistence, paid out at the end and then consisting of death.

Adam earned these wages. He was not a slave of the sin when he sinned and the wages he earned was death. See v. 12. We by our sinning need not now earn death, Adam did that for us. What then about our own sins? They are the proof that we have remained in Adam's sin, and that the wages he earned await us. We know why they were not paid out sooner. The delay is granted in order to give us an opportunity to die to the sin (V. 2), to escape the payment of these wages, to become slaves to God, and thus to obtain life eternal.

Long before we were born Adam did what he did, earning death for all of us. But long before we were born Christ also did what he did, earning life eternal for all of us. Yet the χάρισμα of life eternal is not made ours in the

same way as Adam's sin, guilt, and death were made ours (5:15-16: "not as... so also"). Automatically the death passed on to all men; the charisma, so much greater that it can deliver from that death, even as it was earned for us by one infinitely greater than Adam, becomes ours only by means of personal justification. "Wages" that we earned would be the wrong word entirely. It comes to us as a charisma, a gracious gift only. What then about our works as slaves to God? They are the evidence that we have left "the sin" and become God's slaves, and they are treated as such evidence in the final judgment. Unearned by us, through grace alone, as a pure gift we receive this life. While it is ours already here on earth, "the end" makes it ours in a final and inamissible way, coupled also with eternal glory.

Read as belonging together: "life eternal in connection with Christ Jesus our Lord." This great  $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$  phrase is explained in v. 11 of the preceding text. Modifying the predicate of the sentence, the phrase by way of the predicate applies also to the subject, "the gracious gift of God." As such a gift its reception is involved, and this means by way of our faith. The context always reveals what connection  $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$  indicates. "Christ Jesus our Lord" is the full soteriological title: office — person — personal relation expressed confessionally. To say "our" is to confess him.

The Christian who apprehends what Paul here sets forth will not so much as permit the thought to cross his mind that in some way he might continue in 'sin (v. 1), or that because he is not under law but under grace he might sin (v. 15). The perfection with which the apostle answers the questions in v. 1 and v. 15 strikes us with greater force when we pause and ask ourselves how we would answer these questions without Paul and from our own apprehension of the truth.

## Homiletical Aid

Preach no negative sermons like this one taken from Nebe:

### Whither Does the Sin Drive Us?

I. Into unrighteousness. II. Into slavery. III. Into great shame. IV. Into eternal death.

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Two parts pasted together never form a theme. The sermon is left twins. You have two little sermons that pretend to be one. Yet von Staehlin is quoted by Sommer as being helpful to preachers:

**What have you of the Sin and what have you of the Righteousness?**

- I. Of the sin you have the slavery and death.
- II. Of the righteousness you have liberty and blessed slavery.

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The devil wanted to be like God, dependent on himself alone. The same delusion, when men imagine they can be independent of God. Christianity offers nothing of the kind.

**The Christian a Slave.**

“Servant” too weak. Define just what a slave is.

- I. An escaped slave.
  - 1. Once a slave to “the sin,” this deadly power and master that Adam brought into the world.
  - 2. That means a slave to “the uncleanness and the lawlessness,” these twin powers — describe the moral foulness and the rebelliousness of sin.
  - 3. That means a life in things of which we are now ashamed, thoughts, words, and deeds according.
  - 4. That means freedom from “the righteousness,” God’s blessed power of right, a delusive freedom, the very essence of the worst slavery.
  - 5. The end, the wages of death, earned by Adam. The payment delayed in order to give us time to escape. Slaves never get wages. “Wages” refer to Adam.

- II. Under a new master.
    1. The great emancipation wrought by this master.
    2. The new slavery under our true, loving, magnanimous master.
    3. Our occupation with pure, loyal, honorable things, all our thoughts, words, and deeds according.
    4. God's work of "holiness" in us.
    5. The end no "wages," but the astounding gift of eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.
- 

St. Paul excuses himself for making a comparison where really there is none. For how can the power of sin, operating in this world, be compared with God, our Creator and Redeemer? Yet when we hold some things side by side, like the apostle does here in our text, our foolish minds will see the folly of some of its notions and argument, will drop them, and let the light of divine truth lead us aright. So I ask you:

### **Are You Willing to See the Members of Your Body Slave: to the Sin?**

- I. A sight not pleasant, when you contemplate 1) the vicious master, 2) the vile demands, 3) the deadly wages at the end.
  - II. Alongside the other sight, when you contemplate 1) the divine Master, 2) the tasks of righteousness and holiness, 3) the priceless gift of grace at the end.
- 

We Christians can be called "slaves to God" as this is done in our text. Yet in reality, as also this text shows, we are

### **Slaves That Are Not Slaves.**

- I. We were emancipated (v. 22a) from what was slavery indeed, as described here by the apostle, — elaborate the main points and how we



were freed.

- II. We are separated unto God, for “holiness,” ἁγιασμός, is what God does in you, of which your fruit in righteousness is only the evidence.
- III. We have waiting for us God’s glorious gift, — and gifts as immense as this are not given to slaves. We are slaves indeed, but the strangest kind of slaves, such as the world does not know. The secret lies in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Note: Do not repeat the superficial mistake of Seybold and others who speak of “sanctification” as a work that we are to do.

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Any number of non-Christians claim to be just as good as Christians, if not far better than many. This claim eases their consciences, and need not distress us in the least. Lift the lid the way the apostle St. Paul does in our text and take a good look beneath.

### **No One in the Whole World is Comparable to a True Christian.**

- I. God has emancipated him. Sketch from St. Paul’s words what this means.
- II. God is setting him apart for himself by his work of sanctifying, which is progressive, through Word and Sacrament by the Spirit.
- III. God is using his bodily members in his service, eyes to read his Word, ears to hear it, mouth to confess it and praise him, etc., etc.
- IV. God is enabling him to bear fruit, in all good works to be used as evidence of his faith and his faithfulness in the final judgment (Matt. 25:31 etc.).
- V. God has ready for him the gracious gift of eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Conclusion: Where is the unbeliever, the worldling, the Jew, the Mohammedan, the Free Mason, in a word the non-Christian or sham Christian who dares to claim these acts of God for himself?

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## **The Apostle's Paradoxical Classification of Men.**

- I. Free, yet miserable slaves.
- II. Slaves, yet truly free.

I change the author's "servants" into "slaves," for this is the Greek word and almost necessary for the sense.

J. H. Hartenberger, *Concordia Pulpit*, 1933.

# **The Eighth Sunday After Trinity.**

## **Rom. 8:12-17**

### **“Abba Father!”**

This text forms an admirable succession to the two preceding ones. The text for the previous Sunday viewed the Christians as “slaves,” whose will is not their own but that of their heavenly Master. But that is only one side of the status of Christians, and its limitations are clearly indicated in that text when we are reminded of all that God has done, still does, and yet will do for these slaves, all so great and blessed that no other slaves ever received the like. Now the other side comes to View. We have the spirit of adoption whereby we cry: “Abba Father!” We are “the children of God,” and thus “heirs,” “joint-heirs with Christ.” In addition this text speaks of the Holy Spirit who made and who keeps us children of God — a most necessary thought in this sub-cycle.

The epistle corresponds well with the gospel for the day, Matt., 7:15-23. As true children we cry, “Abba Father,” and are heard, but many cry, “Lord, Lord,” now and will continue to do so even on the last day, and the Lord disowns them utterly, nor will all their grand works count in his sight. The Gospel presents the false prophets, who are the opposite of the Holy Spirit, the guide whom we children of God follow. These prophets are themselves worthless trees producing worthless fruit, and their deluded followers are the same. The epistle certainly corresponds well with the gospel.

Rom. 8:1-17 is the section which deals with the Guidance of the Spirit. Our text forms the last portion of this section. In v. 9 the apostle states that the Spirit of God dwells in us Christians, and v. 11 he adds the great prospect awaiting us, the resurrection of our mortal bodies at the last day. The one thing then necessary for us is to let the Spirit of God lead us as the

children of God, so that this great hope may be realized in us as the joint-heirs of Christ.

**Accordingly therefore, brethren, debtors we are, not to the flesh, to be living according to flesh. [13] For if you keep living according to flesh, you are about to die; but if with (your) spirit you keep mortifying the doings of the body, you will live.** Ἄρα οὖν is a favorite combination of Paul's and it introduces a deduction; "accordingly therefore." Here the deduction is the truth that we are debtors not to live to the flesh, and it is made from v. 9-11, the fact that Paul's readers are not in flesh but in spirit and that in this our spiritual life even our mortal bodies shall be glorified by the Holy Spirit. The apostle really puts the question: Do you want to keep the spiritual life and thus attain the blessed resurrection (comp. Phil. 3:11)? His answer amounts to this: Then you must not live to the flesh, but must put to death what would destroy your life. The wording is exquisite: to live in one way, and thereby coming to die — to make die, and thereby continuing to live.

As always, the address, "brethren," draws the readers to Paul that they may heed him, who as a brother is one of them. What might be put into a command or into a strong admonition is simply stated as a moral fact. It is noteworthy that both the Old and the New Testament avoid the word "duty." Only as an English translation does it creep into the A.V. of Luke 17:10 and Rom. 15:27, and into the R.V. in the former passage. *Pflicht*, "duty," is a favorite word with the old rationalists and the philosophers of their day, with whom we admit not even linguistic relationship. Paul writes: "debtors are we," people under an obligation, and this not an obligation impressed upon us from the outside, but from the inside, from our own nature, as being people who are spiritual. The dative "not to the flesh" is a litotes; our obligation is to live to the spirit. The epexegetical infinite explains: "to be living according to flesh," to be regulating our life in conformity with the norms and principles (κατά) that harmonize with What deserves the name "flesh," i.e. our inborn depraved and sinful nature. "Flesh" is here used in the moral sense and is the opposite of the new life of faith which is called "spirit," the product of the Holy Spirit. Paul uses the verb "to be living," which is stronger than "to be walking," because of the contrast between "to live" and "to die" or "to mortify."

[13] Much might be said on the question as to why our obligation is not to the flesh, to obey its dictates, all of which would be pertinent; yet all this would really deal only with intermediate points. The apostle is bound to present the ultimate reason. This is so powerful and convincing that his mind at once leaps to it and lets it suffice: “For if you keep living (durative present) according to flesh, you are about to die.” The condition of reality states the matter in the strongest way, and avoids what the condition of expectancy (ἐάν with the subjunctive) would imply, namely that the apostle expects some of his readers to live according to flesh and thus to die. What he expects is the opposite. Paul’s factual condition rests on the fact that the world is full of people who keep living according to flesh, their entire nature being flesh. One by one they are dying, i.e. dropping into eternal death.

Let us get the force of μέλλετε ἀποθνήσκειν. This periphrastic future denotes no more than certainty. Like the condition of reality, it states only the impending fact. Living according to flesh is headed straight for death, cannot be and is not headed for anything else. Also, uéMere implies immanence; for no. one knows but what he will die thus in a day or two: death impends. It hangs over his head like the sword of Damocles. This statement of fact is enough. Some are not satisfied. They speak as if Paul had written Bet with the infinitive: “it is necessary for you to die,” “you must die,” and their idea is expressed in an important dictionary: *infolge goettlichen Ratschlusses*, due to a divine decree. But μέλλετε contains no such thought, rather the opposite: you yourselves make death hang over your heads. “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help,” Hos. 13:9. “He that doeth it destroyeth his own soul,” Prov. 6:32. “Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity,” Hos. 14:1.

“You are about to die” is intensive: to die for ever. If you live in spiritual death, eternal death waits for you around the corner. Note the clash in the terms: “if you live, you are about to die.” In the next sentence these terms are reversed, thus emphasizing the clash. Men ever think that they are really living when they give way to the flesh, whereas in reality they are headed straight for eternal death. Paul states the fact as a fact, and thus it is most certain. At the same time he states this fact as a motive, one that must impel every Christian away from all yielding to the flesh. The motive is most powerful. Who wants presently to end in eternal death? We have become

Christians for the very purpose of escaping this death. How then shall we live so as after all to run into this death?

Paul does not proceed to complete his thought in a formal way by telling us that we are debtors to the spirit. His thought moves faster, he at once combines living to the spirit with its blessed result: “but if with (your) spirit you keep mortifying the doings of the body, you shall live.” The simple dative πνεύματι denotes means: “by means of what is spirit” (qualitative, general). Here the clashing terms are reversed: “keep mortifying” (condition of reality), keep rendering dead — “shall live,” this future tense is a sure and certain promise. Paul does not write: “you shall be about to live,” as he writes: “you shall be about to die.” He cannot do so. His wording is most exact. The difference lies in the starting point. Eternal death sets in when we pass into the other world, until that hour we may escape by repentance. But eternal life is now already ours by faith, note the present durative subjunctives in John 3:15-16. The spiritual life we now have shall endure for ever. When we pass into the other world, we do not get another life. The life we now have simply passes into glory, into which also the body passes in due time.

There is a living that brings on death; there is a dying that keeps alive for ever. The clash in terms is brought to its climax. For the latter is not merely a dying, it is a continuous putting to death, θανατόω. Paul might have written: “if you keep mortifying the flesh,” for this is what we really are to do. Gal. v. 24 speaks of crucifying the flesh. Paul advances the thought; the flesh loves to use our body and our bodily members to do its bidding. So he writes: “mortify the doings of the body.” The verb πράσσω and the plural noun πράξεις often carry an evil connotation: “to perpetrate,” “perpetrations.” In this life we Christians cannot get rid of the flesh entirely. It lurks in us and tries to stir up our bodily members to all kinds of perpetratiOns. That this action of the flesh in us involves also the mind and the soul is evident, for the soul animates the body and its members. So we have a constant task before us: mortifying the evil deeds of the body, prompted by the flesh still in us. This is done by constant repentance, by crushing the provocations and the solicitations of the flesh, and by forcing the body and its members to serve God (6:19, “yield your members slaves to the righteousness for sanctification”).

You cannot reform the flesh, the old man, the old Adam. You cannot induce the flesh to do good works. All efforts in this direction are worse than futile. All you can do is to take the club of the law and to keep killing. This is not a pleasant experience, but you neglect it at your peril. Paul says in 1 Cor. 9:27 that he gives his body a black eye, ὑπωριάζω, “I hit it under the eye,” i.e. I knock it out. By no means use the Gospel on the flesh! “Spirit” is the opposite both of “the body” and of the flesh. This signifies our new nature or life implanted in us by the Holy Spirit. It is not the Holy Spirit as the A.V. wrongly translates. For it is impossible to speak of the Third Person of the Godhead as the opposite of “the flesh” still active in us, and still worse, if that were possible, as the opposite — site of our body, the avenue or means through which the flesh still works. The canon also stands, that we never use the Holy Spirit as a means (πνεύματι the dative of means), he uses us, our spirit, etc., as his means. Because we are in this sinful world, with temptations all around us, it is easy for the flesh to stir up our bodily members to sin.

The combat is a mortal one: either we keep on with the killing, or are ourselves killed and dragged into eternal death. That means, our “spirit” must be strong, virile, a constant conqueror. The Holy Spirit has placed our “spirit” on the throne of our inner being, not to be a weakling king, but to rule mightily over the body in constant triumph. The more our “spirit” rules thus, the more will also our body become the temple of the Holy Spirit in true sanctification. It is a mistake to despise the body and its members. There is much about the body in its present state that is not lovely. Its sweat is acrid, its excretions are foul, its diseased conditions are repulsive. Yet the Spirit will raise up this vile body to glory (v. 11). It too is God’s creation, although now sadly infected by sin. The modern morality degrades the body to the brute and animal level by giving the bodily desires full sway as being only “natural,” amoral, as “living our own life.” This morality scoffs at the resurrection of the body; its wisdom is: once dust, then nothing but dust for ever. The Scriptures subject our body to our regenerate spirit, and make our members slaves to God (6:13). This alone is “life.”

[14] With another explanatory γάρ Paul shows what we really are when we live thus. **For as many as are being led by God’s Spirit, these are God’s sons. [15] For we did not receive a spirit of slavery again unto fear, but we did receive a spirit of adoption, in which we cry, Abba**

**Father!** “As many as” is little more than a variation of the preceding “if” clauses of reality. Paul does not mean that perhaps some of the Romans were not being led by God’s Spirit, for in v. 15 he states that we, they and he, received a spirit of adoption. Ὅσοι means “only such,” but also “all such.” From what our spirit is to do we advance to what God’s Spirit does, for he alone enables our spirit to do what the apostle states. Unfortunately the A.V. is full of confusion as regards “Spirit” and “spirit,” although the apostle writes clearly, always, as here, designating the Spirit so as to distinguish him from our “spirit.”

In all that our spirit does God’s Spirit is the *causa efficiens*. We have the dative to indicate the agent: “are being led by God’s Spirit.” The present tense is durative: he leads us continuously. This statement is often badly misunderstood and is taken to mean that in an immediate way, without the Word, by speaking directly to our hearts God’s Spirit leads us. This is the conviction of many *Schwaermer* (fanatics), and appears as the result of the Calvinistic doctrine that the Spirit does not need the Word or any means for his working. The result is that often men follow their own hallucinations and imagine that they are directed by the Spirit. The Spirit indeed dwells in us (v. 9), and does so by inward prompting, but never apart from the written Word. This does not mean that he prompts us only when we have the open Bible in our hands and are reading its pages. The Word itself, as written in the Bible, is also in us. It abides in us, John v. 38. It is in our memory, it saturates our whole mind, it molds and controls our thinking. It is the same Word as that found on the printed pages of the Book; we can verify the Word in us at any time by comparing it with the written Word. This is most necessary, lest we make some serious mistake. So we know indeed when we are led by God’s Spirit, namely when his Word leads us. Any leading that neglects, omits, disregards, contradicts the Word is not from God’s Spirit, but from some evil spirit or from men.

When Paul says: “these (only these, yet all these) are God’s sons,” he opens a new vista, an angle he has not touched as yet, one that is most delightful to every Christian, most rich in motivation for living not according to the flesh but according to the spirit. See how natural it is that God’s Spirit should ever lead God’s sons. God’s Spirit made them God’s sons, — how could he ever abandon them? It is he who must lead them and shape their entire conduct. If some other spirit led them, or if they followed



their own course (Is. 53:6), how could they be God's sons? Only fools imagine that they can run with the world and obey its voice and then at last have God receive them as his sons.

The right word is υἱοί, "sons." While it is a synonym of τέκνα, "children," the difference should yet be noted. Though "sons" is masculine, the word suggests no idea of sex; Gal. 3:26-28: "We are all the υιοι of God ("children" in the A.V. is incorrect) . . . neither male nor female." "Sons" corresponds to the idea of "adoption," "children" (τέκνα) to the idea of the new birth (regeneration). "Sons" is opposed to "slaves" (V. 15 "a spirit of slavery"; comp. John 8:35); "children" connotes dearness. "Sons" corresponds with the thought of conduct, for a son should act the part expected of him in relation to his father: a king's son must act as behooves a prince. "Child," sometimes also diminutive τεκνίον, "little child," conveys the thought of dependence, even of immaturity. Each word has its own flavor, also in English, and the apostle uses each with exactness. "God's sons" — What an exalted position! The world does not rank us thus. Even we Christians often have too low an estimate of ourselves. We need this text to enlighten us.

[15] "For" explains that we are indeed "God's sons." When we became Christians "we did not receive a spirit of slavery again unto fear." In a previous chapter (6:22) we are indeed called God's slaves, but slaves whom he has emancipated. It is a different thing entirely to have "a spirit of slavery again unto fear" (read this as one concept), also "again unto fear" belongs together. Such a slavery-spirit again unto fear would be the duplicate of the spirit of all non-Christians, whose conscience, especially on certain occasions, fills them with dread of the divine judgment. Men put on a bold front and talk with a loud voice, but "conscience doth make cowards of us all" until we are freed of fear by the Spirit.

Note that Paul repeats the verb: "on the contrary (ἀλλά), we did receive a spirit of adoption" etc. "Sons" harmonizes with "adoption," lit. υἱοθεσία (a compound of υἱός), placing as a son. Once we were not sons, then God made us his sons by adopting us. We received from him in our hearts a corresponding spirit, "in connection with which (ἐν) we now cry to him Abba Father," and as a Father to us, his adopted sons, he ever hears our cry. The effort is made to dissociate the forensic act of justification from this adoption and to make the adoption a process within us. Yet in the case of

every legal adoption a declaration has to be made stating that the son is adopted as a son. It leads to nothing to investigate the methods of adoption which were in use in Paul's time among Jews, Greeks, or Romans. The idea of adoption is far more ancient. The mystery cults are also introduced, but Cremer-Koegel rightly states that the Greek language gave Paul only the word "adoption"; as regards an adoption by God the Greek mind knew nothing. The A.V. has the strange rendering, "Spirit of adoption." From Gal. 4:6 we see that because we are sons, God gave us his Spirit; hence that his giving us his Spirit did not constitute the act of adoption.

In connection with this spirit of adoption (qualitative genitive) we exercise the right and the high prerogative of sons, we cry to God whenever the need arises: "Abba Father." We alone, as "sons," have this right. Should any others attempt to exercise it, they would receive the reply: "I never knew you." Thus when Unitarians, Universalists, modernists, sometimes Free Masons address their God as "Father," they neither mean the Triune God nor are acknowledged and heard by him as sons. "Sons of God" — there is no higher position or title for mortal man. We might say "princes of heaven." Paul does say "heirs of God, joint-heirs of Christ." By adoption alone can anyone become a son of God; there is no other way. God's sons alone have received "a spirit of adoption," the inward new life and its spiritual relationship, conscious of its sonship, of its new and blessed right ("the entrance by faith into this grace in which we stand," v. 2) to draw near to God as our Father. The apostle uses no mild word like "address" God, "pray" to God, "Abba Father."

Κράζω is really "to yell," to shout. The word fits a boy yelling in distress: "Father, father!" Despite this strong verb, some would exclude audible crying and would substitute inaudible speaking in the heart. On the other hand, some think of congregational praying. With this crying to God in distress Paul indicates the open evidence of our sonship. We exercise our right as sons. There is here no thought that we indeed cry, but that God does not hear and answer us. Then our sonship would be no sonship, we should still be far from God. In this word "cry" lies the promise that our cry is answered by our great Father.

"Abba Father!" recalls Mark 14:16, Christ's prayer of distress in Gethsemane, together with Heb. v. 7 the fact that this prayer was offered up "with strong crying (χρᾶνγῆ allied to κράζω) and tears." The nominative 6

Harrie is entirely regular as an apposition to the vocative Ἀββᾶ. It is the repetition of the Aramaic and the Greek terms for Father that calls for explanation. It occurs also in Gal. 4:6. The best explanation goes back to Mark who loved to report the original Aramaic words. In recounting the Gethsemane story Mark tells his Greek readers that Jesus cried “Abba,” but adds to the Aramaic word its Greek equivalent. Others had done this before Mark wrote. Thus “Abba Father” became a stereotyped form of prayer in the Church. Other Aramaic terms passed unchanged into Greek and into other languages, such as Amen, Hosanna, Hallelujah; only in “Abba Father” the duplication occurs, combining the word dear to the Jewish ear with its Greek equivalent. Yet the latter we translate with the English “Father.”

How can sons of God ever act as debtors to the flesh?

[16] “Sons,” however, includes far more. **The Spirit himself testifies together with our spirit, that we are God’s children; [17] but if children, also heirs, — God’s heirs and Christ’s joint-heirs, if indeed we suffer with him, in order that we may also be glorified with him.** Paul has no connective. In English this means nothing, in the Greek it acts like an arresting finger and draws special attention to the unconnected sentence.

When crying “Abba Father” we ourselves act as sons of God. That we have the right so to act, and that we are the sons of God, is true indeed. Yet may we not have our doubts? Especially in times of distress, when we indeed cry, “Father” but seem to receive no answer. Is not the world full of self-deluded men who think that they are God’s own when they are nothing of the kind? The Jews were sure Abraham was their father and God their heavenly Father, yet Jesus proved to them that the very opposite was the fact, that the devil was their father, John 8:33-44. How can we be certain that we are not under a similar delusion?

This brings us to the subject of evidence regarding which the ordinary English mind is weak. Throughout the Scriptures the sufficiency of testimony and evidence is stressed. Study Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 16:16; 26:60; John v. 31-37; 8:14-18; 2 Cor. 13:1; Heb. 10:28; Rev. 11:3; 22:6 etc., (God through his angel) and v. 16 etc., (Jesus the second witness). Never is one witness enough, there must be at least two. In the passages taken from John we see that Jesus ever meets this requirement. This requirement dare not be brushed aside as a mere legal formality or technicality. This

requirement is the legal rule because it belongs to the very nature of testimony. Our own personal conviction, that we are the sons and children of God, is not enough, especially in a matter so vital as this which involves eternity itself. We must have a second witness.

We have this second Witness: “The Spirit himself testifies together with our spirit, that we are God’s children.” The Spirit utters his testimony to this effect in the written Word, in a thousand places which apply to us as believers in Christ Jesus. Do not for a moment think of this testimony as given by the Spirit apart from the written Word, outside of it, or above it, by an immediate speaking in our hearts. Such supposed testimony is *Schwaermerei* (fanaticism) and is evidence not only of a spiritual but also of a mental pathological condition. To be sure, the Spirit speaks in our hearts and in this way testifies to us; but he speaks only through the written Word, and we are able at all times to verify his testimony by means of Scripture.

This testimony is given by a second person and it reaches us from the outside. But may not this written Word be misread, misunderstood, perverted? Do not thousands read it and imagine that it declares them to be children of God, when it declares nothing of the kind? True enough. Every true testimony may be abused. We see our lawyers doing that in our courts. But true testimony remains what it is in spite of all abuse. For this very reason the Spirit’s testimony is written black on white. It speaks in a thousand places with a mighty cumulative voice. It thus testifies against every abuse or perversion which may be attempted. Moreover, this testimony stands unchanged. We can go back to it any time, again and again. God’s children thus have no difficulty in understanding the Spirit’s testimony regarding themselves. The word of Jesus is axiomatic: “He that is of God heareth God’s words” as they testify, John 8:47.

It is claimed that the Spirit’s testimony comes first, and that the testimony of our own spirit comes second and rests upon that of the Spirit. This is theorizing. Paul has the factual order. The Spirit first takes the Word as a means of grace and by its operative power converts, justifies, regenerates us, and thus enables our spirit to know itself as a child of God and to testify to that effect. Thereupon the Spirit takes the Word as his own voice of testimony regarding what he has wrought in us. He leads us into all the Scriptures and lets us hear this testimony of his regarding us and all God’s true children. Of course, these two testimonies agree perfectly. We

can compare and test them over and over again, answer every question, remove every doubt, fill our hearts with boundless joy. Ἐσμεν is placed first because it denotes existence and because it has the emphasis. Now Paul uses τέκνα Θεοῦ yet not in contrast to υἱοὶ Θεοῦ, but in amplification: “sons” as adopted, yea, “children” as born by regeneration. Both are true and together so join us to God that we are debtors to him alone and to the highest degree, not to live according to flesh as before, but according to the new spirit born in us.

[17] At once Paul states the supreme result of our childhood: “but if children, also heirs.” In Gal. 4:7: “if a son, also an heir.” It is a mistake to claim that in these statements the distinction between “son” and “child” is wiped out. Here in Romans Paul could have continued with “sons.” Sons inherit legally, children naturally. In our case adoption and regeneration both apply and the inheritance is accordingly. To add “children” where inheritance is introduced enriches the thought. “Children” are dear to the Father who grants them the inheritance.

Μέν... δέ produce a beautiful balance in the Greek which we cannot even imitate in English: “God’s heirs, and Christ’s joint-heirs.” The genitives denote possession: God has us as his heirs, Christ has us as his co-heirs. In Heb. 9:16 etc., the idea of a testator and a testament is fully carried out; here the imagery stops with children and heirs. We inherit the promise. What God has promised his dear children in the world to come is our inheritance. We still wait to have this turned over to us, but its transfer is absolutely certain. Comp. Luke 15:31.

“Christ’s joint-heirs” amplifies and elucidates “God’s heirs,” for only as Christ’s co-heirs can we be God’s heirs. Christ is the supreme Heir (Matt. 21:38; Heb. 1:2). He has already entered upon the inheritance. By calling us his joint-heirs we are not placed on a level with him. We do not inherit as he did; we inherit only by being joined to him and by partaking of his inheritance. Think of it, — to be God’s heirs! Still more stupendous, — an inheritance fit for God’s Son, Christ’s joint-heirs! Who would follow the flesh and cease to be such an heir? Christ, however, is the Heir by way of his human nature, of course, as joined in the personal union to his divine nature (Phil. 2:9 etc.). Not for himself, but for us Christ became the Heir. Through his human nature the inheritance is open to us and is made ours. 1 John 3:2-3.

The clause with εἴπερ (like the one in v. 9) does not question the fact to which it refers as if some did not so suffer, but emphasizes it: “if indeed we suffer with him,” as we most assuredly do. Paul mentions this suffering because it is preliminary to the glorification, when our inheritance shall be consummated. Yet were not Christ’s sufferings ended long ago? The thought is not that Christ suffers now and that thus we suffer with him. His completed sufferings made Him the supreme Heir. By faith we are joined to this divine Sufferer and reap the benefit of his finished suffering. But in this wicked world such a union with Christ brings upon us sufferings like those he had to bear while here on earth, which we suffer for Christ’s sake, 2 Cor. 4:10; 1:10 etc.; Phil. 3:10; 1 Pet. 4:13; John 15:18 etc.

Quite different are the sufferings brought upon us by our sins, 1 Pet. 2:20; 4:15. Different, too, are the common creature-sufferings with which Paul deals in v. 18 etc. None of these are suffered for Christ’s sake. Most people make too free with what we call “the cross.” This consists only of sufferings born for Christ’s sake, for the Gospel’s sake, for confessing him, for refusing to disobey him, Matt. 10:38; 16:24; Gal. 6:12. I fear that at present we are not called upon to endure much suffering of this sacred kind, and when some of it comes to us, we set up great complaint as if a grave injustice were done to us. Stop calling every ache and pain a cross and do not speak of one who has been sick severely and for a long time and who has finally died as a great cross-bearer.

We now suffer persecutions and inflictions for Christ’s sake, “in order that we may also be glorified with him,” aorist to indicate the one future act, and passive because God will glorify us as he did Christ. This includes body and soul, the soul when we die, the body at the last day (v. 11) . To be joined with Christ, the Heir, in glory, without being joined to him here below in suffering, is impossible. No cross, no crown. 2 Tim. 4:7-8.

Here is the climax of the motive for our being debtors to live not to the flesh, but for our joyfully following the Spirit’s guidance.

## Homiletical Aid

Were you startled last Sunday to hear that we Christians are to be slaves to God? You may well be startled again today, for now you hear that we

Christians are God's own sons. This sounds paradoxical, contradictory, yet it is perfectly true, and the two ideas harmonize perfectly. Slaves means that God's will is to be wholly our will, and sons means we must be wholly one with God as our Father. The sin-power is never to be your master to bring you to eternal death. God alone is your Master to give you for Christ's sake the inestimable gift of eternal life. Our present text makes plain the blessedness of our state by showing us this our state in another light. Behold, we are

### **God's Sons, God's Children.**

#### I. The astounding fact.

It sounds incredible to us sinners. — Especially when we realize that this makes God our Father and us princes of heaven. — Yet it is a fact, God has adopted us and made us his sons (v. 15), we have been reborn and have become his children — God has made us his sons, his children. This is the fact. — Where, except in his church through Word and Sacrament, could you receive this adoption and new birth?

#### II. The incontrovertible proof.

Perhaps we only think we are God's sons etc. So thought the old scribes and Pharisees, yet the devil was their father. — It takes two witnesses to furnish full proof. We ourselves can testify by our experience that the Spirit leads us (v. 14), and he leads only the sons of God. The Spirit himself testifies that we are God's children (v. 16) in hundreds of Scripture passages set down black on white, never to be altered. Read and reread them and see how they refer to you as true believers in Christ. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but this proof stands for ever.

#### III. The inestimable privilege.

Gone is the spirit of slavery, full of fear, which fills all the unregenerate at the thought of God and the judgment that impends. — We are entitled to go freely to God as our loving Father to cry to him in every need and distress "Abba Father" (Lord's Prayer for instance), and he has promised to hear Us (v. 15).

#### IV. The self-evident obligation.

We must cease being debtors to the flesh, to live in the sins of the flesh, for otherwise we shall die for ever. — We must kill all such deeds. — We must be debtors under obligation wholly to the spirit, to our life as God's sons and children. It must be our delight to live as princes of heaven.

V. The glorious destiny.

We are heirs of God, to inherit his heavenly mansions with all their glory. — We are joint-heirs of Christ, the supreme Heir, to share all that he has inherited for us by his suffering, death, and resurrection. — We suffer the world's enmity for his sake now, made one now already with him by faith. So we shall be one with him in glory, the soul at our death, the body at the resurrection.

Note the synthesis in this outline.

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So many poor mortals feel quite sure that they will enter heaven. When one of their number dies, they are entirely satisfied if they can secure some preacher for the funeral who will preach the dead person into heaven. When pressed for an answer, how many who live so carelessly are able to give a reason for their hope of heaven? Yet no question is so vital:

### **Are You Really Sure of Heaven?**

Let us divide the question.

I. Do you still live as a debtor to the flesh?

— feeling you must do what the flesh desires, in spite of what God says in his Word? Are you loathe to kill the sinful deeds of the body? Then you may be utterly certain that you shall die for ever and never see heaven, no matter what some preacher may say at your funeral.

II. Does God's Spirit lead you?

Do you listen to what he tells you in the Bible, and do you respond in the spirit of adoption as a son to the voice of his Father? That inward response, wrought by the Spirit, is the one clear proof that you



are indeed God's son and that as such you can be fully certain of heaven. — However, you have still more on which to rest your certainty.

III. Do you hear the Spirit's testimony about you?

He testifies in the Scriptures, in hundreds of places, regarding all the children of God, what makes them such children and what marks them as such. Do you hear and heed this divine testimony and see that it applies also to you? Then you can be perfectly sure that you are God's child and thus God's heir, etc. (v. 17).

You need not be in doubt for one moment. Nor need you fear that you are making a mistake. This morning's text helps you to full certainty.

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“The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man” is the religious slogan of many. The great Heir Jesus Christ, apart from whom no one shall come to the Father, and the Holy Spirit who alone is able to lead us to the Father, are disregarded in this deistic, unitarian slogan which is shaped to fit “Jew, heathen, and Hottentot as all believing in one God.” With this slogan thousands live, die, and go to perdition.

**The True Fatherhood of God, or Who Alone is Heard when he Cries, “Abba Father!”**

- I. He alone who is led by God's Spirit. Who hears and heeds his Word in the spirit of adoption, and thus mortifies the flesh and the sinful deeds of the body.
- II. He alone who receives the testimony of God's Spirit. The testimony of the written Word which declares who God's children are, also who are not, Who thus are God's heirs, Christ's joint-heirs, bearing Christ's cross now, but soon to be glorified with him.

Loy's outline is synthetic, — he loves the analytic. The formulation is not succinct.

### **The Spirit of Adoption.**

- I. It is the spirit whereby we cry, "Abba Father."
- II. It is in contrast with the spirit of bondage that we have by nature.
- III. It makes us sure of the inheritance of God's children.
- IV. It makes us debtors to the holiness which belongs to the Holy Spirit who leads us.

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### **The Certainty of Grace.**

[The Certainty of Sonship would be better.]

- I. It remains only in the battle against sin.
- II. It is based on the testimony of sonship.
- III. It towers in the promise of inheritance.

M. Frommel.

# The Ninth Sunday After Trinity.

## 1 Cor. 10:6-13

### “He that Thinketh he Standeth”

Gospel as well as epistle present warning. The unjust steward, Luke 16:1-9, is set up as an example indeed, yet only as a man who was wise in his generation, whose wisdom we are to copy by being wise in our spiritual generation. In the epistle the evil deeds of the Israelites are plainly written as warnings, “for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” The Christian as a child of God needs such warnings.

Our text continues the text for Septuagesima, 1 Cor. 9:24-10:5, which speaks of the great blessings that the Israelites received in the wilderness, in spite of which God had to punish them by letting all the adults, save two, who came out of Egypt die in the wilderness. Paul now records some of the evidence of their unbelieving disobedience to point his warning for us. **Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we may not be persons lusting after evil things, even also as they lusted.** Ταῦτα is the subject, τύποι the predicate, and the number of the verb is attracted to that of the predicate. In our idiom we should say: “These things have become” (perfect). Εἰς τό is final, expressing purpose. Instead of using the verb: “in order that we may not lust,” Paul uses the noun: “in order that we may not become lustful persons,” and thus has the genitive κακῶν as the object of this lusting: “persons lusting (noun) after base things,” such as are morally bad and to be avoided. “Even also as they lusted” adds the verb to the noun and summarizes the entire lustful conduct of the Israelites by the use of the constative aorist.

Noun and verb emphasize the sin of lust. This is the sin that so angered God (v. 5). Instead of rejoicing in the great blessings that he showered upon this people (V. 1-4), they constantly hankered after things mad, morally

base, evil, carnal, ungodly. Their hearts were not at all with God. So also Stephen describes them (Acts 7).

[7] Now the specifications. **Neither be ye idolaters, as some of those; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.” [8] Neither let us commit fornication, as some of those committed fornication, and fell’ in one day twenty-three thousand. [9] Neither let us tempt the Lord, as some of those tempted, and perished by the serpents. [10] Neither murmur, even as some of those murmured, and perished by the destroyer.** Admonition runs through these verses: “Neither be ye idolaters — neither let us commit fornication — neither let us tempt the Lord — neither let us murmur.” Four is the number of minor rhetorical completeness. Next four historical examples, each time repeating “as some of those.” The punishment is not appended in the first instance, v. 7, because it is plain that idolatry is the very worst sin and that it cannot go unpunished.

Yes, the Israelites were idolatrous right at Sinai where God manifested himself in such tremendous ways. Paul does not recount that they forced Aaron to make a golden calf, a young bull, such as the Egyptians worshipped. Although it was their intention that this idol should represent Jehovah, it certainly did not represent him. Paul prefers to cite the other evidence, the regular idol feast and celebration with which the Israelites worshipped the calf. He quotes Ex. 32:6 according to the LXX. Paul uses this part of the idolatrous proceeding in order the more effectively to strike the Corinthians. Some of these thought it perfectly harmless and in order to attend the feasts and celebrations in honor of some idol which were held in the idol’s great banqueting hall. They imagined that they were spiritually so strong that such actions did not and could not hurt them. Well, this is what those old Israelites did with terrible results. “To play” is to dance and to have an orgiastic good time. Today some Christians imagine that they can belong to antichristian oathbound societies, partake of their and of other worldly gaieties, “conform themselves to the world” in all manner of ways, and yet come away spiritually unharmed. It never has been done, and it never can be.

[8] The second case restates Num. 25:1 etc., idolatry plus fornication. Hence the warning against fornication. All of the idol celebrations in Corinth included fornication; the idol temples supported great numbers of

prostitutes for this very purpose. Yet Paul's warning is directed against all fornication, that shameful, corrupting sin that still fills the world today as it did in Paul's day. Note Matt. v. 27 etc.

The canonical Hebrew text, the LXX, Philo, Josephus, and the Rabbis all have 24,000, and yet Paul writes "23,000 fell in one day." This is not a scriptural discrepancy or contradiction, as hostile minds declare, not a lapse of memory on Paul's part. Nor does Paul mean that 23,000 fell in one day and the other 1,000 the next day. Why then not say at once 24,000? The number was neither exactly 24,000 nor 23,000; these are round, approximate numbers. Paul prefers the lower of the two round numbers, because in an argument it is never well to state a thing too strongly, for the people will reduce all that we say; while if we state a case less strongly than we might, the people will note it and they will add the rest, and be impressed the more. Paul follows this psychological principle; he does so also by saying again and again, only "some of those," — really he could have said more. It is a display of ignorance when critics find fault with Paul's 23,000. We ourselves may well learn from Paul. When we make our warnings too strong and too sharp by overstatement, we defeat our own purpose. An understatement that yet is not incorrect, is more effective.

[9] The third case is recorded in Num. 21:4-6, and Paul merely restates the facts. The Israelites were aggrieved because they had to forego the abundant supply of food and vegetables which they had enjoyed in Egypt. They loathed "this light bread," the manna. So the Corinthians were dissatisfied and hankered after the old heathen enjoyments. They did not appreciate their deliverance through Christ. This dissatisfaction challenged and tempted the Lord; it tried him out, to see what he would do about it. It went to the limit and dared him to do something. In this manner many try God today when they sin. But remember the serpents that killed so many Israelites! The admonition has the strong compound verb: ἐκπειράζωμεν, while in the case of the Israelites the simplex is used: ἐπείρασαν. We must know that no difference in force or meaning is intended. When the same verb is mentioned after a compound verb the Greek uses only the simplex. Translate in both instances "tempt" or "try out."

[10] The instances of murmuring are recorded in Num. ch. 14 and 16. Paul refers to the latter which involved a rebellion against Moses and Aaron. Because of this rebellion 14,700 perished. The murmuring recorded

in Num. 14 brought a curse upon the entire people, so that only Joshua and Caleb entered Canaan. To murmur is to give audible expression to unwarranted dissatisfaction. Back of all murmuring against God and against his representatives lies unbelief. God is no longer trusted, his leading and his treatment of us is called wrong. Murmuring against God presages turning away. Paul's example taken from Israel is to the point for the Corinthians, for they had begun to murmur against Paul and the Gospel which he preached. Unless this should be checked, the results would be deplorable indeed. Some imagine that "the destroyer" here referred to is Satan, but analogy of Scripture points us to an angel of God executing God's judgment.

The first two illustrations go together: idolatry and fornication. So also the last two: tempting God and murmuring against God. All of the illustrations are well chosen for application to the Corinthians; they still apply to us of the present day.

[11] Paul continues the general admonition begun in v. 6. **Now these things continued to come to those by way of example; and they were written for an admonition to us upon whom the ends of the ages have come.** "These things" means these punishments. Note the picturesque imperfect: "continued to come to those," letting these divine penalties pass before our eyes like a moving picture. Τυπικῶς is the adverb, "typically," by way of types, — in v. 6 we have the noun. These examples show what God's reaction will be in all similar cases. The Israelites did not suffer something exceptional when they were punished for their manifestations of unbelief. That is the folly of so many even in our day, — they think they can turn from God and do despite to his grace and escape unharmed. It has never been done, and it never can be done.

Beside the dire happenings themselves the apostle places the record which God made of them. So long ago these things happened, and far away in a lone wilderness. Ordinarily they would have faded from memory long ago. But God thought of us and so they were written (ἔγγραφη, the aorist to denote the simple past fact) with a view to (πρός) our admonition (ἡμῶν objective genitive), an admonition directed to us. The relative clause: "upon whom the ends of the ages or eons have arrived," is causal.

We must understand this correctly. The world or the final age does not have several ends, rd Téln- There is reference here to all the ages since the world began. Each of them with its end points forward to the final eon, the Christian world-age in which Paul and the Corinthians lived and in which we also now live. We Christians are the goal of all past history. All that the past ages have to tell us as this is found in the divine written record, is to bear fruit in us now. All of these past events would have happened and would have been recorded in vain, if now at the apex of the ages their instruction and their admonition and their warning were permitted to go unheeded. The world fund is now at our disposal. We dare not let it lie idle, for only the Parousia is yet to follow. Νουθεσία == admonition that consists of remonstrance and reproof. See Eph. 6:4. The great sin of Eli was οὐκ ἔνουθέτει αὐτούς, he did not even remonstrate with his wicked sons in words. Yes, the Scriptures contain only remonstrance and admonition in words, but God's words swiftly turn into deeds.

[12] Ὡστε, “and so,” draws a summary conclusion. **And so let him that thinks he is standing take heed lest he fall.** In Corinth many thought that they were quite safe and in no danger whatever, and yet they were in the gravest of danger. Nothing is worse than false security. When a Christian is too sure of himself, then perhaps is the very time when the devil brings about his fall. Paul says only “he that thinks he is standing” (the perfect ἔσθάναι always in the sense of the present tense), and leaves the question open as to the correctness of the man's thinking. For right here lies the danger, that a person is lulled to sleep, is persuaded to think he is strong and able to withstand every assault.

Paul would give this person a better occupation than such complacent and self-flattering thinking. “Let him keep seeing to it, lest he fall.” Then, indeed, when we constantly reckon with the possibility of falling, shall we be safe. For then our eyes will be on the lookout for the pitfalls, traps, snares, allurements, temptations, deceptions of Satan, will detect and avoid or nullify them, and thus we shall remain safe indeed. “Lest he fall” (aorist) need not mean fall fatally or completely; to be sure, fatal falling is included, but so are all other falls from which one painfully recovers. Yet when one is made to fall, he does not know whether he will be able to recover. Even apparently light falls have proved fatal.

[13] That Paul's readers may heed his admonition and warning he adds: **None save human temptation has overtaken you; moreover, God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tempted above your ability, but will make together with the temptation the way out, namely the ability to bear it.** A temptation is any inducement to sin. Λαμβάνω, here the perfect ἔληφεν, is regularly used in the sense of "take" and "overtake." Paul tells the Corinthians, that all their past temptation has been only "human," ἀνθρώπινος, such as comes to a human being and such as a human being must expect to endure. "Such as is common to man" (A.V.), and "such as man can bear" (R.V.) are interpretative, circumscribing the adjective "human." What Paul means by "human temptation" he explains in the added words.

This is that God is "faithful," that we can always rely on him. He "will not permit you to be tempted above your ability," lit. ὑπὲρ ὃ δύνασθε, "beyond What you are able." "On the contrary (ἀλλά), he will make together with (σύν, associative) the temptation the way out, namely the ability (infinitive with τοῦ, the being able) to bear it." You can always count on God to do that. When it is asked, whether Paul now encourages, or whether he warns that greater than human temptations may assail us, we must say that the latter idea is excluded. All temptation comes from the devil, and in that sense is devilish. Yet because God ever makes an ἔκβασις, an exit, by keeping the temptation within such bounds that we can bear it, this cheers, stimulates and encourages. But perhaps Paul should still warn. Remember that he thought also of the young, the beginners in the faith, the weak who had not developed to full strength.

Since God is thus faithful, since by his love and providence he reduces temptations to human and bearable proportions, one might think that Christians would also be faithful and would thus pass through every temptation with flying colors. We know from our own sad experience that this is not the case. While there is no fault on God's part, there is much fault on our part. Hence all these warnings, admonitions, and encouragements of the Scriptures. Our flesh is often allowed to assert itself, and thus a fall may occur. Our spirit is not always active, and thus temptation may succeed. Like Peter we at times overestimate our strength and go into danger, go where we have no business to go. Deceptions are cunning, and we are not always equipped with the knowledge and the Wisdom Which God would



give us, and so the deception succeeds. The young and inexperienced are not wary enough and thus are often caught.

But God makes the ἔκβασις, the ability to bear the temptation, either by helping us to overcome it, as Christ was victorious in his great temptation, or by bringing us to repentance in case of a fall, as he brought; Peter to weep bitterly. Will no Christian then ever fall fatally? Some, alas, will. Despite all the grace of God. We know the fact, we see the danger, but we are not able to explain the mystery involved. The fault is not in any way due to God, it lies altogether in man. With that we must be content. But the warning is plain.

## Homiletical Aid

Israel: Egypt — desert — Canaan — pillar of cloud and fire — rock in the wilderness.

We: the world — spiritual desert in the world — heaven — and the Word of God and the Sacraments.

### Israel's Tragedies in the Desert.

- I. They speak in effective warning.
  1. The outward circumstances different from ours. Recount the four incidents.
  2. The sins committed inwardly the same that still threaten us: idolatry — impurity — tempting God — murmuring in unbelief.
  3. How God must react to these sins of his people is made very plain.
- II. This warning is even reinforced for us.
  1. Besides the commandments of God and his precious Gospel, these tragic examples are recorded for us.
  2. We may think we stand, but let us beware lest we too fall.

3. Warning is coupled with encouragement. The temptation reduced, the way out opened.
- 

Once a Christian, always a Christian. We cannot say that. We see how the Israelites fell, how so many still fall.

### **“Lest He Fall.”**

In a way

- I. It is easy to fall. The sins and the temptations are ever present. Our flesh is so anxious to yield. So many have yielded. To be on guard always is such a task. Besides cannot we fall and then hurry and repent?

Yet in a way

- II. It is hard to fall. You have to shut your eyes to the terrible warnings set before you by God, and that is hard to do. You have to disregard the grace he gives you, and that is not easy. If you fall, you may not rise again (Judas), and that is not an easy prospect to face. You can fall only by your own fault, and do you think that a light responsibility? God always makes a way of escape, yet once fallen, you may not find that way. All this makes it hard for the Christian to fall. God has put so many things in his way that really he should not fall at all.
- 

Israel’s desert journey a type of the Christian journey to the heavenly Canaan. As a Christian you are

### **On the Way to Canaan.**

- I. Read the great signs of warning along the way (v. 6-10).
- II. Avoid the road of false security (v. 12).

- III. Being the latest travelers, you should be the safest (v. 11: “upon whom the ends of the world have come”).
  - IV. God does everything to have you reach the goal (v. 13).
- 

Sommer has this sketch:

### **How the Christian Keeps from Falling.**

- I. He considers how severely sin is punished.
  - II. He observes how weak his own strength is.
  - III. He believes that God’s faithfulness will help him.
- 

### **The Deadly Deceptions Regarding Temptation.**

- I. The deception regarding sin. Despite all the examples of warning the thought that one can go into these sins and yet not be caught by the punishment. This deception is exploded here four times. Let it never catch us.
- II. The deception regarding security. We are secure in the protection of the Lord. We are not secure when we trust in ourselves. False security. Let this never entrap us.
- III. The deception regarding escape. God does not abandon us in temptation, he keeps it in bounds. Even when, in spite of them, and in our folly we fall, he makes a way of escape. The deadly deception is first, that the temptation is too strong for us, which results in our giving up without battle, and secondly, that once fallen, we are for ever lost, which is Satan’s way of keeping us from repentance and pardon.

# The Tenth Sunday After Trinity.

## 1 Cor. 12:1-11

### Richly Endowed with Spiritual Gifts

The text bears its own heading: “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren.” Since the Christian is a child of God, he is graced by his Father through the Spirit with certain gifts, which are to be used for the benefit of the body, to which as a child of God he belongs. The subject and the purpose of the text are obvious.

The Tenth Sunday after Trinity has a rather fixed significance. It is the Sunday of the Jews and of the destruction of Jerusalem and of their national existence. The gospel is Luke 19:41-48, Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. Yet, I think, the epistle agrees with this gospel. So richly gifted was Jerusalem by the abounding grace of God, yet in the end it was all in vain. We too now in the Christian Church have the most abundant gifts, all of them evidence of God’s abounding favor. The epistle contains only instruction and no warning as does the gospel. Yet it is plain, the instruction must cause us to appreciate our gifts and to use them aright.

**Now concerning the spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant.** Paul has such a περί phrase at several places in this letter, each time when he takes up a subject concerning which the Corinthians had asked him for instruction in the letter which they had sent to the apostle, to which First Corinthians is the answer. Τὰ πνευματικά == “the spiritual things” in the sense of “the spiritual gifts.” While the Greek genitive might be a masculine: “the spiritually gifted men,” it is scarcely to be thought that Paul was asked in regard to persons, when after all the gifts were the distinction of such persons. “I do not want you to be ignorant” is a litotes frequently employed by Paul for: “I want you to be fully informed.”

[2] Paul first lays down the fundamental facts on which his instruction about spiritual gifts rests. **You know that when you were Gentiles, unto the dumb idols, even as you might be led, you were being led away.** Paul begins with a truth that was known to all the Gentile Christians in Corinth, as well as to the Jewish Christians, of whom there were not many. When they were still pagan, they were led away to “the dumb idols” to worship them. The passive idea is emphasized: “even as you might be led.” Note how the simplex ἦγεσθε and the compound ἀπαγόμενοι are abutted, the latter being the participle with ἦτε understood. The agent of the passives is omitted. We may say, men thus led you away, blind, helpless as you were.

The main point lies in the phrase “to the idols, the dumb ones,” the adjective is appended in the Greek by a second article, thus it is a sort of an apposition and receives the same emphasis. “Dumb,” — Why, of course, as idols they were dead and minus life, mere marble or metal statues; or, if you speak of Jupiter and the other gods, mere imaginary beings like those found in fairy stories. “Dumb” has here a more direct reference. The Holy Spirit is God indeed, hence not only does he himself speak, but he bestows the highest gifts of speech: “the word of Wisdom,” “the word of knowledge” (v. 8), and divine prophecy (14:1). You are, Paul says, in a different world now since you became Christians, — you laugh at those dumb idols, you are blessed by the Spirit of God.

[3] A second fact rests on the first. **Wherefore I give you to understand that no one speaking in union with God’s Spirit declares: “Accursed is Jesus!” and no one is able to declare: “Lord is Jesus!” except in union with the Holy Spirit.** Be — cause in your old religion you had nothing more than dumb idols, therefore see the difference: in Christianity everything depends on the living Spirit of God. “I want you to understand” = I want you to mark this well.

Paul is not speaking of the whole unbelieving world on the one hand, and of the Christians on the other hand. Millions had never even heard of Jesus, and thus did not and could not curse him. Paul is speaking of just one man, of what he does not do and of what he always does “in union or connection with the Holy Spirit.” Paul is also not referring to the gift of tongues. For certainly no one who was gifted thus ever cursed Jesus. Paul’s point is that the Holy Spirit is a living Being and that he truly converts a man, moves him to confess his faith: “Lord is Jesus!” Any man who curses

Jesus does not do so in connection with the Holy Spirit. This is put so strongly because when Jesus was urged upon a man through the Holy Spirit and yet was not accepted in faith by that man, his opposition often broke out by hurling curses against Jesus.

Note λαλῶν λέγει, — the participle meaning to speak and not to be silent; the verb. to declare something, to state a thought. This is also true with regard to εἶπεῖν, the aorist of λέγω, the aorist to indicate the making of one statement. Ἀνάθεμα == “accursed,” set aside for God for destruction, while ἀνάθημα == “devoted,” set aside as an offering to God. The title Κύριος, “divine Lord,” is, of course, meant in the Christian sense, the Lord who bought us as his own, to whom we belong in body and in soul, when we believe, trust, obey. But this was the title which the pagans gave to their gods, calling each of them Κύριος, as if he were a living, supernatural being. No, Paul says, you are done with that farce of dumb idols; as Christians you know that you are dealing with the true God, with his Spirit, who brings men not to reject and to curse, but to accept and to confess Jesus as their divine Lord. After this agency of the Holy Spirit is well understood, Paul can proceed.

**[4] Now there are distributions of charismata, yet the same Spirit; [5] and there are distributions of ministrations, and the same Lord; [6] and there are distributions of energies, yet the same God who energizes all things in all ways.** Διαίρεσις, found only here in the New Testament, == not “diversities,” (our versions), for the fact that the gifts are diverse and different need not be mentioned, but “distributions.” The gifts are parceled out, so that one person has this, another person that gift. The “charismata” are gracious gifts of the Spirit, in the sense of abilities, some of them altogether supernatural, others with a basis in natural talent or ability. While the distribution of these charismata varied for the different persons in the Church, all of these charismata are bestowed by the same Holy Spirit.

[5] But these charismata may be viewed according to their purpose and their activity. Then they are called “ministrations,” and we have “distributions of ministrations,” διακονιῶν, of services freely rendered to others for the sake of the service. This is the purpose of all charismatic gifts. Yet whatever the distribution and allotment of such services to the individual Christians, there is “the same Lord.” He determines the allotment.

[6] Again the charismata may be considered as “energies,” filled with energy to produce results. Once more, whatever the distributions are which we see among our fellow members, God is back of them all, the one and the same God, and he it is “who energizes all things in all ways,” wherever energy is required according to his design. We must not let our versions mislead us to think that “all in all” means “all things in all men.” Ἐν παντί is a frequent adverbial phrase and means: “in all ways.”

Paul brings in the Holy Trinity, yet not as attributing the charismata to the Spirit, the ministrations to the Lord, and the energies to the Father. There is no disjunction, but rather an inclusion: all three divine Persons are connected in the bestowal of gifts in the Church. The neat dogmatical formulation is: *Opera ad extra sunt indivisa aut command*, which succinctly states the fact. Implied in this reference to the Trinity is the thought that in place of the dumb and dead idols who could give you nothing, you Christians now have not only the Holy Spirit as a great giver, but even the three Persons of the Godhead.

[7] First the divine Givers, next the human recipients. **Now to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the purpose of the benefit.** Here is another designation for the gifts bestowed upon us: “the manifestation of the Spirit.” It is not we who manifest the Spirit, as some suppose; but the Spirit who does this manifesting. “Of the Spirit” is a subjective genitive. Now Paul has the singular “manifestation,” whereas before he uses plurals. This is typical of Paul: once he spreads out the multiplicity and variety, next he summarizes and unifies. We should see his mastery of thought. “Manifestation,” φανέρωσις == public display: the Spirit displays his presence so that all may see. The word “manifestation” takes in more than the exhibition of the gifts, it includes in general the presence of the Spirit in the believer. When we see the gifts operative and working, we see not only that these gifts are evidences of the Spirit’s presence in the gifted person, but that even apart from such gifts the Spirit dwells in him.

The emphasis is on the dative placed forward, “to each one,” and on the phrase at the end, “for the purpose(πρός) of the benefit.” “Each one” means what it says: each individual Christian has his portion, and not merely each one in a favored class. “To profit withal” is the interpretative rendering of our versions. Paul has the substantivized neuter participle: τὸ συμφέρον,

“that which keeps profiting.” Not you yourself or God is to receive this profiting, but your fellow Christians, and then also others. This is the fact to be impressed most deeply. All our gifts, the greatest as well as the smallest, everything in us by which the Spirit manifests his presence in us, is intended for benefiting others. To have a part in such benefiting of others ought to be our highest joy and pride.

[8] Paul now lets the gifts parade before us. **For to one through the Spirit is given expression of wisdom, while to another expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; [9] to someone else faith in the same Spirit, while to another charismata of healings in the one Spirit, [10] and to another energies of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another discernings of spirits; to someone else varieties of tongues, while to another interpretation of tongues.** The list is not exhaustive; only outstanding gifts are listed. To criticize and then to reconstruct Paul’s list is presumptuous.

Two gifts involve the intellect: wisdom, knowledge. Five involve faith: faith itself; healing, miracles (two deeds); prophecy, discerning spirits (two for speech). Two involve the tongue in a special way: tongues, their interpretation. All the gifts are due to the Spirit. Note well “is given,” — all these are gifts from above. The *λόγος σοφίας* is “the expression of wisdom,” not the wisdom locked up in the heart, but a statement of it for the benefit of men; this is also true with regard to the logos of knowledge. The difference is that existing between wisdom, knowledge applied and put to its full use in life, and knowledge as only knowledge, a fund of information and facts and the details. Both wisdom and knowledge here deal with the Gospel. This Gospel knowledge makes the Christian a spiritual scientist. He is fully posted on the Gospel facts, we call them doctrines. Every teacher must have some measure of these first two gifts. In fact, we all have some such measure, although some have these gifts in large measure.

[9] “Faith” as a charisma is not *fides salvifica*, but *fides miraculosa* (Matt. 17:20 and the context; 21:21; 1 Cor. 13:2). From Matt. 7:22 we learn that wonder-working faith may exist without saving faith, — an anomaly to us, but a fact none the less.

Thus with this “faith” Paul groups “charismata of healings.” One example: Peter and John healed the lame man in the Temple. Yet we must



not think that this gift was bestowed on many even in the early days. Paul did not heal himself of the thorn in the flesh, and he left one of his helpers sick at Miletum (2 Tim. 4:20). Another mistake is to think that the person blessed with this gift healed at will. Not at all; he healed only upon the intimation of the Spirit, and made no attempt to do so without such intimation.

[10] Paired with healings are “energies of miracles,” δυνάμεις, power-works. Broader in meaning than healings, this embraces all other miraculous manifestations (Mark 16:17-18). At this point we may answer the question about the occurrence of these miraculous gifts even today, and we may include also the tongues. In the first place, it is the Spirit alone who either bestows or withholds gifts. He knows what is best for each age. The early Church needed miraculous gifts to serve as seals and confirmations, even as Jesus wrought miracles for the same purpose. The later Church, being fully established, having the entire New Testament, needed no new and additional miracles. The later Church had the recorded miracles. These were better than new local miracles which would have required evidence to have them believed by people at a distance. The recorded miracles retained their full attesting power by being recorded in the inspired Word. Thus the miracle-working gifts ceased. For the building up of the Church the other gifts, such as wisdom, knowledge, and prophecy, became supreme. A survey will show how manifold are the Spirit’s gifts to this day. He may yet work miracles as he wills. But none of them can have the same ranking as those recorded in Scripture; these latter are the authoritative and abiding seals.

“Prophecy” and “discerning of spirits” (1 John 4:1) form a pair. This is the general gift of prophecy, which Paul asks all Christians to seek and to cultivate (ch. 14). It is the blessed ability to present the Word of God to others. This is the gift of preachers, of Sunday school teachers, and it should be the gift of all parents, and of all who have been properly instructed in the Word. We all need this gift to a high degree, because there are so many false prophets, not only preachers but also laymen, fanatically promulgating error, often defending it skillfully. Hence “discerning of spirits,” so as to expose all who are false. This is polemics, and some people are so irenic that polemics offend their tender sensibilities. Yet unless the work of exposing, branding, and denouncing error is properly done, the

Church would soon be wrecked. The Spirit provides keen minds to expose false doctrine and errorists. Shall he withhold this gift?

We now come to the gift of tongues and to the gift of their interpretation. These gifts have disappeared, yet the New Testament has ample information regarding them. Efforts have been made to revive speaking in tongues, but these efforts soon failed, — those people did not speak in tongues but uttered gibberish, and soon the leaders of the supposed Pentecostal movement themselves confessed that the movement had been inspired by devilish spirits. So it is dead.

Much has been said on “tongues,” altogether too much that is not sane, but fanciful, even foolish. The subject is treated at length in my *Interpretation of First Corinthians*. There was only one such gift, not two or more. A person spoke in a language he had never learned, and one who knew that language understood perfectly. This happened in Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost, at Caesarea, and at Corinth. Whether it happened elsewhere, we cannot determine. The gift was miraculous, highly prized in Corinth. Paul had this gift. He considered its value for the Church small (ch. 14); he lists it next to the last in our text. “Tongues” was not a speaking “in the language of heaven,” in the language of angels, and the like.

“The interpretation of tongues” is their translation into the vernacular. Paul wants no one to speak in tongues at the public service unless either the person himself or some other person present is able to tell the assembly what was spoken in the foreign language. It is as though I should be permitted to speak in church and should then utter something in Chinese or in Russian. That would be miraculous, but valueless, unless an interpreter were present to translate.

[11] So the gifts are varied indeed. **Now all these the one and same Spirit produces, apportioning to each one severally, even as he wills.** Ἐνεργεῖ recalls v. 6: the energizing power in all these gifts is the Holy Spirit. No person can exercise any of these and similar gifts (see Rom. 12) without him. The participle adds that even the apportioning of the gifts, such and such a gift to this person, such and such a gift to the other person, lies wholly within the discretion of the Spirit, and not in any person’s own discretion. “Even as he wills” is sovereign, but not to be understood in the arbitrary sense. Since the good and gracious will of the Spirit decides our

endowment and the use which the Spirit desires to make of each of us, how foolish is envy or complaint on our part? The greater the gifts, the heavier the responsibility. The most signally gifted are not always the best Christians. Some great men in the Church have made some great mistakes. Satan loves a shining mark. The highly gifted have their own temptations.

## Homiletical Aid

We may fail in two directions: by doing evil, by failing to do good. The former was pointed out last Sunday, the latter is pointed out today. One great fault of ours is that we do not do enough good, do not exercise our gifts as we should, neglect so many opportunities. This counts against us, and even such gifts as we have fade away.

### What About Your Gifts?

#### I. Do you recognize their source?

The Holy Spirit. A gracious gift. Only to God's children, who call Jesus Lord. A great honor and blessing and a noble responsibility.

Many gifts. Notable list in our text. Why some are no longer bestowed. The Spirit's will in the distribution. Not one of us passed by. The Spirit who made us God's children means to use every one of us.

#### II. Do you see their purpose?

Not for your pride, for invidious comparison with others; not for your profit at all. But for the benefit of the church in the place and the opportunity the Spirit provides for you.

Many gifts because so many needs of the church. Your needs among them. The Spirit distributes the gifts to meet these needs. What a loss, if he did not supervise the gifts and the operations! All gifts are to help men to become and to remain Christians.

#### III. Are you ready to have the Spirit use you?

What are your gifts? In wisdom, in knowledge, in prophecy, in ability for service, etc.? You probably have more gifts than you think.

When the Spirit uses you with your gifts he would ennoble you and the gifts, make you richer, bring you commendation, praise, reward. Men may not praise, God will.

To live for God's children should be the delight of every child of God. A noble, well-spent life. To live for self or for the world is tragic.

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It is not surprising at all that God's children are all

### **Gifted People.**

I. The one gift they all have.

Jesus their Lord, in whom they believe, whom they confess, whom they serve.

There would be no other gifts if this gift were not received; nothing but dumb idols who cannot even speak.

II. The many gifts distributed among them.

No shortage on the part of the Giver.

The gifts in our text, those no longer bestowed.

The gifts we enjoy today, enumerate, use also Rom. 12.

The glory of all these spiritual gifts, when placed in contrast with the world, the paganism of the Gentiles.

Our joy in having our gift and in seeing in others also all the other gifts.

III. The one great purpose of all the gifts.

That you and others may be saved.

In detail, that each of us may profit spiritually in knowledge, wisdom, etc.

The purpose seen in the needs to be supplied.

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Jerusalem, in the gospel, gifted above all nations, yet lost. The Christian Church in Jerusalem's place, the only place in the world for God's spiritual gifts. With these gifts we are

### **Incomparably Rich.**

Consider

- I. What we have in the supreme gift, Jesus.
  1. Redemption, pardon, peace, all spiritual help. He is our Lord, we belong to him.
  2. Other men honor idols, are led blindly in slavery to them. The mental idols as bad as those of metal and stone.
  3. Our response to this supreme gift; complete faith, love, devotion; constant confession: "Lord is Jesus!" Appreciation and joy. All thought of serving self for ever gone.
- II. What we have in the auxiliary gifts of the Spirit.
  1. The dumb idols of the pagan; but we the Spirit of life in his Word.
  2. Hence the many auxiliary gifts we enjoy: gifts you and I may actually have — gifts others have of which we get the benefit (as in the hymns, none of which we wrote; other examples) — gifts in the sacred record (such as the recorded miracles which still seal the Gospel).
  3. Our response to these auxiliary gifts: we see their value, the spiritual wealth they bestow, the blessings they bring to us all, — we feel that we must use our own gifts to the fullest extent.
- III. What our responsibility is today.
  1. The richer we are, the greater our responsibility, so in regard to money, so in regard to talent, so in regard to spiritual wealth. Not merely bask in wealth and boast. So the Jews.
  2. We are wholly bound to the Triune God. All our gifts are cords that bind us to him, hence the wisdom, knowledge, prophecy,

*diakonia* we must ever exercise.

3. No unused talent buried in the ground. The Savior cannot have too many and too brave confessors; the ignorance about us cannot be attacked too strenuously; our own family circles need all that they can get of light and grace. When the sense of this responsibility fades, the gifts and their riches must disappear. The salt that has lost its saltiness, Matt. v. 13.

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### **Our horn of plenty.**

The Holy Spirit's Cornucopia.

- I. The plenty it contains for God's children. Survey of the spiritual gifts.
- II. Your share as one of God's children. Some gift or gifts yours personally, other gifts you enjoy in others.
- III. Our response to the Spirit's plenty. Truer, better, busier, happier children of God.

# The Eleventh Sunday After Trinity. 1 Cor. 15:1-10

## **“By the Grace of God I Am What I Am”**

Since they are children of God, all true Christians confess their total unworthiness and glorify the grace of God, as Paul does at the close of this text. We see the correspondence with the gospel for the day, Luke 18:9-14, in which the publican throws himself completely on the mercy of God. Last Sunday we saw the many gifts which the Spirit bestows upon us Christians, they are all gifts of grace, and our epistle agrees, — What we are, we are by grace alone.

The text is Paul’s introduction to the great discourse regarding the resurrection. But this Sunday in the Church Year cannot be set aside for a sermon on Christ’s resurrection. What is here said about Christ’s resurrection is on the present Sunday to be used as exhibiting the grace of God by which Paul was what he was, by which we children of God are what we are, if indeed we have received this grace and have allowed it to make something of us for the glory of God.

Paul does not at once reveal his purpose, namely that he intends to answer the talk of some of the Corinthians, who declare that there is no resurrection of the dead (v. 12). He recounts the great acts on which our salvation depends; thus reaches the resurrection of Christ; and then states the full authoritative evidence for his resurrection. Fortunately, those who denied the resurrection had not carried their deductions far enough so as to include Christ and they had not asserted that he had not risen from the dead. Among the outstanding Witnesses of Christ’s resurrection Paul names himself, but as a most unworthy witness. It is thus that he feels compelled to speak of his own person. Quietly he begins.

**[1] Now I remind you, brethren, of the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also you received, in which also you stand, [2] through which also you are saved: with what statement I preached the Gospel to you, if you hold it fast, unless you believed in vain.** Nothing new at all. Only the old Gospel which Paul had gossiped (εὐηγγελισάμην) to the Corinthians during the year and one half that he had spent with them. Only a reminder recalling some of the grand data of this Gospel.

Four relative clauses remind the Corinthians 1) of how Paul preached this Gospel to them; 2) of how they had received it in faith; 3) of how even now they stand in this Gospel, holding it by faith; 4) finally, of how they are saved by means of this Gospel. Though only a reminder, all of this is impressive. Every Corinthian can only say: “Yes, yes, we know.” The perfect ἔσθήκατε is always used with the sense of the present, and the verb “to save” means to rescue from mortal danger and then to place into permanent safety. All Christians are in a state of safety, having forgiveness and peace with God.

[2] Paul, however, does not wish to speak of the Gospel in general, but in particular of the “statement,” λόγος, which he used when preaching this Gospel. The emphasis is on τίνι λόγῳ, “with what statement” I preached the Gospel to you. Λόγος is to be taken in the ordinary sense, a statement of some thought, fact, truth, etc. Discard the fumbling renderings of our versions, which make difficult what is simple. We have the *logos*, or statement, to which Paul refers. It is repeated in brief in v. 3-4 and embodies the central facts of our salvation. Paul reminds the Corinthians of this summary of these facts, because it includes Christ’s resurrection: he died, was buried, rose again on the third day, and all this according to the Scriptures. So *logos* does not mean “formulation,” even as we know of no special formula for the facts stated, whether peculiar only to Paul or to the apostles in general. Why great weight should be attached to such a formula would be hard to say. At least Paul is holding up no formula, he is stating only facts to the Corinthians. They know his statement of these facts very well indeed.

Of course, Paul’s reminder would be pointless, if the Corinthians had given up the Gospel. So Paul adds: “if you hold it fast,” namely this *logos*, that I preached to you. To hold it fast is, of course, honestly to believe it. Paul is not doubting or questioning the faith of the Corinthians, even as the



condition is one of reality. Nevertheless their believing the Gospel statement regarding Christ's death, burial, and resurrection must be counted on by Paul. No use reminding a lot of unbelievers.

There is another possibility: "unless you believed in vain," believed indeed, but found that your believing was εἰκῆ, "at random," took you nowhere, was thus "in vain," as when we believe something that turns out to be fiction instead of reality. The Corinthians had made no such discovery about the facts of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. So also this angle is taken care of. We see how Paul fortifies his *logos* and his Gospel. There must be faith in the facts of it, and such faith always has solid facts on which to rest.

[3] Here then once more is the *logos* on which so much depends. **For I delivered to you in the first place what also I received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, [4] and that he was entombed, and that he has been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.** When Paul first came to Corinth, this was the *logos*, which he preached. "I delivered" means I handed over to you. Paul did nothing beyond transmitting these outstanding, all-important facts. This was the great work of his apostolic office. "What also I received" is often pressed to mean that Paul himself received this *logos* from men, but in Gal. 1:11-2:2 Paul shows at length that he did not receive his Gospel from men; in Gal. 1:12 he states how and from whom he received it: "through revelation of Christ." I would a thousand times rather believe Paul regarding this matter than any of his more or less critical commentators.

Paul is not restating the entire Gospel, he is repeating only this statement as an integral part of it, which recounts the three great facts. The first is "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." This is history, ἄπεθανεν, the historical aorist. "For," ὑπέρ our sins can have no meaning as regards saving us, unless this meaning be atonement for sins, expiation by sacrifice. The phrase is vital. All who disregard it or interpret it out of existence have at Christ who at best was a noble martyr dying for his convictions. They may despise "the old blood theology," but Christ's blood and righteousness are our only hope in life and in death.

"According to the Scriptures," i.e. the Old Testament prophecies (Is. 53 is very clear) fortifies the great fact. These Scriptures cannot be false.

Christ's death was part of God's great plan of salvation, revealed in advance in Holy Writ. The atonement that would avail for sins for ever is still to be found in the old prophetic record for our added assurance.

[4] The entombment in a rock-hewn chamber is connected with the death, attests its reality. When Christ's soul had left his body, there was nothing to do save to put that body away in a grave or tomb. Joseph of Arimathea had a fine new tomb, into which nobody as yet had been placed; this became Christ's tomb. Since the entombment belongs to the death, no modifier is added.

“And that he has been raised on the third day” has the perfect tense after two aorists. The aorists state only the past historical facts, the perfect tense implies that having once been raised Christ is still the risen one. The same perfect tense is used with reference to the crucifixion, implying that Christ even now is the Crucified One. That the resurrection of Christ is “according to the Scriptures” is evident. But did the Old Testament foretell anything about the third day? The answer is found in Matt. 12:39- 40, and it is given by Christ himself. The Lord positively foretold that he would arise on the third day, even as he did. The reference to the Old Testament fortifies. The facts are, of course, facts and stand as such, nor can all the denial in the world alter one iota of them. But “according to the Scriptures” places the veracity of God behind the facts. He who assails the facts, must also assail and demolish the whole Old Testament, — not that our modernists hesitate to do this, but this act does make their crime a double one.

[5] Paul begins with the very day of Christ's resurrection and records in chronological order a number of the appearances of the risen Savior, which attested his resurrection. He follows a selective principle, he presents only the most important witnesses. **And that he appeared to Cephas; then to the Twelve. [6] Then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the most remain till today, though some fell asleep. [7] Then he appeared to James; then to all the apostles. [8] And last of all, as to a dead foetus, he appeared also to me.**

Ὡφθη (ὄραω) is passive: “he was seen,” and is idiomatically construed with the dative. The special appearance to Peter is recorded also in Luke 24:34. He had been the leader of the apostles; he had denied the Lord, — thus the appearance to him meant a great deal.

“Then to the Twelve” == John 20:19 etc.; Luke 24:36 etc.; Mark 16:14. This occurred on the evening of the day of the resurrection, immediately after the two disciples had returned from Emmaus. “The Twelve” is a standard expression and it is used here, although Judas was dead.

[6] The greatest number to whom Christ appeared comprised a group of more than five hundred. Apparently, this is a reference to Matt. 28:16 etc., when Christ gave his great commission to the Church. This took place in Galilee, whither Jesus had repeatedly appointed his disciples for a meeting, Mark 14:28; Matt. 28:7, and v. 10. Then we read that the eleven went to the mountain in Galilee Where Jesus had appointed them, Matt. 28:16. So large a meeting could scarcely have been held elsewhere. Paul states that most of those five hundred witnesses are still alive, as he Writes his letter, although some died, “fell asleep” in Jesus.

[7] We have no further record of the appearance to James, who must be the James that was at the head of the congregation at Jerusalem, who ranked next to the apostles in importance (Gal. 1:19), the writer of the Epistle of James, “then to all the apostles” cannot well be the same as “the Twelve” in v. 5. So we take “all the apostles” to mean “apostles” in the wider sense, as when Barnabas, Timothy, Silvanus are called apostles. We cannot say how many men were present, nor where this appearance occurred.

[8] Last of all Paul mentions the appearance to himself on the road near Damascus. Paul does so in deepest humility: to me “as to the dead foetus.” Our versions are wrong. This is not a child born out of due time, late in the life of its parents, when a child is no longer expected, or a child born before the full time of gestation although able to survive. An ἔκτρωμα is an abortion, which is dead and vile and is thus hurriedly buried and removed from sight.

[9] Paul explains: **For I am the last of the apostles, that am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God.** “Last” is here not a reference to time, long after the others had been made apostles, but refers to quality, as “not fit to be called an apostle,” i.e. even now as he writes this letter. The reason is all too evident, he had persecuted the Church of God. How can a bloody persecutor of the Church occupy the position of an apostle of this Church? Though the persecution lies in the distant past, the odium of it ever clings to Paul, who cannot forget what once he did.

Bengel: *Ut abortus non est dignus humano nomine, sic apostolus negat se dignum apostoli appellatione*, “as an abortion does not deserve the name of a human being, so the apostle denies that he deserves the apostolic designation.”

The point is this: the other apostles were appointed by the Lord after a course of training and preparation, as fit and worthy for the office in his sight. To them as such the Lord appeared. Paul was a persecutor of the Church, a vile, dead thing spiritually, fit only to be carried out and buried from sight. Yet to him, and while he was such a thing, the risen Lord appeared in all his glory. He, the abortion, placed at the side of these living men, treated, honored, dignified like unto them by the Lord!

[10] Much more must be said: **But by God’s grace I am what I am; and his grace toward me did not prove empty; on the contrary, I did labor more abundantly than they all, yet not I; on the contrary, the grace of God with me.** Here is the marvel of grace, *κάρις Θεοῦ*, God’s unmerited favor which cancels the guilty one’s guilt and receives him as his own. What Paul now is, he is wholly by God’s grace alone. Stating it in another way, when it took hold of him on the road to Damascus God’s grace toward him did not prove (*ἐγενήθη*) empty, *κενή*, hollow, without substance, a litotes for full of power and energy.

*Ἀλλά*, quite the contrary. The effective grace of God so wrought in Paul that he labored more abundantly than they all, yet, of course, Paul says “not I.” He was only the instrument, “the grace of God with me” accomplished this astounding result. Paul is speaking of the fruits of his labor. That he had such abundant fruit was not due to his own strenuous exertion. Often a minister labors very hard, but the soil is so stony, that the result seems small. Paul is not saying that if the other apostles had labored as hard as he had, their fruits would have been equally abundant. Does Paul mean that the results of his labor exceed the results attained by anyone other apostle, or does he say that his results exceed those of all the other apostles? Paul’s words say the latter. But this is no credit to him, all the glory belongs to the grace which could do such wondrous work through a wretch, such as Paul had been.

Paul does not say merely: “not I, but God’s grace.” For that might mean that this grace alone was active, not Paul. This is avoided by the added

phrase: "the grace of God with me, σὺν ἔμοί (associative σύν). While the laborer must say: Thy pound hath gained ten pounds! this laborer is not the slothful slave who folded his hands and did nothing. Paul's σύν does not intend to picture God's grace and Paul as two horses together drawing a load, for the two are not coordinates. In the last analysis, Paul's own efforts are due to God's grace; he puts forth his efforts only as grace rules, guides, and moves him.

## Homiletical Aid

Many outlines on this text fail to satisfy. They treat the text abstractly, irrespective of its place in the Church Year. Some are simply outlines for Easter Sunday and they would be appropriate for the very Easter festival itself. Others deal with the Gospel and its work or its effects. Seybold has the following which illustrates a mistake that we should not repeat:

### **Three Brilliant Stars Which Our Text Lets Shine Into Earth's Darkness: Scripture, Christ, Grace.**

- I. Scripture, the one source of all revelation.
- II. Christ, the one Savior of the soul.
- III. Grace, the one way of salvation.

I reprint this as a representative example of placing the numeral into the theme. Sometimes we have "two," sometimes "three" (as here), sometimes even "four." This numeral advertises the fact that the preacher has failed to discover a unity for his theme. The result is that we have no division in the parts. These parts are nothing but baby sermonettes, either twin babies, triplets, or quadruplets. Three little essays on three subjects do not make a full-grown sermon just because they are thus pasted together. Three topics or subjects do not form a sermon theme when written in succession. Why such an outline should be exhibited in print as a sample from which to learn sermonizing is a homiletical mystery.

The outlines and the sermons which elaborate the thought that the Christian as a child of God is ever deeply and truly humble, or that the

Christian as a child of God' bestows all credit for his character and his work on the grace of God, are true to the text as appointed for this Sunday of the Church Year.

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Last Sunday we saw the Christian as a child of God adorned by the Spirit with spiritual gifts to be used for the benefit of God's other children to God's praise and glory. Today we have an example of such a child of God in St. Paul, the apostle so highly gifted, who did more for the church than all the other apostles put together, and yet see his deep humility, his supreme appreciation of God's grace.

**“Not I, but the Grace of God with Me.”**

- I. This states the incontrovertible fact.
    1. In Paul's case supremely true.
    2. In our case correspondingly true.
  - II. This voices the full appreciation of the fact.
    1. The full appreciation of our own nothingness.
    2. The complete appreciation of the wonders of God's grace.
  - III. This makes sure of the fruits of this fact.
    1. Labors truly acceptable to God.
    2. A crown of glory bestowed by grace alone.
- 

“Self-righteous souls on works rely And boast their moral dignity.”

Ohio Synod Hymnal 397.

**“Grace is the Note my Soul Shall Raise.”**

- I. The grace of Christ, in his death, entombment, and resurrection.
- II. The grace in the Scriptures and the Gospel.

- III. The grace that makes sinners children of God, and that made some great apostles.
  - IV. The grace that makes our labor for Christ successful. Who can praise this grace sufficiently?
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### **The Marvel of Grace in the Life of Saint Paul.**

- I. The persecutor of the Church.
  - II. The Christian convert.
  - III. The apostle of Christ.
  - IV. The most successful apostle.
  - V. The grace that wrought the marvel.
  - VI. The Gospel by which this grace reaches us today.
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The Pharisee and the Roman Catholic in us all. We want credit. We would use even Christ for getting merit for ourselves. Yet none is a true Christian and child of God who has not learned what may be called

### **The Hardest Lesson of All.**

This is the great lesson of humility which once for all sees

- I. That we ourselves are nothing.
  - 1. St. Paul the outstanding example, since he was a persecutor of the Church, fit only to be cast out in disgust.
  - 2. None of us would be any better, even if we did not persecute the Church. Vain, empty, perhaps vicious sinners, worthy only to be cast out.
- II. That grace is everything.

1. Illustrated in St. Paul. Grace made him even an apostle, yea the apostle most successful of all.
  2. Illustrated in every one of us. Though not apostles, of whom Jesus needed only a few, all that we are spiritually is due solely to the Lord's grace, — specify.
- III. That Christ and the Gospel are the sole fountain of grace.
1. Christ's atoning grace in his death, entombment, resurrection.
  2. Christ's converting grace in his Scriptures and the Gospel.

**What is a Christian to Do so that he May Not be Deceived and Lost because of the Fair Appearance of Incoming Error?**

- I. Above all he is to hold fast to the main truths of the Gospel already recognized.
- II. Ever he is to remain with the clear letters of Holy Scripture.
- III. He is to strengthen his faith by the testimony of approved teachers.
- IV. In addition to all this he is to despair of his own worthiness and wisdom.

C. F. W. Walther, *Epistel Postille*.



# The Twelfth Sunday After Trinity. 2 Cor. 3:4-11

## **“Able Ministers of the New Testament” for the Christians as God’s Children**

This text rounds out the second after-Trinity cycle which treats of *the Christian as the Child of God*, by stating that *the Christian as the Child of God is Served by the Able Ministry of the New Testament*. The glory of this ministry is brought to View by a comparison with the ministry of Moses in connection with the law given on stone tables at Sinai. The gospel for the day (Mark 7:31-37) deals with the healing of the deaf-mute and contains the great word “Ephphatha!” “Be opened!” Whether a connection between gospel and epistle was intended may, of course, be disputed, especially since the individual epistles of the various cycles were not selected to match the thought of the individual gospels found in that same cycle. Yet, if the thought is not too allegorical, one may say, that as Christ made the man to hear and to speak through his almighty power, so the ministry of the New Testament makes deaf and dumb sinners hear and speak spiritually by the power of grace.

Paul is glorifying his apostolic ministry to the Corinthians, who had begun to think slightly of it. When now we transfer to our own day what Paul says about himself and his assistants as able ministers of Christ, we must not be hasty. Hundreds of ministers cannot take their place at the side of Paul. They are not faithful. The preacher who plays fast and loose with the Word and the Confessions cannot be ranked as an able minister of the New Testament, however he may rank himself. The same is true regarding the preacher who never advances in the study of the Word, who knows all about automobiles, baseball, bridge, golf, etc., who can beat you at cards, but not at doctrine. The worldly preacher, the lazy preacher, the superficial

preacher, and all their relatives in the clerical line, are not to make this text their shield and imagine that the Christians are wonderfully blessed by having such “able ministers.” It is a wonder that despite these clerics the congregations still exist. But all faithful ministers share in the glory of Paul and his assistants. It is not a question of duplicating the high personal gifts of the apostle or the features which made his ministry an apostleship, — Timothy, Titus, Silvanus were not so gifted and were not apostles. It is a matter of keeping faithfully in the true ministerial succession, ever true and fully devoted to the Gospel Word.

**Moreover (δέ), such confidence** (as just expressed in 2:16 b-3:3) **we have through Christ as regards God. [5] Not that of our own selves we are sufficient, so as to claim anything as (emanating) from our own selves; on the contrary, our sufficiency (is one emanating) from God (alone).** Paul speaks of the sure confidence which he and his assistants have in regard to the character of their office, and thus in regard to the nature of its product. “Through Christ” means that Christ mediates this confidence. “Through Christ” connects with v. 3: “You are Christ’s letter,” one which he has written and put on display so that all men may read and thus see who we preachers are, what our office and our work really is and what it has accomplished.

This confidence is “as regards God,” πρὸς with persons often with the idea of standing face to face. We may bluff men. Many are satisfied if we preach a little cheap morality. It is easy to get into the papers. Confidence “as regards men” is nothing to boast of. Sometimes preachers justify themselves before God even though his Word means little to them. I dread to hear their bold brazen assurances. To claim such confidence “as regards God” without the fullest warrant in fact, is to invite God’s judgment, perhaps already in this life. Matt. 5:13 is a passage in point.

[5] Paul confesses: “Not that of our own selves we are sufficient, so as to claim anything as (emanating) from our own selves.” The sufficiency referred to is the ability to achieve results in building up true congregations of Jesus Christ. Paul says that for such results there is no ability that emanates from himself. Hence he (and his assistants) base no confidence on themselves, and thus also make no claims for themselves. The two ἐκ denote source. It would be the height of folly to suppose anything of the kind as regards themselves. Do not construe λογίσασθαι with ἱκανοί:

“sufficient to think or account” of ourselves. The infinitive denotes result: “so as to claim anything for ourselves,” i.e. so that we can do this. The infinitive clause modifies all that precedes.

No, Paul says, here is no thought of ourselves as being a source in any manner: “our sufficiency is from God.” Any and all claims of ours are outlawed. It is quite customary for ministers to give all glory to God. But when we do this, let us pause and consider with care, lest we unload upon God and make him responsible for our insufficiency, our laxity in doctrine and in practice, etc. Bad enough to be insufficient, much worse to call it sufficiency and to thank God for it. Paul is not so hasty. What he says here is preceded by v. 1-3, the strongest factual evidence of the efficiency of himself and of his assistants.

[6] Their success is fully explained, and thus we see why they are so happy when facing God. **He who also made us sufficient as new testament ministers, not (a testament) of letter, but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the spirit makes alive.** Ὅς is demonstrative, emphatic: “He who,” “he the one who.” God did this: he made us sufficient “as new testament ministers.” Διαθήκη is “testament,” a one — sided disposition, emanating solely from the testator who designates-the heirs and by his provision alone bestows the inheritance. The heirs have nothing to do with making the testament, they only receive. The testament is called new in contrast with the Abrahamitic testament. This was old and consisted of promise which now was fulfilled, rendering Abraham’s testament old; “new” means as fulfilled in Christ; the promise no longer being just promise, but now fulfilled reality.

The greatness of the new testament is shown: “not of letter, but of spirit.” The genitives are qualitative. We must know that γράμμα == *Vorschrift* a legal enactment put in writing, and that this has nothing to do with Abraham and the old covenant or testament, but refers to Moses, to the engraved tables of stone, the legal enactments of the Mosaic code which came more than 430 years after Abraham. Not another such legal system was Paul to administer. This killed. It was given in the first place because of the transgressions (Gal. 3:17 and 19), to expose and to increase them and thus to show the need of salvation. This new testament is one “of spirit,” — the opposite of grammar, cannot be the Holy Spirit, but only “spirit,” the

new life created in us by faith in the Gospel, the fulfilled promise. Of course, this makes alive.

Like John 6:63 and 8:32 this passage has often been abused. The Scriptures are called “the letter that kills.” Therefore the words written in Scripture are discarded; to heed them, kills. In their place is put “the spirit,” a so-called inner, spiritual meaning at which the fanatic arrives by supposedly direct illumination. Luther had to oppose these people. He says they cry, *Geist, Geist!* but their Geist is the devil.

[7] Δέ proceeds with the elaboration. **Now if the ministry of the death, engraved in letters on stones, was in connection with glory, so that the sons of Israel were not able to gaze upon the face of Moses because of the glory of his’ face, although it was being done away with: [8] how shall not rather the ministry of the spirit be in connection with glory?** The argument is from the less to the greater: the ministry of the spirit cannot possibly have less glory than the Mosaic ministry of the legal letter.

Paul asks us to consider the old ministry of law as represented in Moses. It was a ministry that caused death, for the *grammata*, the Commandments of God engraved on the two stone tables, could and did do nothing but damn all transgressors, and this means all men, for all broke these Commandments. It is striking to say that Moses’ ministry was graven in letters on stones, yet these letters (*Vorschriften*) were the message of Moses and of the preachers of the law. Ἐν δόξῃ == connection with glory." When Moses came down from Sinai, his face shone with unearthly light, so that the people could not look at his face, but had to shield their eyes. The glory of the divine Law-giver was reflected from the face of the human minister of this law. Yet Paul adds that this was a temporary glory, a glory “being done away with.” The light on Moses’ face faded away. This is symbolical. The law itself is to cease its bringing of death; the Gospel is to come with life. God intends that the glory of the *grammata* of judgment and of death shall disappear before another glory that is to abide for ever, the glory of the grace of Christ, the glory of pardon and of life, conveyed by the New Testament ministers, the first of whom were the apostles.

[8] So another ministry followed, previously called “the ministry of the New Testament,” and now “the ministry of the spirit,” objective genitive: Which bestows the spirit, spiritual life. Not that the Israelites did not have

this ministry, and thus all died without salvation. We have already said that Abraham had the promise, and thus Moses and every prophet of Israel who preached the promise and its coming fulfillment ministered the spirit and made alive. Yet all this was preliminary, awaiting the fulfillment in Christ, who then sent out no more law-ministers, but only Gospel-ministers. Their function was to deliver to the heirs the testamentary inheritance, spirit, life, salvation, to be received by faith alone.

Paul's question is: Can this blessed ministry be without glory? No; its glory must be far greater than the glory on Moses' face. Yet not a blinding glory from which one has to avert the eyes. It will not be an outward light like that of judgment overwhelming the sinner, but a light that "shines in our hearts," even as this ministry puts spirit and life into our hearts. It will be a glory that corresponds to the love, mercy, and grace of God: "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (4:6). Nor will this light ever be done away with. Οὐχί is only the stronger οὐ, the interrogative particle expecting an affirmative answer.

Such a glorious ministry is now the gift of Christ to all the children of God, Eph. 4:11-12. How great should be our gratitude because we have this ministry! And the called ministers should realize the glory of their office, and in every way live up to its glory. Theirs is the highest incentive, — an office exceeding that of Moses when he brought the *grammata* engraved on the stone tables.

[9] Paul's γάρ explains by a restatement: **For if the ministry of the condemnation (is) glory, by much more does the ministry of the righteousness abound in glory.** The contrast lies in the objective genitives. The letter kills, the ministry condemns; but these are only God's means, — he is the one who acts. Κατάκρισις thus rightly is a word indicating an action, and the article points to the well-known condemnation which needs no elucidation. Moses is still found in Scripture and he still has this ministry that brings condemnation to every guilty sinner. Only one other ministry exceeds in glory this ministry which administers condemnation, it is the ministry of the righteousness, i.e. which bestows the righteousness, again so well known as to need no more than the article. This δικαιοσύνη is the quality bestowed upon the repentant and believing sinner by the judicial verdict of God, declaring him free from guilt and righteous in God's sight

for the sake of Christ's blood and righteousness. The word and all its derivatives is always *forensic*, see Cremer-Koegel *Woerterbuch*.

[10] Paul comes to the climax: **For even what has been glorified has not been glorified in this point (or part): on account of its transcendent glory.** The perfect tense says that it has been glorified, i.e. and Will remain so, in everything except one point, and in this point the ministry of the righteousness has no lack or gap. The ministry of the condemnation was not made to have transcendent, superlative, supreme. glory, so that no other ministry could outshine it. This all-transcendent glory is reserved for the ministry of the righteousness. They that bring many to righteousness shall shine as the stars in the firmament. When Moses damns with *grammata*, his glory pales before this greater glory, must pale before it.

What then shall we Christians say, to whom this ministry has been given which ministers Christ's blood and righteousness to us? And who of us ministers would not strive with all the grace that is in him to be one of Paul's worthy assistants now in preaching, teaching, confessing, and bestowing this blessed righteousness?

[11] "For" elucidates still farther: **For if what is being done away with (is being done away with) despite glory, much more what remains (remains) with glory.** The Greek is terse and neat, because it needs no such repetition of the verbs. Our versions miss the sense, because *διὰ δόξης* was not understood. The dictionaries and the grammars fail to list and to explain this *διὰ*, which occurs also in Rom. 2:27 and 4:11. The preposition here means "despite glory," "in spite of glory." The original idea of *διὰ* is "between," and if the passage between occurs in a favorable element, the meaning is "with," but if the medium is hostile, or, as here conceived to be contrary to the action, the resultant sense of *διὰ* is "despite." Since it has such great glory, who would think that the ministry of the law was to be done away with? Well, here is another ministry, and this remains, and thus, as contrasted with the other, it certainly remains *ἐν δόξῃ*, "in connection with glory."

But we must understand this being done away with and this remaining. While it is predicated of the light on Moses' face and of his ministry, this does not mean that Moses, the law, and its preaching are to be dropped from our Bibles and from our churches. They have a function to perform (Rom.

3:20) for all sinners, to condemn them by death and damnation. And to proclaim judgment and the terrors of God's holy wrath is glorious. What passes away is this death and this damnation, these terrors of the conscience. All these pass away the moment the ministry of the Gospel brings us Christ's blood and righteousness, pardon from sin, the blessed quality of having been acquitted by God. Certainly, when the voice of the law is stilled for us, and the sweet sound of the Gospel fills us with faith, the spirit of the new life in Christ, the glory of the ministry that brings us this Gospel, shall abide.

## **Homiletical Aid**

Every minister desires to be considered able, and every congregation wishes to have an able minister. Yet preachers and congregations have all sorts of wrong ideas about this ableness. Many want what is the opposite of the ability which God works. To be sure, there must be natural aptitude and proper schooling, but these alone would leave only a sounding brass and a crashing cymbal.

### **An Able Minister.**

- I. One whose entire dependence rests on God.
  1. In all his thinking regarding the sins of the people committed to his care.
  2. In all his thinking regarding the cure of sin.
  3. In all his thinking regarding himself in any matter pertaining to his flock.

All his sufficiency is to be from God.
  4. You should want no superficial, worldly, ease-loving, doctrinally unsound, in practice untrue minister, whatever attractive features he may otherwise have.
- II. One whose whole activity comprises the Gospel.

1. He knows the glory of the Gospel and how this glory is to be shining in himself.
  2. He is convinced of the unique power of the Gospel, the only fount of righteousness and salvation.
  3. He is devoted with heart and soul to the Gospel.
  4. You should want no minister who could in any way violate the Gospel, give men a stone in place of bread, a serpent instead of a fish, law instead of Gospel; or one who tires of preaching, teaching the Gospel and applying it to you; or one whose life is not wholly controlled by the Gospel; etc.
- 

As children of God we all need the ministry of the New Testament, the ministration of the spirit. For this reason we are banded together as a congregation, have our organization, constitution, officers, our place of meeting. For this reason we and our children come to Sunday school and to church. We prize

### **The Glory of the Christian Ministry.**

- I. We expect the most glorious gifts from the Christian ministry.
  1. Salvation from the law on the tables of stone, from death, from condemnation.
  2. We expect this ministry to lead us to God, to Christ, to the spirit, to life, to the righteousness before God.
  3. The glory of this ministry compared with that of Moses. At all hazards this glorious ministry must be maintained among us.
- II. We thus must have the right men in our ministry.
  1. True assistants of St. Paul.
  2. Full of faith in the glorious Gospel they bring and apply, and devoted heart and soul to this Gospel alone.
  3. Men who would not violate one iota of the Gospel.



4. Men whose glory is in the many they have led to righteousness.

God give us such men in our ministry!

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As his beloved children God has given us

### **The Glorious Christian Ministry.**

- I. For this reason we have a congregation.
  - II. For this reason we safeguard our pulpit, our altar, and our membership.
  - III. For this reason we call and obligate our minister.
  - IV. We do all this to be sure to get what God intends as his gift to us.
- 

The greatest danger to the children of God comes from the so-called ministers and it comes to them in their very churches. The big sect (Romanist), the many sects, the sectlets, the bad ministers in the true church.

### **The Great Clerical Crime.**

- I. Its gravity.
  1. It deprives dying souls of righteousness and life, or places obstacles in our way when we seek to obtain these treasures.
  2. It is so grave because this is a crime against God — Christ — the Gospel — the true Church.
- II. The aggravating circumstance.
  1. The clerical criminals pose as benefactors, many claim and obtain high pay and great honors.

2. They even thank God for making them what they are, ascribing their work to God's enabling!
- III. The condoning churches.
1. Blind to the difference between the glory of the law and the glory of the Gospel.
  2. Captivated by outward numbers and display (Matt. 7:22-23).
  3. Indifferent to the Word.
- IV. The safeguards against this clerical crime.
1. The measures we take in our constitution and our organization.
  2. The vigilance we must ever exercise.
  3. The support we must give true ministers of God.

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### **The Glory of the Gospel.**

- I. It is not merely letter (precept), but spirit.
- II. It does not kill, but makes alive.
- III. It does not cease, but has imperishable truth and clarity.

# The Third After-Trinity Cycle

## The Christian Maturing in the Church

### **The Thirteenth Sunday After Trinity.**

*“The Promise Given as the Result of Faith in Jesus Christ”*

### **The Fourteenth Sunday After Trinity.**

*Led by the Spirit, not by the Flesh*

### **The Fifteenth Sunday After Trinity.**

*“Let Every Man Prove his Own Work”*

### **The Sixteenth Sunday After Trinity.**

*“Strengthened with Might by his Spirit in the Inner Man”*

### **The Seventeenth Sunday After Trinity.**

*“The Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace”*

### **The Eighteenth Sunday After Trinity.**

*“In Everything Ye are Enriched by Him”*

# The Thirteenth Sunday After Trinity. Gal. 3:15-22

## “The Promise Given as the Result of Faith in Jesus Christ”

*The Third Section of the After-Trinity Cycle.*

See the introduction to the Second Section beginning with the Sixth Sunday after Trinity. The Third Section or Sub-Cycle comprises six Sundays, the Thirteenth to the Eighteenth after Trinity.

The caption for the first section (First to Fifth Sunday after Trinity) is, the Christian **in the World**.

For the second section (the Sixth to the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity) we use the caption, the Christian as **the Child of God**.

The caption for the third section (the Thirteenth to the Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity) I take to be, the Christian **Maturing in the Church**. The subjects of the six texts in this sub-cycle may be formulated as follows:

1. Gal. 3:15-22 for the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity, *the Promise Given as the Result of Faith in Jesus Christ*. In this promise the maturing Christian lives by faith.
2. Gal. 5:16-24, the Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity, the maturing Christian *Led by the Spirit and not Under Law*.
3. Gal. 5:25-6:10, the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity, the maturing Christian *Testing out his Own Work*.
4. Eph. 3:13-21, the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity, the maturing Christian *Strengthened with Might by his Spirit in the Inner Man*.

5. Eph. 4:1-6, the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity, the maturing Christian *in the Unity of the Spirit by the Bond of Peace*.
  6. 1 Cor. 1:4-9, the Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity, the maturing Christian's *Thanks for Being Enriched*. This text and subject fittingly close the third sub-cycle.
- 

Our present text is selected from that section in Galatians which impressed upon the readers the great limitations of the law. In our text we are told that the law certainly cannot overturn or alter God's own testament. The ancient Judaizers who invaded Galatia made too much of the Mosaic law; all who are Judaistically, i.e. legalistically, inclined do the same today. We need Galatians to keep us safe. For one thing, the law came in 430 years after God had put his testamentary promise into force. It ought to be as plain as day, that no testament, not even a mere human testament, can be annulled or even altered after it is in force. The maturing Christian does not live in the law, but wholly *in the Promise Given as the Result of Faith in Jesus Christ* (v. 22).

The gospel text for the day is Luke 10:23-37, the Good Samaritan. The point of contact with the epistle text is found in the question regarding what the law requires. The lawyer is to learn that he cannot inherit eternal life by way of the law. This truth our epistle also teaches. The ancients found Jesus Christ depicting himself in the character of the Good Samaritan, — he and he alone will save us.

**Brethren, I speak in human fashion. Though (only) a man's, having (once) been confirmed, no man voids a testament or adds thereto.** The affectionate "brethren," rather significant in this Epistle, would open the hearts of Paul's readers to what he is saying. "I speak in human fashion" means: so that every one can at once understand me. The illustration from human experience, thus introduced, is exceedingly common. Grammars and dictionaries leave much to be desired in regard to ὅμως, which here and in 1 Cor. 14:7 is concessive: "although" only a man's testament. Διαθήκη is to be understood in the sense of "testament," for only a testament is confirmed (we should say "probated"). Our versions waver in uncertainty between "testament" and "covenant", but a human covenant is entered into by two

parties, hence if the reference is to a covenant we should here have a plural, not “a man’s,” but “of men.” On the whole subject of the Hebrew *berith* and its being rendered by διαθήκη in the LXX see the information given in my Interpretation, Matt. 26:18 or 1 Cor. 11:25.

A man’s testament, duly confirmed and thus put into force, is unchangeable, inviolable. No one can void that testament, no one can affix codicils to it. Paul’s argument is from the less to the greater: if this is the case with regard to an ordinary man’s testament, it is much more the case with regard to God’s testament. The *tertium comparationis* is the unchangeableness. Paul’s illustration is not an allegory, full of many points of resemblance; we must abide by the one point indicated by the tertium. We need not ask as to what law Paul has in mind, Jewish, Roman, Galatian, etc. No ancient or modern legal practice permits a will, duly in force, to be set aside by a substitute offered by someone else; nor does it allow the addition of codicils by any person.

[16] After the main point of the illustration has been clearly stated, Paul states what he thus illustrates. **Now to Abraham were spoken the promises and to his Seed. Not does he say, “And to the seeds,” as for many, but as for One, “And to thy Seed,” who is Christ.** These promises of God resemble a human testament which is already duly in force and in process of administration after the testator’s death. God’s promises were spoken at various times, but they formed one testamentary promise, and the beneficiaries named are two: “Abraham — Abraham’s Seed, Christ.” Commentators generally pass by Abraham and discuss only “his Seed,” but this is a mistake. Even Isaac and Jacob could not be added here, for they, like all others, inherit only as “sons of Abraham” (V. 7).

Note the emphasis: to Abraham were spoken the promises and to his Seed. Yet Abraham and his Seed are not on an equality as the two heirs of God’s testament. There would be no Abraham, the father of believers with multitudes of spiritual sons, apart from “his Seed” (Christ). The whole testamentary blessing was Abraham’s, making him the father of these sons, only through “his Seed...” As “his Seed” Christ himself was promised to Abraham, when no hope of fulfillment seemed possible. That promise Abraham believed (v. 6), and he is thus named the heir together with the Seed. “His (Abraham’s) Seed” connects Christ and Abraham. These two belong together as do no other two, but “the Seed” is supreme.

The two “and”: not “And to the seeds” — but “And to thy Seed,” point us to Gen. 13:15 and 17:8 where this “and” appears with the dative. Yet in these passages the word “Seed” is indeed singular, Hebrew *zera*’, but it is collective and thus practically a plural. Zahn scores those who think that Paul is rabbinical in his exegesis and that he disregards the fact that *zera*’ is a collective. We need none of the strained explanations. Paul interprets Gen. 13:15; 17:8 in the light of Gen. 22:18 and of all the other promises to Abraham, which Jesus sums up in the statement: “Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad,” John 8:56. The testamentary promises apply to others because they apply in a peculiar way to Abraham and to Christ. This fact is conserved by the singular, “And to thy Seed,” although it is a collective, and it would at least have been rendered obscure if the word had been the plural “seeds.” Paul claims no more. The collective *zera*’ focuses on Christ. In all the spiritual seed of Abraham (collective) appears Christ, the one person. For this reason the neuter σπέρμα is followed by the masculine relative ὅς, “who” (not “which”) is Christ. Of course, the gender is that of the predicate “Christ,” yet here there is more than the mere grammar. All the children of God, a great collective “Seed” indeed, start with Abraham, and are all one in Christ.

[17] Paul now applies the illustration of the testament: **Now this I mean: a testament that has been confirmed in advance by God, the law that has come four hundred and thirty years later, does not unconfirm, so as to put the promise out of effect. [18] For if the inheritance (is derived) from law, no longer (is it) from promise; but to Abraham God has graciously granted it by means of promise.** Τοὔτο λέγω == “This I mean.” The whole matter is startlingly simple. Here is a testament, confirmed by God himself more than 430 years in advance of the giving of the law. Does any man who is in his right senses now dare to claim that after those centuries the law upset and unconfirmed that testament? The very idea is preposterous. Yet this is what the Judaizers wanted the Galatians to believe, what all legalists still want us to believe. They do not say so outright, but their exaltation of the law says it plainly enough.

God’s testament needs no confirmation. When God does confirm it with an oath (Heb. 6:16-18), this is only a condescension to us, to make our faith certain. The number 430 years is an understatement, the purpose of which few recognize. In an argument an understatement induces men to add what

the understatement omits, — they feel you might in truth claim more. They will the more readily believe. An overstatement has the opposite effect. The 430 years cover only the residence in Egypt, to which might well be added the years of the sojourn of the patriarchs in Canaan before Jacob migrated to Egypt, estimated at 200 years.

“So as to put the promise out of effect” stresses the vital point. The heart of the testament is the promise it contains. All testaments are alike in this respect.

[18] The point at issue, as far as all legalists are concerned, is simple indeed, as γάρ explains. It is a mere question of easily ascertainable fact. “If the inheritance in God’s testament is ἐκ νόμου, derived in any way from what is law, then most certainly it is no more derived ἐξ ἐπαγγελίας, from promise.” Everyone sees that the two exclude each other. But what is the plain, unquestioned, historical fact? This that to Abraham God graciously granted it by means of promise. Facts are invincible. Here is the fact in regard to the present matter. God’s promise and testament, confirmed even by an oath, stands, and no law of any kind, given centuries later, can upset and change this fact.

[19] But: **Why then the law?** If the promise made the testament, what use was there for the law at any date? Indeclinable τί == why.” The R.V.: “What then is the law?” is due to the opinion that Paul delays his answer until v. 24, feeling it necessary first to clear up certain points. But Paul’s question is “why,” and he answers it at once.

**For the sake of the transgressions it was added, up to (the time) when the Seed came, to whom the promise had been made, — (this law) put into force as an ordinance by means of angels in connection with a mediator’s hand.** Here are statements that might well astonish all Judaizers and all legalists. The law was only “added,” as something secondary. Χάριν is a preposition, denoting the reason or the aim, here the latter. The law had nothing whatever to do with the testament. The law was added only “for the sake of the transgressions,” yet not, as we might imagine, to check these transgressions. The very opposite is meant: in order to increase and multiply them and to reveal fully how damnable they are. The image in the Greek παράβασις is that of leaving the road marked out by the law and walking somewhere along the side of it.



It is perfectly true, the purpose of the law is transgression. It is for sinners only; sinless ones need no law. The moment the law meets the sinner, because of the sin in him he reacts to it by transgression. As long as it is undisturbed, sin stirs but lightly. It is like a lion, asleep or moving quietly. Apply the stick of the law to it, — its teeth flash, it rages and roars, it tries to rend and tear, it shows what a wild beast it really is. The stick does not make the beast a beast, also it does not kill or change the beast into a lamb; but it does make the beast show what a beast it is.

“Up to (the time) when the Seed came to whom the promise had been made,” — for a limited time only and for the Jews only, from Sinai, where they became a nation, to the time of Christ, when they ceased to be a nation. Do legalists ever think of this great historical fact? The historical mission of the entire Mosaic code ended when the promise made to Abraham (v. 18) was fulfilled in Christ, who is here called “the Seed,” as explained in v. 16. But what about the time from Adam to Moses and Sinai? Rom 5:14 supplies the answer. And what about the time since Calvary? Rom. 2:12-16 supplies the answer. Even pagans have the moral law engraved in their hearts, which by the working of their own conscience condemns them. When at any time a legalist wants to use the Mosaic code, either its ceremonial, its civil, or its moral features, as a means of salvation (like the pagan moralist in Rom. 2:1-16, and the Pharisaic Jewish moralist in Rom. 2:17-29), he is only abusing the law and damning himself the more. Not only is a part of the Mosaic law abrogated in Christ, but for the believer all law, with all its condemnation, is ended in Christ; there is no more *κατάκριμα*, verdict of condemnation, from any law for those who are in, i.e. in connection with Christ Jesus by faith.

Christ is “the Seed.” To him the promise of the testament was made. He is the Heir. The inheritance is in his possession. We are his fellow heirs (V. 29; Rom. 8:17), since by faith we are Abraham’s seed.

With the temporary nature of the Mosaic code, which was intended only for the Jews, corresponds the inferior manner of its bestowal. It was “put in force as an ordinance (*διαταγείς*, in Acts 7:53 Stephen has the plural noun *διαταγάς*) by means of angels, in connection with a mediator’s hand” (hand == service). Paul refers to more than just the two tables of stone; he refers also to all of the Tabernacle arrangements, etc. What the angels did, we are not told. In all of this Moses acted as “mediator,” *μεσίτης*, i.e. as Israel’s

representative by whose service this entire law-ordinance was transmitted. As regards Christ, “the Seed,” the great Heir, all this was vastly different. He inherited the promise of the testament without angelic or human aid. He was the Mediator in the highest sense of the term, himself the Godman, reconciling the world to God.

**[20] Now the mediator does not belong to one person; but God is one person.** A statistician has counted 250 different interpretations of this verse; yet the words and their meaning are simple. Keep to the context. This is said with reference to the transmission of the law to the whole people of Israel by Moses. It is said also in contrast to the way in which the testament with its promise was given. Since he is one person, God acted for himself and needed no representative when giving the law; Israel, being a young nation, had a representative when receiving the law from God. Ἐνὸς οὐκ ἔστιν, “is not of one,” is the Greek idiom for “does not belong to one,” i.e. one person does not need a representative, as a whole nation does. The angels were not used as God’s representatives.

Paul is clearing away the whole idea that in some way the law is an addition to, or an alteration of, God’s will and testament to Abraham. It is only a temporary and a subordinate set of regulations, intended only for the Jewish nation. How different the testament! God in person appeared to Abraham in person (Gen. 17:1-21). When at last the testament was executed, God was in Christ (2 Cor. 5:19). One person, Abraham, received the testament, and he needed no representative. One person, Christ, was Heir and received the inheritance, and again he needed no representative. Nor did God when dealing with Abraham and with Christ. But the law was intended for all of the Jews, hence their representative, ὁ μεσίτης, with the generic article. So great is the difference between the testament and the law that no one should even dream of considering the law a late codicil to the testament, to say nothing of substituting the law for the testament, thereby making the latter void.

[21] To the great inferiority of the law belongs its inability to produce life.

To attach the law to the testament (Gospel), or to substitute it for the testament, is one extreme (legalism); to make the law a contradiction of the

testament (Gospel) and thus to set the law aside (antinomism), is the other extreme. Both are false.

In order to drive the Galatians into their legalism, the Judaizers could confront them with the alternative: either this legalism, or antinomism, complete rejection of the law. Many an argument is couched in the form of such a logical dilemma. The one alternative, which is obviously to be rejected, is used to compel the acceptance of the other alternative. To the question: **Is the law, then, contrary to the promises of God?** so that the law would have to be rejected, the apostle answers: **Perish the thought!** μὴ γένοιτο, an optative of wish: “May (such a thing) not be!” an expression often used by the apostle. Γάρ explains that the trouble with the law is again its great lack, that if it had not been for the great inability of the law, God would have used it for salvation instead of using promise and testament.

**For if there had been given a law, one able to make alive, actually the righteousness would have been (derived) from law.** There was no such law, in fact never could be. [22] **But the Scripture** did what alone was possible since the power of law was such as it was, it **locked up everything together under sin, in order that the promise might be given as a result of faith in Jesus Christ to those believing.** We have a past condition of unreality: εἰ with the aorist (protasis), the aorist with ἄν (apodosis), the imperfect ἦν here doing duty for the aorist of εἶναι which is not used. An apodosis of present unreality is excluded because Abraham is included. “Had been given” implies that every law is given by a law-giver. The implication is that any law worthy of the name must come to man from above. All evolutionary ideas of the origin of law are here denied. When man manufactures his own law, he may call it law, but it is not worthy of the name. Consider our legislatures and our congress. Note how at one time they make an act a crime and in a short time make that same act entirely legal. This is playing with law-making.

There never was a law that was able to bestow life. If there could be such a law, it would not be law; if it really were law, it would have a different effect. The very idea that a law, any kind of a law, should produce life is a self-contradiction. Note how making alive, or life, is here connected with “the righteousness,” ἡ δικαιοσύνη the quality which is produced by God’s favorable verdict, when he declares a man righteous before his judgment-seat. Sin produced unrighteousness and thus spiritual death. Life,

ζωή, the very essence of spiritual life, is born in man when God pronounces him righteous. All the law-works in the world do not restore spiritual life to a single sinner, all Judaizers, Pharisees, and legalists to the contrary notwithstanding. These men usurp the throne of judgment and declare their own works righteous (Luke 16:15). In the same way every criminal would like to acquit himself. But in God's sight all these law-works are nothing but filthy rags (Is. 64:6).

“But” (ἀλλά), since there was no law that was able to give life, “the Scripture locked up everything together” in one great mass “under sin,” i.e. under its curse and doom. As in v. 8 “the Scripture” 2 God who is its author. Yet “the Scripture” is named as the agent because every one of us may read the Scripture and see for himself what it has done. “The Scripture” locks up not only all men, but τὰ πάντα, all that pertains to them, their thoughts, words, deeds, “everything,” as in a great prison from which no law offers the least hope of escape. Paul does not say “the law” or “law” in general lock up; for the Mosaic law did not appear until the Jews reached Sinai. To be sure, it is “law” that seals the fate of all sinners, and “law,” in due time also the Mosaic code, served for that purpose. By writing “the Scripture” Paul makes it clear that he reaches back to Adam himself, whose fatal sin the Scriptures record so fully.

The purpose back of these many Scripture statements, which doom the sinner, was not to damn him for ever. Nor was it to send him to the law to pile up law-works (dung, Phil. 3:8), as if salvation were accomplished by legalism. No, no, but “in order that the promise might be given as the result of faith in Jesus Christ to those believing.” The purpose was to bring all of us to the promise and to make us receive the gift of that promise by faith in Jesus Christ. You cannot receive a promise by law-works. The only way to obtain it is to believe the promise, to trust the One who makes it. “The promise” is to be understood in the intensive sense: that which is promised, righteousness, life, and salvation. Abraham is the example. God's purpose was to close every avenue save this one: the promise — given as the result of faith (ἐκ πίστεως, source) — to all who believe in Jesus Christ. If you ask why only this avenue was left open to the sinner, the answer is, because no other avenue existed or could exist. For if men could have been saved without the Seed, Christ, without his humiliation and his death, we may be sure God would have taken that way.

Twice faith is named: ἐκ πίστεως — τοῖς πιστεύουσι. The Scripture is never reluctant about pivoting everything on faith. Study especially the ἐκ phrases: “out of faith” comes righteousness and life (Rom. 1:17), justification (Rom. 3:30), life (Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38). These ἐκ phrases are possible only on one condition: “faith” always has its contents, and is never empty. It is never anything but “faith in Jesus Christ” (objective genitive). When faith is viewed only as an activity of ours, these ἐκ phrases would be wrong. But when viewed as the passive recipient of Jesus Christ, yes, then “right out of” (ἐκ) faith spring justification, righteousness, life.

## Homiletical Aid

To be a mature Christian you must be clear in regard to what is now called legalism. This is the ancient Jewish error that sought to mislead the early Christians, against which St. Paul testified so mightily. To trust in legalism to obtain life and salvation is to lose both. We must reject all legalism and trust wholly in God’s promise fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

### **Away with Legalism!**

That means:

- I. No trust in law or law-works for spiritual life, righteousness, and salvation.
  1. Some trust altogether in their keeping the law of God. Some think they must have such works in addition to their faith in Christ. The insidiousness of this error, the deadly danger. No man can climb to heaven by a ladder made by himself, or by one partly made by himself.
  2. The folly of trusting in law etc. The Gospel Promise and testament saved Abraham hundreds of years before God gave the law. This law could not and did not change the saving power of that Promise. Fulfilled in Christ, this Promise stands unchanged, unchangeable to this day. No law in the whole world can put life

into your heart; it can only make demands upon you, demands that you cannot fulfill.

3. Trust in law and in doing what the law demands never has saved a soul and never will. Away with legalism! This means:

II. Trust only in Jesus Christ for spiritual life, righteousness and salvation.

1. In his infinite love God gave to Abraham and to his Seed, Christ, the great Gospel Promise, like a signed and sealed Testament, that through Christ he would redeem the world of sinners.
2. By faith in that Promise and in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, Abraham was saved. He is thus the father of all believers. In the same way all the Old Testament saints were saved. Not one of them was a legalist.
3. The Promise was fulfilled. Christ died and rose again for our redemption. He is the Heir of salvation. Believe in him and you are saved, and not only partly, but completely. Never try to add anything of your own. Faith in Christ is both your spiritual life as a child of God and your righteousness before God. God's moral law is nothing but your guide for thankfully serving him by faith.

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The opinion that all roads lead to heaven, that the main thing is that you desire earnestly to reach that blessed goal. Satan's opiate to keep men asleep, indifferent to the one and only road that does end in heaven. So I ask:

**Quo Vadis? Quo Vadis? Whither Away? Whither Away?**

You reply:

**I Am On the Way to Heaven!**

- I. Are you? — if you are on the road of the law?

1. The law is not even a part of the road to heaven. The law was given too late for that. It never took the place of the real road or in any way altered that real road.
  2. The law only stirs up transgressions and reveals the desperateness of your case. The law cannot give life. Only deluded people travel this road.
- II. You are! — if you are on the road of the promise by faith in Jesus Christ.
1. This is the road Abraham, the father of all believers, traveled, when God made and confirmed to him the testamentary promise by expiating our sins by means of his blood.
  2. The one way out from sin to heaven is faith in Jesus Christ and in the promised testament of his blood which cleanses us from all sins.

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Many people object when everything is made to depend on faith alone. Here is a miserable criminal with a life worse than misspent, finally brought to account by the law — the malefactor on the cross, — and just because in the last hour he believes, you say, he is saved. Here is a fine gentleman who has lived a life of credit to his community, supporting every forward movement, every charitable effort, a member of the best fraternities, an asset in every way to the city, — and just because he does not believe in Christ, you say, he is cast into hell. No, I will believe no such doctrine as that, even if it is taught in the Bible. This is the way men blindly reason.

The mature Christian must see how blind this reasoning really is, so as never to be caught by its fallacies, and so as to be able to point out to others the falsity of this reasoning.

### **Why Does Everything Depend on Faith? Just Why?**

- I. No man can claim salvation. His sins cancel every claim. There would be no salvation, if it depended on men and what they might do. Not one step upward toward heaven could they raise even one of their

number. The law of God makes that very clear: when you come with that law, the transgressions only flare up the more. God did not leave man in his wretched plight. Everything depends on faith, because everything depends on God's promise. Only by his promise does man get to heaven, and there is no way to obtain that promise except by believing what it says. Try anything else and you lose the promise.

II. We may put this in another way. How can sinful man get to a golden mansion in the skies? The very idea is preposterous. Let him be as grand a man in the town as he pleases, even the town does not reward him with a house on Main Street. When he is dead they cover him with flowers and with eulogies in the daily papers. No, the mansions in heaven are too valuable to be handed out to people praised on earth. God reserves them for his children. He bequeathes them by a testament. That testament is the Bible. Unless you are named in the testament you cannot inherit. Only believers in Christ are so named. For this reason everything depends on faith, because everything depends on God's testament. That testament is inviolable. The whole world could not alter it. God's own law did not change one iota of it. The only question is whether you are specified in that testament. If you refuse faith, you eliminate yourself.

III. There is still another way in which to answer our question. The promise and the testament deal with the removal of your sins. You do not suppose for one minute that you could enter heaven with a single sin left upon you? The light of heaven would shine through you, as if you were made of glass, and not one wrong thing found in your soul could be hid for one instant. But how are you going to wash your soul so heavenly clean? You are right, God will have to do it, or it will never be done. Well, he tells you how he does it through the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son. Now do you see why everything depends so completely on faith? Because it depends on Jesus Christ and his fulfillment of the testamentary promise. Turn from Christ, ignore or reject him, — the mere act of unbelief leaves you without the cleansing blood, without which it is hopeless for any man even to think of getting to heaven. No, my friends, what the Bible says about faith is vital, no matter what others, even the whole world, may claim.



Note: In this sketch the formulated parts of the sermon are not stated at the beginning of the elaboration, but well toward the end of the elaboration of the respective part. They may be stated at the very end, as summing up with precision the whole elaboration. See sermons constructed in this style in my New Gospel Selections. Why preachers do not use this pattern when constructing their sermons is a mystery.

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Let us not join in the presumptuous and blasphemous talk of so many who seem to think that they have a right to regulate who is and who is not to enter heaven, or who feel that God must consult and satisfy them in regard to whom he admits and whom he excludes.

### **The Matter of Admitting People into Heaven.**

- I. Is it yours to determine?
  - II. Or shall we let God determine?
- 

### **Is Your Name Found in Abraham's Testament?**

The Scriptures constitute that testament. Examine them yourself.

- I. It is not, if you are a legalist and cling to Moses' law and seek to earn your salvation in some way, if only in part. You then cannot inherit.
- II. It is indeed, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, trusting him alone for your salvation, receiving it as a pure gift, which you could never earn even in the least part.

That a man is justified before God and is saved without his own merit and work, solely by grace through faith in Jesus Christ is the chief and basic doctrine by which the Christian Church stands or falls (Smalc. Articles, II, 1:5). Yet this doctrine is the glaring opposite of what the natural man thinks concerning being saved and of what therefore all other religions teach concerning this matter. For no matter how they differ from each other, in

this they all agree, that man is justified before God because of his own works. Yea, so deeply is this delusion rooted in the hearts of men, that it does not die out even in the Christian Church. For not only are such members found who imagine that they are Christians and are being saved by living outwardly respectable lives and doing Christian works, like going to church and the like, but even true Christians often become uncertain of their salvation when they feel their sins in their conscience and realize that they are not living in as godly a way as they ought to live according to the law of God. This would not occur, if they would hold fast to the belief that in order to be saved the law and pious works are of no avail, that grace does everything.

The doctrine of justification by grace alone must therefore be preached continuously, in order that the self-righteous may be rebuked and corrected, and the true Christians be more and more grounded in this comforting doctrine.

### **The Justification of a Poor Sinner before God, a Free Gift of Divine Grace.**

- I. The Gospel so attests.
- II. The law itself so confirms.

O. H. in Magazin\_etc. Vol. 8.

# The Fourteenth Sunday After Trinity. Gal. 5:16-24

## Led by the Spirit, not by the Flesh

The mature Christian must be fully informed in regard to the conflict between the spirit and the flesh, which is bound to disturb him. The victory of the spirit dare not be uncertain. The Christian must not be caught by legalism (last Sunday), and, on the other hand, he must not be worsted by the desires of the flesh. The gospel for the day is Luke 17:11-19, the ten lepers, nine of whom followed promptings of the flesh and did not return to give thanks.

In the Third Part of Galatians (5:13 — 6:16) Paul tells the Galatians how they should use their Christian liberty, which he has described to them. They are to exercise it by means of love (5:13-15); next by following the spirit and not the flesh (5:16 etc.). Indeed, there would be no liberty if the flesh were on the throne. **Now my meaning is: Keep walking with what is spirit, and you will not carry out any craving of what is flesh.** This is what Paul means to convey (λέγω) to the Galatians in regard to their daily life and conversation: that in thought, in word, and in deed they ever use what regeneration has brought to birth in them (spirit); then the stirring of what is still left in them of sinful flesh, their old depraved nature, will not be carried out into action but will be crushed in its incipency (v. 24).

In the Greek all of the nouns are anarthrous, hence qualitative, a fact which we try to convey in our translation. We join issue with our versions and with many commentators regarding the meaning of πνεῦμα in this section. The word does not mean the Holy Spirit, but the Christian's regenerate spirit. It is impossible to make the Third Person of the Godhead the opposite of the flesh that is still active in us. The very thought is intolerable. In Rom. 8:1-11 Paul writes "God's Spirit," "Christ's Spirit,"

etc., when he distinguishes the Holy Spirit from our spirit; in the seven instances in this section where πνεῦμα is used it has no modifying genitive. The whole analogy of Scripture proves that we never use the Holy Spirit as a means, yet that would be the force of πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε, if the word referred to the Holy Spirit. It is wrong when the A.V. translates: “Walk in the Spirit,” for if this were the intended meaning Paul would have written ἐν. “Walk by the Spirit” (R.V.) has caught the sense correctly, but it suggests the unbiblical thought that we may use the Third Person of the Godhead as a means for our walk.

We are to use our own “spirit,” our new spiritual life, namely the quality of this spirit (hence no article): keep walking “with what is spirit.” We are not to let this part of our being remain idle. Keep what is spirit in you active, in all that you think, say, or do! That will keep down “what is flesh” in you: “and you will not carry out any craving (no article) of what is flesh (no article).” Ἐπιθυμία == craving, lust, evil desire; in the New Testament the word is always used in a bad sense; although in the classics it is a vow media. What is flesh in us is always on the alert to take control. Hence what is spirit must ever keep awake and keep all our faculties and all our members busy in its employ.

[17] The admonition is greatly needed. **For the flesh has cravings against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. For these lie opposed to each other, so that you are not doing what you may want.** “The flesh,” “the spirit” have the article of previous reference: “this flesh and this spirit that I am speaking about.” The verb matches the noun ἐπιθυμίαν, but the verb is a vow media, since it is used with reference to the spirit as well as with reference to the flesh. These two are like hostile forces that are facing each other, each with cravings Opposed to the other, ever ready to clash. Paul knows of no exceptions, he is no perfectionist.

ἵνα is consecutive, it states result (according to all the late grammatical information): “so that you are not doing what you may want.” The spirit in you stops you from doing what you may want to do to satisfy the craving of the flesh. Our versions and others assume the opposite sense: that the flesh prevents us from doing what the spirit (Spirit) wants. But Paul is here not recording the victories of the flesh, (as in Rom. 7:15 etc.), but those of the spirit: “and you will not carry out any craving of what is flesh.” If kept

active in the battle with the flesh the spirit will certainly prevail. The wrong grammar has produced some awful interpretations, such as that it is God's purpose that our spirit (or God's Spirit) should not do what it wants.

[18] Paul adds to his elucidation: **Now** (δέ, another point) **if you are being led by what is spirit, you are not under what is law**, in other words you have the great Gospel freedom to which you have been called. This harks back to v. 13 and now shows us what this freedom amounts to in our daily experience. To be led by what is spirit is another way of saying to walk by means of spirit, yet now in place of means "spirit" is made our guide. Note again the anarthrous nouns. In the similar passage, Rom. 8:14, "God's Spirit" is the leader, and the result is according, we are "sons of God." Of course, it is true that when the spirit leads us the spirit is prompted by the Holy Spirit. By rendering correctly, "what is spirit," we lose nothing whatever pertaining to the Holy Spirit.

The fact that our regenerate spirit is in control and leads us in the use of all our faculties and all our members is evidence that "we are not under what is law" (anarthrous, anything in the nature of law, of course, including also the Mosaic law). The tyranny of the law, as well as its curse, is gone. All the law-slavery, that ended in death, is abolished. We are free. The leadership of what is spirit and new life in us proves it. Many are frightened because of this freedom. No more to have a club and a curse behind them, driving them on, seems dangerous to them. These legalists want to remain "under law," they feel better to be law-slaves. But we Christians must become mature and get past such feelings. We are "under grace," as Paul says elsewhere. Our spirit is free, wholly free, and in its new power voluntarily does with joy and delight all that pleases God. Our spirit makes the law its slave, that must tell us what really pleases God. Another slave-service to which our spirit subjects the law is that by using the law as a club it kills the flesh. The spirit's freedom is perfectly safe. Use it and find out!

[19] **Moreover, public are the works of the flesh, of which kind are fornication, uncleanness, unbridled conduct, — [20] idolatry, sorcery, — enmities, strifes, jealousies, wraths, — factions, splits, separate notions, envies, — [21] spreeds, carousings, and the things like these, concerning which I tell you in advance, even as I told you in advance, that they who perpetrate such things shall not inherit God's Kingdom.** Δέ appends this list of vices. They are "public" (φανερὰ), everybody knows

them as what they are, “the works of the flesh.” When Vices are called “works,” the vices are viewed together with their product.

In catalogs of sins the worst form of each sin is mentioned, first because, of course, the worst must be included; second, because the worst intends to include all lesser forms. So the Fifth Commandment, for instance, forbids murder, but Matt. 5:21 etc., shows that all lesser crimes and sins of this nature are included. Matt. 5:27 etc., teaches the same truth with regard to adultery. Let no one raise his brows and inquire with a meaningful air, how the apostle comes to forbid actual crimes to his Christian congregations.

All of Paul’s catalogs are carefully arranged. He always has the entire list present to his mind before the first item is penned. The most elaborate and most perfect arrangement appears in the list given in 2 Cor. 6:4-10, which list deserves fullest study and appreciation. Another is found in Rom. 1:18-32. I call attention to this fact because so often Paul is not appreciated in regard to this matter, and fault is even found with him by writers who should devote more thought to the text. Some find four groups: 3 — 2 — 8 — 2. But eight is unrhetorical, and this eight contains two fours. We divide into five groups: 3 — 2 — 4 — 4 — 2. Ten is used to express the greatest rhetorical completeness (ten commandments, ten virgins, ten slaves in the parables == all of them). The broken ten, i.e. five == incompleteness; half of the items are listed, and the reader is to add the remaining half. The A.V. follows inferior texts.

Paul begins with “fornication, uncleanness, unbridled conduct,” sexual excesses, the nastiest and most degrading group of sins, with which the pagan world reeked. “Fornication” == all illicit sexual intercourse, and, of course, all that leads up to it, including the desires of the heart (Matt. v. 27 etc.). “Uncleanness” is broader and covers all filth in all its many forms. Ἀσέλγεια is *Zuegellosigkeit*, unbridled sexual conduct, all restraint cast off, like a runaway horse. “Uncleanness” spreads like a flood, “unbridled conduct” rushes through to the limit. These three and the next two vices are comprehensive singulars, thus making a rhetorical five.

[20] With the sex group the godless group is closely allied in the pagan world. Thus we have the pair “idolatry, sorcery.” Idolatry was a grave danger for the Christians. The old superstitions drew them toward the false gods. More than this, civic and provincial festivities and celebrations in

honor of the gods themselves almost compelled participation. Pagan skeptics scoffed at the gods, but none the less participated and acted as if they believed in the gods. Φαρμακεία == administering drugs (our “pharmacy”), then poisoning, and finally baneful sorcery. All sorcery, witchcraft, charms, and the superstitions which furnish the soil and the atmosphere for their existence, are pagan throughout. Under the influence of Christianity Christian words, signs, and symbols were introduced but the sorcery remained as pagan as it had ever been. With this Christian embellishment goes the idea that the devil is able to operate supernaturally in witchcraft, — an idea, promulgated by preachers and professors, that has done untold harm among our people. As nothing else has done, this idea has kept faith in charms alive among our people despite the prohibition of Scripture. I say these things advisedly as the result of an extensive study of this subject and of occultism in general.

After five singulars we have ten plurals, yet not ten in one group, but in three groups, hence not a unit ten (grand rhetorical or symbolical completeness), but a diverse ten (only hinting at this completeness by two fours and a broken four: 4 4 2). Four is the common brief rhetorical completeness, constantly, even intuitively used by writers, and thus distinct from the consciously employed ten. Paul breaks off in the middle of the third four; instead of completing it he adds: “and the things like these,” thus in a double way ending his list, in which there is so much completeness, as being after all incomplete. Who cares to catalog the entire hydra? Cut off one of its heads and two grow in its place. The R.V. has the correct text not the A.V.

Four forms of personal animosity comprise the *hateful* group. Ἐχθραὶ == personal hatred or “enmities.” Ἔρεις == the “strifes” and wranglings that result. Ζῆλοι == the motives so often involved, “jealousies.” Θυμοί == the outbursts of hot passion in “angers.” The first and the third point to motives, the second and the fourth to their product. Hateful animosities produce strifes; jealousies produce passionate outbursts of anger.

Four form the *divisive* group. When persons clash, each so often has his following. People take sides. Relatives and friends rally to the support of the one, as those of the opponent rally around him. Thus there are ἐριθείαι, “factions” or parties. Next διχοστασίαι, actual “splits,” Sunderings, divisions. Also αἰρέσεις (whence our word “heresy”), the word for self-

chosen, special opinions. Thus with their doctrines the Pharisees formed a *hairesis*, a sect, opposed to the Sadducees as another *hairesis*. The Jews applied the word to the Christians (Acts 24:5 and 14; 28:22). Later the word came to mean a peculiar school of philosophy. Paul here uses the word as he does in 1 Cor. 11:19 with a severer meaning, products of the flesh utterly to be condemned. Placed here after “splits” or divisions, these *haireseis* are their cause; they are “separate notions.” In 2 Pet. 2:1 the context deals with false prophets. These bring in *haireseis* of destruction on the side, and some of them deny the very Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. Thus *hairesis* soon became our “heresy.”

[21] When Paul places “envies” into this group he does not mean little envies in common matters of life, for this kind of envy would belong in the enmity group. Placed here into the divisive group led by mercenary “factions,” the envies Paul means are like the envy mentioned in Matt. 27:18 and Phil. 1:15, productive of party splits, rivalries and separatistic doctrine, envies of the worst type.

The broken four: drunkennesses or “sprees” and “carousings” (*Galage*), Luther translates: *Saufen und Fressen*, and no further comment is needed. “And things like these” refers to the entire list, — name as many more as you desire. Concerning all of them Paul once more tells the Galatians in advance, as he has already told them in advance when he preached in their midst, “that they who perpetrate such things (πράσσω, perpetrate) shall not inherit God’s Kingdom.” With the verb “inherit” the apostle touches all that he has said in his letter about “the testament” (3:15 etc.), “the inheritance” (3:18), “heirs” (4:1), “full grown sons” (4:7). “God’s Kingdom” must not be restricted to heaven, for it is inherited in this life. See my *Interpretation* Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:15; Luke 1:33; John 3:3; also this volume Col. 1:13 (Twenty fourth Sunday after Trinity).

God’s Kingdom is God’s rule of grace and of glory. Wherever he thus rules, is his Kingdom. This is not a Kingdom like those on earth in which the subjects make the King and the Kingdom. The reverse is true, the King alone makes the Kingdom. It has no subjects. You are born into this Kingdom as a child and son of the King, and by means of that birth you inherit the Kingdom. You are royal princes (1 Pet. 2:9), and you must conduct yourselves as such. “The Kingdom ours remaineth,” Luther’s hymn. Already we rule in this Kingdom, and we shall rule. Since we are



heirs of the Kingdom, crowns await us. Only kings are crowned. The crowning takes place at the consummation of the Kingdom. We shall then sit with Christ on his throne. The future tense “shall inherit” is not to be dated at the end of the world, but at the moment when people perpetrate the vices here named. When you let the flesh lead you, then and there you forfeit the Kingdom. See my *Kings and Priests* for the details.

[22] Over against “the works of the flesh” Paul places “the fruit of the spirit.” The translators of our versions should have known that the Holy Spirit never bears fruit, that fruit is not predicated of the Persons of the Deity. **But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, — longsuffering, benignity, goodness, — [23] faithfulness, meekness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.** The flesh has “works,” but the product of the spirit, the new life born in us, bears the nobler name “fruit.” The flesh spreads out in all directions, hence the plural “works,” and in the list of these works there are found many plurals. The spirit follows only one direction, it produces the unit “fruit,” which is a collective indeed, yet names only the one pure kind. The one list is heterogeneous, a jangle and incomplete: 3 — 2 — 4 — 4 — 2. The other list is homogeneous: 3 — 3 — 3, a sweet harmony, the three groups, each consisting of three, is complete. These are rhetorical points, and they are generally disregarded. I maintain that Paul built these patterns intentionally, and in this matter too he leaves so many of his commentators (and critics) far behind.

The entire list consists of virtues. “Love” heads the first trio, described at length in 1 Cor. 13. It is the essential fruit of faith and the mother of all other Christian virtues. Ἀγάπη is discussed in Rom. 12:9 (Second Sunday after Epiphany) and in Rom. 13:8 (Fourth Sunday after Epiphany). Paganism did very little with the word; in the LXX it can be used for erotic love; but in the New Testament the word attains its height: “God is love.” As distinguished from φιλία, the love of affection, ἀγάπη is the love of intelligence and comprehension coupled with corresponding purpose. Even Warfield in his great essay (in *Christian Doctrine*) misses the mark when he defines *agape* as the love which sees value in the loved object. Gerhart Kittel’s *Woerterbuch* is pretentious in size and expense, but entirely unsatisfactory regarding this and many other words. Jesus loved (ἀγαπᾶν) his enemies, he did not love (φιλεῖν) a single one of them. The Greek words for “friend” and for “kiss” are derived from φιλεῖν, which helps to show

that only liking and affection are referred to. Much sentimental talk about Christian love would disappear if we all understood what ἀγάπη really signifies. Many preachers have told their people to love, without ever having told them, or having themselves known, what the word really signifies when mentioned as a New Testament virtue.

With love goes “joy,” — a remarkable combination, written by the man who composed 2 Cor. 6:4-10 based on his own experience, yet inserted even in that list: “always rejoicing.” Joy is a cardinal Christian virtue, next to love. This joy is the effect of all the grace we have received by being made heirs of the Kingdom. The Christian cannot be a pessimist. He is the happiest man in the world. His is no fatuous joy, such as the world accepts, ending in gall and wormwood. His joy is undimmed in tribulation and calamity, for the Lord is ever at his side. His joy, so sweet on earth, finally merges into the joy of heaven.

“Peace” as a virtue is subjective, the assured quietness of the soul which knows that all is well between it and God, the opposite of secret or open dread and terror, inspired by the misgivings of conscience. The world tries to imagine peace and goes blithely on its way as if it had peace with God, when it has nothing of the kind. This delusion of peace is pitiful, the more so since all men could have and could enjoy all their life long the true feeling of peace.

“Love, joy, peace” form the response to what God has done and is doing for us; the second trio forms the response to what men need from us; the third trio conserves what we are in ourselves.

Μακροθυμία is “longsuffering,” in the Rheims version “longanimity” (Trench), ascribed also to God: holding out long under trying provocation. Let men mistreat us, it shall not stir us to passion, we will bear it without complaint. Χρηστότης is “benignity,” exhibited by Jesus in Luke 7:37-50, in the reception of the penitent sinner. It is the graciousness which treats men in a kindly, serviceable way. Ἀγαθωσύνη is its sister, “goodness,” perhaps “beneficence” would be better. It is more than a quiescent moral excellence, for it is always active, bestowing what is good upon others, and not only the common earthly good for temporal needs, but especially the spiritual good which benefits the soul.

Our verse division is faulty, πίστις belongs in v. 23, nor is “faith” the proper translation. The A.V. followed Luther. The virtue here referred to is πίστις, *Treue*, “faithfulness,” trustworthiness. Ever true to God, his Word and his will, we will be true also to men.

[23] “Meekness” is the opposite of arrogance, vehemence, violence. Meekness results from the consciousness of our sinfulness and thus looks back to God. The meek are unassuming, mild, gentle, patient, not crowding forward, presumptuous, self-assertive. How they fare, Jesus tells us in Matt. 5:5. Even in this life the Lord ever takes care of them. Read Ps. 37. Ἐγκράτεια is “self-control,” κράτος holding all our desires and passions in check. “Temperance” in our versions is inadequate. These three virtues conserve the Christian’s own character.

“Against such things there is no law,” in the Greek idiom: “is not law” (of any kind). We regard τῶν τοιούτων as a neuter, the proper Greek gender for the feminine list of virtues; the masculine “against such men” is not indicated. There are, of course, more of such virtues. No law in the whole world has anything to forbid in regard to them; if any law should forbid, it would itself be unlawful and lawless. This sounds rather self-evident, but is highly pertinent where the issue is liberty. To walk in these virtues is to walk in true Christian liberty, no law is in any way to disturb us. Christian liberty never consisted in being and doing what we may please. Such notions lead straight back into the works of the flesh, against all of which all proper law fixes its prohibitions and threats of penalty.

[24] It is no liberty to be ruled by the tyrant, the flesh. Look at the list of vices to which the flesh would make us slaves. We have escaped from them. Look at the list of virtues. We are free in practicing them, with no law of any kind upon our heels. How was this escape to liberty achieved? **And they who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the cravings.** In this way the thing was done.

In their conversion they took the flesh from its throne in their hearts and murdered it; they nailed it to the cross of Christ where all our sins were expiated. There they left the flesh to hang. Henceforth they belonged to Christ Jesus, they are οἱ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, “of him,” i.e. his property, he and he alone ruling them in the most blessed liberty.

When comparing 2:20 and Rom. 6:6 note that these passages are passive. In Rom. 8:13 we have the active, but durative, a mortification that continues. Now we have an aorist, ἔσταύρωσαν, to indicate one historical past act: “they did crucify.” What all of these passages say is true, only they do not say quite the same thing, and we must not confuse what is distinctive and valuable. Of course, with our old bound will and our natural ability we could never have staged such a successful rebellion, hurled our own flesh with all its passions (παθήματα, used fourteen times in the New Testament and always in the evil sense) and cravings from the throne, dragged it to the cross of Christ, and there nailed it up to its painful death. To do such a thing would require more than what is commonly called synergism. Hence the passive expressions to which we have referred. It is grace that enables us to accomplish this crucifixion of the flesh in conversion. Adopting Paul’s words: I, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

## Homiletical Aid

Some would call the Christian the most enslaved man in the world. This he cannot do, that he cannot do. Here he cannot go, there he cannot go. It is a sign of great immaturity when a Christian thinks in such fashion and feels aggrieved at his state. The mature Christian understands and rejoices that he is

### **The Freest Man in the World.**

Why, he has been in the greatest rebellion.

I. He has crucified his terrible enemy.

The flesh that ruled him as a tyrant and made him do the nastiest, the most ungodly, hate-filled, and disruptive things. This flesh, his old sinful nature, never satisfied unless it revels in its passions and desires, he killed, he nailed to Christ’s cross, at his conversion. He dethroned the tyrant, he became free, — and that is the greatest freedom in the world. Thus

II. He escaped the worst thralldom.

This is the thralldom in which you have to do what you know is evil and do not want to do and yet cannot help but do (correct exegesis of the Eva clause in v. 17). You see this thralldom all about you in the works of the flesh which men do, although they know the punishment that awaits them. Review of the dreadful catalog. By crucifying the flesh in your conversion this terrible thralldom has been broken for you. You do not have to do these works any longer. If you are sensible, you will use your power and will never do any of them even when strongly tempted. This is the greatest liberty in the world.

III. He has become a prince in God's Kingdom.

He is born anew, an heir of the Kingdom. The spirit is enthroned in him. The things of the flesh are far beneath him. As a prince he lives in a princely manner, for the Kingdom is his, and he is the King's son. Is there any liberty as high as this?

IV. He delights in royal virtues.

These virtues mean freedom. No law has a thing to say against them. The spirit delights to exercise them. They are royal indeed, spiritually royal. Describe them in detail: love, etc. Do we need admonition to make full use of our royal liberty?

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Implacable rebels are taken out and shot. No government tolerates a rebel. Do the same with

### **The Rebel in Your Soul.**

This rebel exists

I. Only in the Christian's soul.

1. The man who is not a Christian is ruled entirely by the flesh, the old man, the old Adam, his sinful will which has never been freed. In him there is no conflict. The rebel sits on the throne and nothing challenges him.

2. With the Christian this is different. He is a twice-born man, regenerated by God's Spirit. In him the flesh has been dethroned, and the spirit, the new man, the implanted Christ, now occupies the throne. He crucified the flesh, nailed it to Christ's cross when he was made a new man in Christ. But that did not end the rule of the flesh. It acts as a rebel seeking to usurp the throne of your soul, to oust the spirit.

II. His rebellion ever to be abortive.

1. Here are the works to which this rebel, the flesh, wants to degrade you, filthy, godless, etc.

2. Here are the virtues to which the spirit has elevated your soul: your response to all that God has done for you — your response to your fellow man's needs — your own nobility of character.

3. Shall the rebel ever win in your soul? Win after you have crucified him? Let the spirit implanted in you lead you (v. 18), walk by means of the spirit (v. 16), and every attempt of the rebel will be abortive, a dismal failure.

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The Christian generally has too low an opinion of himself. Revise your estimate of yourself upward! Show your Christian nobility in all your conduct! As a Christian

### **You Are a Prince in God's Kingdom.**

Realize

I. Your princely position.

The Kingdom of grace and glory. Through Jesus Christ God has made you an heir of this everlasting Kingdom. He has given you his Word by which to rule here on earth in his Kingdom of grace. You have the Word that judges and shall judge the world. With Christ you are to sit and to rule on his throne of glory.

II. Your princely obligation.

The obligation to conquer the flesh and all its works. These menace you, would drag you down from your princely position into filth, ungodliness, etc. Already you have crucified the flesh. Never stoop to its vile and wicked works.

The obligation to follow the spirit, to walk by means of the spirit, to exercise the princely virtues, and thus to grace your inheritance, the Kingdom of God, until you are ushered into the Kingdom of glory.

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You read the daily crime record in the papers. How would you like to be involved in some of those crimes? Such crimes, however, are only the upper layer of the world's wickedness. Unrecorded, except by God in heaven, are all the sins out of which the glaring crimes spring, and all the depravity and moral rottenness in men's hearts from which the sins spring.

Here we are in God's house with his Word and his Spirit, devoted to the very opposite, to the spirit of new life created in us by God. Can there ever be a doubt as to where we think our souls and our lives belong? Can anyone of us ever even think of going back to the flesh and its works?

It is a good thing to set the two side by side, the flesh and what it wants and the spirit and what it loves, that we may be made more mature and firm in our Christian life.

### **Can You Ever Hesitate Between the Flesh and the Spirit?**

- I. When you consider the works of the flesh, the flesh itself and of its works the nasty ones, the ungodly ones, the ones filled with hate, the disruptive ones, the vile ones, and their terrible effect?
- II. When you consider the fruit of the spirit, the spirit itself and the response it makes to God's grace and gifts, to man's needs, and to what its own character should be?

The abnormality that some do hesitate, yea, choose the flesh. Your choice and mine is only confirmed by the comparison which the apostle makes.

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## **What is the Difference between the Life of the Christian and that of the Non-Christian?**

- I. The difference does not lie in this that the non-Christian is all flesh, and the Christian is all spirit.
- II. But in this that the non-Christian is impelled entirely by his flesh, and in the Christian his spirit rules.

C. C. Schmidt, *Weg des Lebens*.



# The Fifteenth Sunday After Trinity. Gal. 5:25-6:10

## “Let Every Man Prove his Own Work”

One of the evident marks of Christian maturity is the ability to evaluate one’s own person and work. In this regard many still seem to be infants. Although they amount to nothing or very little, they imagine that they are very much indeed. Works that are superficial or are tainted they prize and want others to prize. They love flattery, even when its insincerity is apparent. They sow one thing and expect to reap another. The mature and sensible Christian must get far beyond such faulty estimates of himself and of his work. This text is to aid him toward doing so.

Our epistle harmonizes with the gospel for the day, Matt. 6:24-34, the inability to serve two masters, — yet many wrongly imagine that they have such ability — and the worry about our earthly life, when all that we need in this respect shall be thrown in for good measure, if we seek first of all the Kingdom of God.

Our text is the direct continuation of the text for last Sunday. We have the final section of Paul’s instruction regarding the free life of the Christian. Verse 11 etc., forms the conclusion. We may begin a new paragraph with v. 25 or with v. 26. **If we are living with what is spirit** (as we surely are), **with what is spirit let us keep in line.** See v. 16 of the previous text for the same datives of means and for the rendering “spirit” and not “Spirit” (our versions). Paul uses two new verbs: “live” and “keep in line with.” Of course, our entire spiritual life we live by means of what is spirit (πνεῦμα, anarthrous). The condition is one of reality. We do so live. Very well, then “let us keep in line,” let us march in rank and file with what is spirit (the noun again qualitative, without the article). If we did crucify the flesh as something accursed and abominable (V. 24), let us be done with the flesh.

Note how the two πνεύματι are placed side by side for emphasis. What a lovely picture: Paul and all of the Galatians marching along in one line, with no one out of step. Does the flesh still throw any of us out of line? Let each of us look carefully to himself.

The address, “brethren,” should be placed at the end of v. 26, not at the beginning of v. 1 of chapter 6; comp. v. 13; 6:18. **Let us not be vainglorious, challenging each other, envying each other, brethren!** No; “brethren,” all of whom keep in line, will not act in that way. Our liberty in Christ Jesus lifts us above such foolish selfishness. Κενόδοξος, “vainglorious,” denotes the empty praise of men which has no genuine basis in fact. We are not to desire flattery and when flattered boast as if we were highly honored. Where this failing occurs, it will manifest itself in such a way that Christians challenge each other, each demanding more recognition than some other Christian, and envying each other, neither wanting to see the other having more than himself. “Look at all that I have done, and yet he is honored more than I am!” “Why does he receive recognition, and I am ignored?” How many times do we not hear language like this?

[6:1] Unholy ambition delights in seeing a rival stained by same fault or brought to complete downfall. Not so the Christian who has a right estimate of himself. **If also a person gets to be overtaken in some transgression, you on your part, the spiritual ones, do’ you proceed to restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, watching thyself, lest thou also get to be tempted.** With ἔάν Paul visualizes such a case: some brother is overtaken by a transgression. The flesh overtakes him. The idea is not that you or someone else catch him in some sin, when he thought he was safe from observation. We must drop Luther’s idea, which the A.V. adopted, that παράπτωμα is a mild word: *ein Fehl*, “a fault,” a slight slip; the word is serious, a plain transgression of the law, something that is evidently wrong. All that we can exclude in the present connection is deliberate, willful sin, for such sin would mean a complete fall from grace. “Lest thou also get to be tempted” points to sins into which temptation leads us. Include *Uebereilungssuenden* into which one is hurried, sins of more or less ignorance, sins of weakness, when one is not brave enough to say no, sins of deception, in which the sinfulness is cleverly covered up by specious

argument, excuse, etc. Of course, this is a sad manifestation of the presence of the flesh.

What are we, the spiritual ones, to do, we who are led by means of what is spirit (v. 18)? “Do you proceed to restore such a one in a spirit of meekness.” The present tense intimates that it may take some time to do so; the present tense is also iterative and refers to every such case that may occur. Καταρτίζω means to frame a mechanism in an expert manner; then “to restore,” like setting a broken limb, mending a torn net (Matt. 4:21), always indicating an action that requires expert skill (our word “artisan”).

Such a task demands true spirituality, especially “a spirit of meekness” (5:23). Overbearing and harsh ways will make the case worse. Pour in oil and wine and with gentle fingers bind up the wounds. The transgressor is to be brought to a true realization of his sin, to repentance, and to the firm resolve not to be overtaken again. We call this procedure *Seelsorge*. The pastor is to be an expert in this care, is to be like a good physician; but all spiritual Christians are to possess a great deal of the same skill.

“Watching thyself, lest thou also get to be tempted” (ingressive aorist passive) by the flesh, is more than a warning, for it points to the motive for the work of restoration: “suppose you had been caught.” Do not imagine such a thing to be impossible. See 1 Cor. 10:12. When one is too sure of himself, he is prone to cease watching (σκοπεῖν, to look at carefully) himself, and that is very dangerous. Thought about self will help in producing the needed meekness for accomplishing the proper restoration. If you ever fall into transgression, may a good Samaritan be at hand to help restore you, and not only a priest and a Levite with a callous, selfish heart. Paul is right when he uses the singular in this last clause, for “watching yourselves” might mean keeping an eye on each other, — keep it on your own self. Have no illusions about yourself.

[2] Restoring a transgressing brother, so that he walks in line with us once more, is only one of our tasks. Paul thinks of many others. **The burdens of each other keep hearing, and thus fulfill the law of Christ.** Weakness, ignorance, inexperience, lack of caution, difficult surroundings, grief, affliction, etc., help to produce such burdens for fellow Christians. We are not to withdraw from one who is hurt spiritually by any of these conditions. We are to help him bear his burden by encouraging, supporting,

helping him. Each case has its own peculiar need. Paul summarizes. We help lift each burden as we see it pressing down on a brother.

Our great motive for this is the thought that thus we fulfill the law of Christ. This is the law of love, John 13:34; according to Paul the law of Christian liberty; according to James 2:8 “the royal law.” It is the Gospel law or principle. We see it exemplified in the kindness, the compassion, and the help that Jesus constantly manifested to those in need and in trouble. We are to walk in his steps.

[3] With “for” Paul supports his admonition by pointing to the opposite, but not to the opposite action, refusal to bear the burden of others; he at once goes deeper, namely to the delusion from which such refusal springs. For if one deems he is something, while he is nothing, his mind deludes himself. Self-satisfied, such a man thinks he is something (εἶναι τι) and therefore needs no help from his brethren for bearing any burdens he may have, he being capable of taking complete care of himself. His thought is: Let others do the same! Self-satisfied, he is hardhearted and callous.

Paul does not claim that every one is nothing (μηδὲν ὄν). That would not be true. The fault he scores is this, that when a person really is nothing spiritually he considers himself to be something, i.e. a good deal. We have such self-satisfied people who fail to realize how little they really amount to as regards their brethren. It is no fault to be something and then to think accordingly in all honesty. Rom. 12:3 is plain on this point. Grace made a good deal of Paul and he says so in 1 Cor. 15:10. False humility is no virtue. Well, as regards Such a man “his mind deludes himself.” It is the best that can be said about him. Perhaps something will soon crack his self-satisfied and callous shell, so that he will cry for help from his brethren.

[4] So Paul advises all of us: **But his own work let each one keep testing, and then in regard to himself alone he will have his cause for boasting, and not in regard to the other person.** This is the great point of our text. None of us is to live in a fog regarding himself. Your great task is to keep testing your own work, τὸ ἔργον, the summarizing singular, what the whole product of your Christian life really amounts to. God has given you his Word by which to make this test, δοκιμάζειν, as coins and metals were tested for purity and for full weight. You are not to keep on in delusion until at last, when God makes the final test, you and your work will be

rejected as μηδὲν ὄν, amounting to nothing, as not being genuine evidence of faith and love. See Matt. 7:22-23.

When this testing is rightly done, you will be undeceived. The weak and the spurious spots will appear, and you may make them strong and genuine, instead of blindly thinking that they are sound. Above all, you will have your cause of boasting (καύχημα) in your own self, in what God has really accomplished in you, and “not in regard to some other person” (two Sig, “in regard to”). You will not have a false estimate of yourself by comparing yourself with some one else to your advantage. Besser says: *Wer sich an einem andern misst, vermisst sich.*

[5] **For each one will carry his own cargo** (Acts 27:10 has this noun φορτίον), without reference to another person. “Their works do follow them,” Rev. 14:13. The opposite of vainglory (5:26) is not spurious self-abasement, but genuine testing. Legalistic works are hollow and boastful. True Gospel works are genuine. Carry a full cargo of them to judgment day.

[6] I am sorry to say that this verse has been made to mean just about the opposite of what it does mean. A number of writers, including Zahn, understand Paul to mean that the pupil is to pay his teacher, the congregation is to share its material wealth with its minister. Paul says the opposite: the pupil is to have fellowship and part in the spiritual good things, in the spiritual wealth of his teacher. The havoc is wrought because of a grave linguistic error: κοινωνεῖν is made to mean “communicate,” “contribute” money, alms, gifts, and κοινωνία, “contribution,” even “collection” of money, etc. Instead of correcting the commentators, most of the dictionaries trail after them. So this falsification has spread, and this passage is steadily quoted to induce people to pay their pastors. I treat the subject at length in my *Interpretation* of Galatians, no need to do so here. The falsification effects also Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13; Heb. 13:16. Cremer-Koegel 612 etc., is correct.

The paragraph v. 6-10 deals with the Receiving and Imparting of Spiritual Excellence. It does not deal with money. **Moreover, let him who is being instructed in the Word fellowship with the one instructing him in all good things.** To make the proper test of our own work we must be well instructed in the Word. So the admonition is to the effect that every pupil fellowship in all the good things with his instructor, that he let none of

them slip by. Κοινωνεῖν always means “to fellowship,” and the noun means “fellowship.” “All good things” are *im Sinne von heilbringend*, ἀγαθός, soteriological, — not money or material things. Cremer-Koegel p. 4. The teacher has the wealth, and the pupil is to fellowship the teacher in regard to this wealth, the Word. There are disagreeable burdens in which we are to fellowship our brethren. Thank God there is also the Word with its delights, in which we may fellowship our teachers. Paul is referring especially to himself as the teacher of the Galatians. Paul never taught for money; the Judaizers were greedy for money (2 Cor. 11:20). When Paul left Galatia, he did so only after appointing proper teachers in the congregations.

[7] The efforts to make What Paul now says support the idea that teachers are to be duly rewarded show only too plainly that this entire conception is wrong. **Be not deceived, God is not sneered at.** The verb means “to turn up the nose at someone” in disdain. God lets no one do that with impunity. The reference is to the Word and to the good things in the Word which teachers open up to us. The law holds since the world was created: **For what a person keeps sowing, that very thing also shall he reap.** In 2 Cor. 9:6 the point is quantity, here it is identity. You cannot sow one thing and expect to reap the opposite, or even something else. The law is inexorable; turn up your nose against it all you please.

[8] Paul makes the application. **Because the one sowing for his own flesh, from his flesh will reap corruption; but the one sowing for the spirit, from his spirit will reap life eternal.** Ὅτι, “because,” refers to the statement that God is not sneered at, “because” inevitably the reaping will be as here stated; no man sowing for his own flesh shall reap anything but corruption, and only he who sows to the spirit reaps life everlasting, — no turned up nose will ever change these facts.

I am unable to understand the men who refer “flesh” and “spirit” to two different *soils*, and condition the harvest on the soil, and then assure us that Paul has not changed the thought from *seed* to *soil*. No assurance can make these statements true. Equally wrong is the supposed meaning: the one sower sows his money into the soil of his own flesh and thus reaps corruption; the other sows his money into the spirit, i.e. shares it with his religious teachers, and thus reaps life everlasting. I certainly shall not preach such ideas. This interpretation is made much worse by making the second sower sow into “the Spirit” as the soil, gently telling us our own

spirit cannot be meant. It is outrageous to call one of the Persons of the Godhead “soil” and to parallel that Person with the flesh as soil. It is asked, why then Paul does not write “his own spirit” as he writes “his own flesh.” Because “the flesh” and “the spirit” are not both our own equally. The one is born in us, the other is given us later by the Spirit.

Εἰς in the two phrases does not mean “into” the flesh, the spirit, but as Robertson says, is like a dative. The one sows “for his own flesh,” to promote the flesh; the other “for the spirit,” to promote its interests. “Sowing” is figurative for what has been called “walking by what is spirit” (5:16), “being led by what is spirit” (5:18), “living and keeping in line by what is spirit” (5:25). The figure of sowing helps Paul to parallel the flesh and the spirit. Rom. 8:12-13 (Eighth Sunday after Trinity): debtors not to the flesh to live after the flesh, and thus to die, but with the spirit (not Spirit!) to kill the deeds of the flesh and thus to live. The entire stress is on the two sowers and on what their sowing promotes. Nothing is said about seed or soil, for no sower sows without either.

Ἐκ τῆς σαρκός == from this very flesh; ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος == this very spirit. In neither phrase is soil referred to; for the law is that what one sows that he shall reap (v. 7). And Paul has already told us what the flesh produces and what the spirit’s fruit is (5:19-21; v. 22-23). Both sowers get an increase upon what they sow, more works of the flesh, more fruit of the spirit. Only these are the intermediate products, with which the apostle has already dealt in v. 19-23. He now comes to the ultimate product, that of the flesh being φθορά, “corruption,” that of the spirit being ζωὴ αἰώνιος, “life eternal.” Rom. 8:13: “ye shall die — ye shall live.” The word “corruption” is chosen to match “the flesh,” and means *Verderben*, *Vernichtung*, *Untergang*, ἀρόλεια. As “flesh” does not mean the body, so “corruption” does not mean the rotting of the body. The bodies of the godly rot as do those of the ungodly. Corruption is the destruction of soul and body in hell, loss of the Kingdom of God (5:21). The spirit itself is ζωή, “life.” While this may be lost by unbelief, in the believer who sows to the spirit it will grow into the eternal life of heaven in glory. I hold that it is impossible to reduce the great things Paul here presents to the idea of being generous with our money to our religious instructors, instead of wasting our money in a worldly manner.

[9] Many start well in sowing to the spirit, but the work is often hard, lasts long, and so some become discouraged. Hence Paul adds this other (δέ) admonition: **Moreover, in doing the excellent thing let us not be discouraged, for in proper season we shall reap, if we do not relax.** Our versions and the common comment: “Let us not be weary in well doing,” refers to being generous with our earthly means, — a result of the error which makes κοινωνεῖν in v. 6 refer to money given to our instructors. But “doing the excellent thing” (τὸ καλόν) is sowing for the spirit through the virtues listed in v. 22-23. The neuter τὸ sums all up into a unit, the substantivized Greek adjective in place of an abstract noun in good Greek fashion. Ἐγκακεῖν, a compound of κακός, does not mean “to give in to evil” (Robertson’s guess), but “to weary,” “to tire,” to become discouraged or fainthearted, — our versions are correct. Κακός in the verb means “inferior.”

The prospect of the καιρός or “season” when we shall reap so gloriously is to keep us ever cheerful, courageous, and eager in our sowing. Doubly Paul urges us not to give up, for at the end he has the participle “we not relaxing,” μὴ ἐκλωόμενοι. When the blessed harvest season arrives, we shall wonder that we ever thought of growing tired or of letting down in flabbiness. A wait a hundred times longer will then seem as nothing compared with what our sowing has produced.

[10] Thus Paul adds his final admonition: **Accordingly then, while we have opportunity, let us work the thing that is good toward all, and especially toward the house-members of the faith.** Verse 9 is negative: Do not tire! verse 10 is positive: Do with energy! This is the final deduction: ἄρα οὖν. The emphasis is on ὡς καιρὸν ἔχομεν, *jetzt wo*, now while we have opportunity. How are we to look at the time of our sowing here as it lengthens out? As so much extended opportunity, so much more time for working τὸ ἀγαθόν.

Under the spell of the wrong interpretation this verse suffers as does v. 9. Though Paul writes ἐργαζόμεθα τὸ ἀγαθόν, “working the good,” he is made to mean: extend your financial charity to all men, especially to your fellow church members. How many times has this passage been quoted to this effect? No, this is not a broadening of the wrong notion read into v. 6:



be generous to your teachers, and thus generous and charitable to all men, in particular to your brethren.

Paul calls for work, not for gifts of charity. This work is to apply “the good thing,” *das Heilbringende* (ἄγαθόν, soteriological), the Gospel good thing, to all men. The neuter is classic like τὸ καλόν. In v. 6 we are told to get from our teachers all “the good things” we possibly can. This states the source of our spiritual riches. Now with tireless energy we are to dispense the good we have. This states the outflow. Jesus is our example; Paul is another, as far as the outflow is concerned. The great body of this epistle to the Galatians does not end with a plea for charity.

The οἰκέῖοι ever have first call upon us. They are actual “house-members” of the faith, with whom we have the faith as an inner spiritual bond. All their needs are seen, known, and felt by us. They and we are one family, live under one roof (the faith, objective, the Gospel doctrine). So to any of our relatives in the faith we bear a special obligation to serve them in any way we are able with the Gospel truth. “All men” means missionary work by us Christians; “the house-members” means instruction, admonition, encouragement, support, comfort, and the like.

Now look at your work with a testing eye (v. 4) and evaluate it as the Lord himself will weigh it at last.

## Homiletical Aid

The mature Christian has learned how necessary it is to test himself and he continues this testing day by day. Yet we have those who are indifferent, who shut an eye to their failings, who never make an exact inventory of their spiritual condition. Are they living, are they walking by means of what is spirit?

### Test Your Own Self!

That means:

- I. Avoid the obvious mistakes!

1. One is vainglory (5:26). The assumption that because it is you, there can be no question that you are both living and walking by means of the spirit, your new nature born in you by faith in Christ. To be vainglorious is to be a very poor Christian. To act as if you were something, when really you are nothing (6:3), only provokes and stirs up envy (5:26). The vainglorious man makes the mistake that he thinks he is above testing himself.
2. The other mistake is that you test yourself only by comparing yourself with some other Christian (6:4). Every man shall carry his own cargo to judgment. If another is worse than you are, how does that help you? Can you judge another correctly?

## II. Take the Word alone!

1. Get yourself thoroughly taught in the Word (v. 6). The Word alone judges the world (John 12:48). Get into fellowship with your teacher, so that you may possess all the good things your teacher is able to give you from the Word.
2. By this Word test your own self. It will reveal whether your spirit or your flesh rules in you. It will show every vice in you, every sin, also every virtue, every good work. It will require an honest application of the Word to do this testing, — are you not honest?

## III. Remember the sower's law!

1. It is universal (v. 7), and to deny it is to mock God. Only evolutionists imagine they can sow the inferior and secure something superior. You get exactly what you sow.
2. Sow for the flesh, and you increase your mass of flesh, and the final harvest is corruption, — it ever was, and ever will be.
3. But sow for the spirit and you augment it and the final harvest is eternal life, the blessedness of heaven. It has ever been so, ever will be.

## IV. Look at sample tests.

1. How do you treat a brother who has fallen into transgression (6:1-2)? The value of this test. Do you talk about him, spread the

gossip, etc.? Do you condemn him? Or do you restore him in the way the apostle says?

2. How do you treat your fellow men and your brethren? Do you get tired of offering them τὸ καλόν and τὸ ἄγαθόν, good spiritual help secured out of the Word you have learned (v. 6)? Here is a second test easy to make.

Make a daily honest and thorough test!

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Man is supposed to be rational and sensible, and yet we constantly see the most senseless things being done by these sensible beings. Crime after crime is committed, and the criminal foolishly imagines that he can “get away with it.” Millions have failed, yet he thinks his cunning so great that he cannot fail. Some few escape the arm of the human law, but none can possibly escape the divine law. What is true regarding evil and crime, is equally true regarding virtue and Christian life. Here too the results are entirely certain. Consider

### **The Inevitable Harvest.**

#### **I. Of the flesh — corruption.**

1. That worldly men will sow for their flesh we know, and we are not surprised at the inevitability of the result.

That Christians are vainglorious, do not test their own work, imagine they are walking the way their spirit dictates, while they are fostering their flesh, should be impossible, but alas, is not.

We see how indifferent they are to the Word and to the instructors. Yet this Word alone opens our eyes to the inevitable harvest of the flesh.

In various plain ways we see how the flesh is followed, for instance in the treatment of a transgressing brother, and in dealing with men generally and in particular with those of the household of faith.

2. What must the harvest be? No prophet is needed to tell us. Corruption, the inner spiritual decay, that ends in hell.

II. Of the spirit — life everlasting.

1. The spirit, the new nature, the life of faith directs the conduct.

It makes a constant test of its own work regardless of others.

It watches lest it be tempted.

It ever seeks instruction in the Word and fellowship in the good things of the Word.

2. What must be the harvest? The blessedness of heaven. Not as earned by thus sowing, but as the fruit appointed of God's grace.

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It is no news that there are many kinds of Christians. The question has also been asked: What would the Church look like if all Christians were like me? Our text lets us catch a glimpse of a number of different Christians.

### **What Kind of Christian do You Want to be?**

I. A vainglorious Christian?

Often looks like a grandiose Christian, provocatively boastful, envious if another is esteemed more highly. Absolutely sure of himself even without making a test.

II. A pitiable Christian?

He has fallen into temptation and some plain transgression. He deserves pity and careful treatment to bring about his restoration. You should aid in that treatment and not feel too certain that something similar may not happen also to you.

III. A hollow Christian?

He thinks he really is something, and yet actually he is nothing. He talks wisely and is otherwise. He wants to lead when he does not even know how to follow. Like a stalk of wheat standing up perfectly

straight, because the kernels are not filled out. A good many Christians have at least large hollow places.

IV. A comparative Christian?

He looks like one, if you place a worse one beside him. He has not tested his own work. He does not perceive that every man is bound to carry his own cargo.

V. A well-taught Christian?

He knows he needs the Word; he tries to get “all good things” out of his teacher in the Word. Thus will he be spiritually rich, able to test himself, able to impart of his spiritual riches to others.

VI. A self-deceived Christian?

He sows for the flesh and expects to reap from the spirit. Often tried, always a failure. Really this mocks God as challenging the law of the sower.

VII. The tireless Christian?

He lets nothing weary him. He knows what he shall reap in due season. The longer the wait, the wider the opportunity he sees for doing spiritual good to all men and to his brethren.

The list is not exhausted. But it is long enough to enable you to say what kind of a Christian you would like to be.

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“The white man’s burden” has become quite a popular phrase. The truest, best, noblest are

### **The Christian Burden-Bearers.**

To be the burden-bearers Christ desires we must be

I. Strong. A weakling may be a burden, but not a burden-bearer.

A false show of strength will not answer. When a man is vainglorious (v. 26), or just thinks he is something (v. 3). Or when he

sows to the flesh instead of to the spirit (v. 7-8).

He must know and draw from the source of true strength, the Word (v. 6).

Also he must test out his own strength and not be satisfied with a cheap comparison.

II. Willing. This burden-bearing is the noblest work we can do. So Christ bore the burdens of men.

Take the case of a brother who has fallen into transgression. To restore him is to save his soul, James v. 19-20.

Many other burdens, — the law of Christ (v. 2).

Not weary in aiding others spiritually (v. 9), seeing every opportunity for such aid among men generally and among our brethren.

# The Sixteenth Sunday After Trinity. Eph. 3:13-21

## “Strengthened with Might by his Spirit in the. Inner Man”

In this series of epistles regarding the mature Christian (Thirteenth to Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity) we now see this Christian as “strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man.” No Christian can be mature without this inner spiritual strength. Paul prays that the Ephesians may receive this strength. We have too many weaklings. We might borrow the phrase found in v. 19 for summarizing this text: “filled with all the fulness of God,” or even the expression found in v. 17 “rooted and grounded in love.”

The gospel (Luke 7:11-17) deals with the raising of the widow’s son at Nain. What connection was thought to exist between the epistle and the gospel is not apparent. In v. 20 Paul glorifies him “who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think,” — Jesus is so revealed at Nain by breaking the power of death, and Paul prays to God for spiritual power for the Ephesians because he is the God who is so able to give it beyond human conception. Perhaps this forms the link connecting the epistle with the gospel.

In v. 1-13 Paul writes about his own great work. This paragraph he concludes with the request: **Wherefore I ask (you) not to be losing heart in my tribulations in your behalf, which is your glory** The middle of αἰτέω is used when one has a certain right to ask something. Paul’s relation to the Ephesians gave him ample right. Ἐγκακεῖν means to become discouraged; mud; in the verb has the idea of inferiority, of good-for-nothingness. Thus a soldier is *kakos* who is cowardly, a student who does not study, a farmer who does not know how to farm or does not attend to his farming. There was much in regard to Paul to discourage the Christians. For

four years he had been confined; his great work among the Gentiles had been interrupted. It seemed as though the work of spreading the Gospel among the Gentiles would stop, as though the members of the Church might as well stop now as later. Winning the Gentiles for Christ was a hopeless work.

'But this would be a wrong estimate of Paul's "tribulations," for these were of such a quality (ἥτις, qualitative) as to be "your glory." This puts the very opposite estimate upon Paul's tribulations, as far as their effect upon the Ephesians is concerned. The relative ἥτις is the singular and a feminine by attraction to δόξα, the predicate.

In what way Paul's tribulations are experienced in behalf of the Ephesians, the clause with ἥτις states: "they are your glory," something to distinguish the Ephesians, to make them rejoice, not something to make them hang their heads in discouragement. If Paul is willing to endure everything for his work's sake, that work must be great and valuable indeed, and the Ephesians were a part of it. If God permitted Paul to endure so much as the consequence of his work, this showed God's own exalted estimate of Paul's work. Most prominent among the fruits of this work were the Ephesians, among whom Paul had spent more than two years of most successful labor.

[14] The new paragraph which begins here contains Paul's intercession for the Ephesians. Τούτου χάριν, "for this cause," resumes this phrase used in v. 1 and now completes the thought that was left incomplete in v. 1: **For this cause I bow my knees to the Father [15] from whom all the family in (the) heavens and on earth is named, etc.** "For this cause" states what motivates Paul's great intercession, namely his great work, which brings also the Gentiles into the *Una Sancta*.

"I bow my knees" refers to actual kneeling in prayer (iterative present). The bodily attitude assumed in prayer reflects the attitude of the soul. I saw the dean of a Seminary pray in public with one foot upon a chair, one elbow on his knee, the hand supporting the head, the other hand was in the pants pocket. What a posture for prayer in public! Some preachers neglect to instruct their catechumens in regard to the significance of the customary attitudes. To kneel expresses humiliation and lowly supplication. Today we kneel when we confess our sins, at a deathbed, or when some calamity



presses us down. We stand with bowed head, as being in the presence of God, the bowed head expressing reverence. Whether kneeling or standing, we fold our hands. This is also done in connection with some church rites (sponsors, confirmands, communicants, during the marriage ceremony, etc.) . All that our hands may be busy with all day long we fold away, so as to devote heart and thought wholly to God. One may pray in any position, pray even with only a groan or in silence; but the significance of the positions named remains. Careless, thoughtless, ignorant attitudes are not proper. Formalism is less to be feared than the thoughtlessness of meaningless attitudes.

[15] “The Father from whom all the family in (the) heavens and on the earth is named,” etc., refers to the family which is the *Una Sancta*. Any correct name for this family always indicates the Father from whom it has sprung. Hdoa naretd is correctly translated “the whole family” (A.V.). There is no grammatical necessity for “every family” (R.V.). With abstract nouns the ideas of “all” and “every” coalesce. Here the idea of a plurality of families is ruled out. God has only one family (2:18-19). The notion of a number of families has set many strange ideas going: two families, one Jewish, one Gentile, — when all that Paul has ever written violently contradicts duality, and when “every family” is never used to include only two. Ranks of angels, orders, communities, groups, congregations of men, all are ruled out; also Westcott’s “every group of beings united by a common descent or origin,” and Meyer’s “all classes of angels in heaven and all nations on earth.” Paul writes about one family, not about a number of families.

The paronomasia πατήρ and πᾶσα πατριά is lost in English. Ὀνομάζεσθαι ἕκ τινος is good Greek for the idea of being named after someone. The passive means to ignore the agent. A part of the great family is already in heaven, the rest of the family is still on earth. The great, gracious, wondrous Father, who has created this family for himself, ever has his ears and his heart open for the cry of any of his children on earth, and is ever ready to supply to all of his family or to any part of it whatever may be needed.

[16] Non-final ἵνα states the substance of Paul’s intercession. As great as is Paul’s preamble (v. 14- 15), so great is the prayer itself: **that he give to you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power**

**by means of his Spirit in the inner man, [17] so that Christ may dwell through the faith in your hearts; in order that, having been rooted and founded in love, [18] you may be strong to grasp with all the saints what (is) the breadth and length and height and depth, [19] and to know the love of Christ exceeding this knowledge, in order that you may be filled with respect to all the fulness of God.** The prayer asks for spiritual strength and knowledge.

“That he give,” aorist, is effective, and predicates an actual gift. Κατά indicates the norm which God is to use, namely “the riches of his glory.” God’s δόξα is the sum of his attributes as one or more of them shine forth, so that we may behold them. All the wealth of this glory is to govern the gift for which Paul prays: all his love, grace, and mercy, power, wisdom, majesty, infinitude. The gift is to be like the Giver, is to reflect him fully. Note the expressions in 1:7; 2:4; 2:7; all of them belong together.

I find but one gift, not five or several mentioned here; after naming this one gift Paul unfolds its contents. The object infinitive names the gift: “to be strengthened with power” etc. No ἐγκακεῖν for us, but δύναμις, dynamic power; κράτος (in the verb) strength as exercised; and ἰσχύς (in the verb in v. 18) *vis* or *virtus* as possessed, whether exercised or not. Yet Paul has in mind real powerful Christians, no babies, no weaklings, no cripples, no ailing patients. The Church is a hospital, but only in order to bring patients to robust health in the shortest possible time. The Church is a nursery, but not for babes that never grow up. Too many Christians want to remain puny. When there is the least thing to do, they reveal how puny they are by crying: “I cant!” Δυνάμει is the dative of means.

The Holy Spirit is the personal medium (διὰ) through whom God gives us spiritual power. Calvinists and sectarians imagine that the Spirit works strength in us without using means. This is fiction. You can tell when the Spirit comes to you, you can hear his voice, feel his touch in your heart, for he ever comes only by means of Word and Sacrament. Luther well says that what is not of these is of the devil. Neglect the Word and the Sacrament, and you sever the nerve that sends power into your soul. For this reason so many are weak, — too little contact with God’s Spirit in Word and Sacrament. Some cry for a new Pentecost. This is thoughtless. Pentecost cannot be repeated: once poured out, the Spirit remains, and cannot be

poured out again. He now flows out into all the world and into your heart and into mine through Word and Sacrament.

We may regard εἰς as static: “in the inner man”; or take it in the sense: “with regard to the inner man.” The inner man is the counterpart of “the outer man” (2 Cor. 4:16). The latter is the physical body with its members; the inner man is the heart, mind, soul, spirit, regenerated, quickened (2:5), made spiritually alive, and to be filled with power to assert himself in the fullest manner. Spiritual virility is what we need. It comes from the Father through the Spirit by way of Word and Sacrament.

[17] The infinitive does not name a second gift coordinate with “to be strengthened.” It denotes result: “so that Christ dwells” etc. The aorist is again effective. We may render intransitively “dwell,” or transitively “make dwelling.” Jesus said that the Spirit would receive of what was his and would show it unto us: “he shall take of mine and shall show it unto you,” John 16:14-15. This the Spirit does when he comes to us with Word and Sacrament; he fills our hearts with Christ. This is the *unio mystica*, which is progressive and grows, but always only by means of Word and Sacrament.

Christ dwells in our hearts “by means of (διά) the faith.” One might think that here, as so often, “the faith” signifies the objective doctrine which is to be believed; yet Paul adds “love,” and so we take “the faith” to be subjective. The Spirit too is the objective means. According to the Greek way of thinking the heart is the center of our being. Here Christ is to dwell in order to control all our thinking, feeling, and willing.

Ἐν ἀγάπῃ and the participles belong to the following ἵνα clause and are placed before ἵνα for the sake of emphasis. Where Christ dwells in a heart by means of faith, love will be present in rich measure. It could not be otherwise. The less faith, the less love, and vice versa. Ἀγάπη is the love of comprehension and corresponding purpose; see further Rom. 12:9 (Second Sunday after Epiphany) and Rom. 13:8 (Fourth Sunday after Epiphany). The figures are allied: like a tree whose roots spread wide, deep, and strong in the soil of love; like a building founded and grounded on a strong foundation. By these figures Paul carries the idea of power into love. The passive participles are to be construed with the passive verb in v. 16: “may be strengthened with power.” The imagery is beautiful: each of us is to

stand like a great, solidly rooted tree; like a great beautiful building on a massive foundation.

Note the progression: the Father — the Spirit (Word and Sacrament) — the faith in our hearts — and now love in its full development.

[18] ἵνα denotes purpose. Paul now adds knowledge. Since it is named after the Spirit (Word and Sacrament), faith, and love, this is the subsequent knowledge, the knowledge of experience which grows richer and fuller as the Christian life advances. But the apostle retains the idea of strength, for instead of writing “that you may grasp,” he writes “that you may be strong to grasp.” “With all the saints” reaches out to the entire *Una Sancta*. Paul is making no exception of the Ephesians; the Ephesians are ever to feel themselves a part of the Church Universal. “Saints” is the standard term for Christians: those whom God has set apart for himself. The word is devoid of perfectionism.

“What is the breadth and length and height and depth” has these four specifications as a unit after the one article; the genitive is withheld, but only to be added the more effectively in a separate clause: “to know the love of Christ” etc. Paul means “the breadth... and depth” of the love of Christ. We read about this love in the Scriptures, it is preached in the pulpit, but we are to be strong in our spiritual life so as to experience this love in all its vast dimensions. We can never reach its boundaries, it is so broad and so long, it is like a vast plain; it is so high and so deep, that we cannot scale it, it is like the sky; or sound it, it is like the ocean. He gave his life for you. In his love you can rest, no matter what befalls you. Grow disheartened (v. 13)? Not with the arms of this love to bear us up.

Instead of detecting what Paul here does, many minds proceed to supply a genitive and thus encounter strange ideas. Some mention the Church, the Sanctuary (2:21),- — it has the four dimensions (Rev. 21:16). Others think of the work of redemption, of the mystery (3:4 and 9), the wisdom (v. 10), etc. The ancients were inventive: height == Christ’s deity; depth 2 his humanity; length and breadth == his worldwide salvation. But these terms are not an allegory, for which we must hunt the key.

[19] Note τε, the close connective rarely used by Paul, which here at once supplies what purposely was omitted in v. 18: “and to know the love of Christ exceeding this knowing.” Astounding! The breadth, length, height,

and depth of the love of Christ exceeds our knowledge and knowing, and yet we are to know its boundless dimensions: γνῶναι, aorist expressing effective, actual knowing. Christ's love for us can never be known in all its vastness by our limited mind and our short experience. We bathe in it as in a vast ocean. Yet even under these conditions we do know it, for all our spiritual life revels and glories in it.

Now the ultimate purpose in this climax which goes from faith to love to knowledge: "that you may be filled with respect to (εἰς) the fulness of God." The fulness of God is that which fills him, the glory of his attributes, especially of his love, mercy, grace, etc. Paul does not say that we are to be filled "with" this fulness (A.V.). Something of that which fills God is not to be poured into us to fill us to capacity. Least of all is all the fulness of God to be poured into us. No, we are to be filled full with respect to all the fulness of God. The medium is the knowledge of the love of Christ. John 1:16: "Of his.(Christ's) fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (more and more grace). All that God reveals to us concerning himself, all that by knowledge we apprehend of Christ, all this is to fill our hearts, and there is to be no empty space. We can never absorb and enjoy all of it, for it is altogether too vast and glorious, but we can let God fill us with all that we can possibly appropriate.

[20] In v. 14-19 Paul has told the Ephesians the substance of his prayer. He now adds a doxology, yet not in order to complete his prayer (which he has only summarized), but to complete the entire first part of his letter: **Now to him who is able beyond everything to do exceeding abundantly beyond what we ask or conceive, according to the power operating in us, [21] to him the glory in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for all the generations of the eon of the eons! Amen!**

Unlike our versions, we have two modifiers, and we do not contract them but leave them where Paul placed them: 1) "able beyond everything — 2) to do exceeding abundantly beyond what we ask or conceive." God's ability is ὑπὲρ πάντα, "beyond everything." He can do far beyond what we in our prayers ask or even conceive in our mind. Paul more than any other New Testament writer uses such vast superlatives in regard to God. The relative (ML — ii, and is made a genitive because it incorporates its antecedent which must be a genitive after the compound preposition. The middle αἰτοῦμεθα is explained in v. 13.

While the greatness of God's ability extends beyond the reach of our mind, we nevertheless possess in ourselves a norm by which to measure its extent: "according to the power operating in us." This is the δύναμις of God's love and grace (2:8) operating in the Gospel (Rom. 1:16). It is an openly Calvinistic idea to conceive this *dunamis* as God's omnipotence. Omnipotence does not work in the spiritual domain to produce spiritual effects, such as contrition, quickening, regeneration, faith, love, the Christian virtues, graces, and works. Omnipotent providence works in its own field. It opens the path for the preaching of the Gospel among men; it curbs the hostile forces, protects the Gospel messengers, prevents the gates of hell from destroying the Church, rules ever in the midst of the enemies, even when they rage and ravage the Church. Omnipotent providence shapes life so that hours and circumstances favorable for hearing the Gospel come to individual persons. Omnipotence permits martyrdom, but grace turns the blood of the martyrs into the seed of the Church. The Scriptures are entirely clear on the distinction between the power of grace and the power of omnipotence, their distinct domains, operations, and products. Both work together, yet we dare never ascribe to the one what belongs to the other.

[21] Αὐτῷ is emphatic: "to him," "to this One" the glory! This is an exclamation and no verb need be supplied. "The glory" is the ascription of glory to God by his creature. All of it belongs to God. All of us must recognize his wondrous greatness, worship and adore it.

The text that retains καί has the best textual authority; the A.V. is not justified in omitting καί. Nor is ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ == "by Christ Jesus." The R.V. is correct. "To him glory in the Church" means in the hearts of the entire *Una Sancta* and then also from the lips of all its members. "And in Christ Jesus" cannot mean: also in his heart and from his lips, but means: "and in connection with Christ Jesus" (ἐν taken in its first and original meaning). "For all the generations of the eon of the eons." Paul means that all the glory due to God the Father is connected altogether with Christ Jesus (office and person) and that throughout all the generations of the Church as throughout entire eternity. The exceptional phrase is εἰς πάσας τὰς γενεάς, which cannot be a mere temporal phrase since the temporal phrase is the all-sufficient τοῦ αἰῶνος κτλ. This is the peculiar idea of the A.V.: "throughout all generations, world without end."

“The eon of the eons,” like King of kings, Holy of Holies, has the superlative plural: the supreme eon. Ordinarily this means the eon of eternity after the Parousia, but here we have: “for all the generations of the eon of the eons.” We take this to refer to the generations of the saints, as they, one after another enter into this heavenly eon to which they belong. Thus praise, glory, and honor is to ring out here on earth in the entire *Una Sancta* day in day out, year in year out, and in addition in connection with Christ Jesus praise, glory, and honor to God for all the generations of the *Una Sancta* as they finish their earthly course and enter the supreme eon. Paul seals the doxology with “Amen,” the Hebrew word for truth or verity, adopted into the Greek and other languages as a word of confirmation, assurance, and also of personal confession. “Amen” always involves an energetic demand for faith, since it seals something pertaining to Christ and to salvation.

## Homiletical Aid

A baby is weak. We do not expect much from a baby. The danger is that some of us want to remain baby Christians all our lives long, to be carried, nursed, and amused by others. A mature Christian is certainly a spiritually strong Christian.

### How Strong Are You?

Let us put a few test questions suggested by our text.

I. What do you pray for?

Just earthly things? That is a sign of immaturity, babyhood. The strong Christian prays like Paul for spiritual gifts, more faith, love, knowledge, etc.

II. Do you go to the Holy Spirit?

He is the source of all spiritual strength. You meet him in Word and Sacrament. No man ever became strong who disregarded the Holy Spirit and the Word and Sacrament.

III. Is Christ only a Sunday visitor in your heart?

Some go to church on Sunday, let Christ visit them for an hour, and then think they can be strong to fight the devil, the world, and the flesh, and are shamefully beaten. Christ must dwell in your heart, control all its thoughts and volitions; and to the extent to which he does this you are spiritually strong.

IV. How truly do you know Christ's love?

Knowledge is power, especially spiritual knowledge, and its main object is the love of Christ, its breadth, length, etc. By your own experience to know this love is to be strong to love him in return, to do his loving will, to fight his enemies, etc.

V. Do you give glory to God?

"Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever and ever." Does your heart see and praise the glory of God? How much has he done in your soul? Does that help you to realize what his love is able to do for you? Is your heart happy to be in the Church, where they sing God's glory, happy to be in one of the generation of saints that will soon enter the world to come?

With a little honest investigation by the aid of a text like this you can get quite an accurate estimate of how spiritually strong you really are. Strengthen every weak spot.

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There is nothing at all strange about it that some Christians are strong and some are weak. If you make little or no use of the sources of spiritual strength, how can you expect to be strong?

### **The Sources of our Spiritual Strength.**

- I. The Spirit in his Word and Sacrament.
- II. Christ dwelling in our hearts.
- III. The Father with his power working in us.



We admire moral strength. More admirable is spiritual strength, to be

### **Strong in the Inner Man.**

The inner man is the new man, the new life created in us by Baptism, the spirit that rules in place of the flesh. To be strong in the inner man is to be strong

#### I. In faith.

The trust that relies wholly on Christ for pardon, peace and salvation, so that he dwells in our hearts as a permanent resident. This is accomplished by the work of the Spirit in Word and Sacrament.

To be strong in the inner man by faith is to be able at all times, even in the face of opposition and danger, to confess Christ before men, to defend his Name and Gospel, to oppose and to fight error, to hear only his voice and obey only his Word.

To be strong in the inner man is to be rooted and grounded

#### II. In love.

The love of comprehension and corresponding purpose. This intelligent love is great like a deeply rooted oak, solid like a well-founded building. The response to Christ's love and the Father's grace.

To be strong in the inner man in love is to obey all of Christ's behests (ἔντολαί), John 14:15:21:23-24. Those that love him will ever please him, and will love each other for his sake.

To be strong in the inner man is to be strong

#### III. In Knowledge.

There never was or ever will be strength in ignorance. The Spirit fills us with knowledge through the Word, knowledge of all the greatness of God, of the breadth etc., of the love of Christ, of what God has wrought in us and will yet do for us. This knowledge is a priceless blessing to fill us with certainty, assurance, joy, and happiness.

When one has this strength of knowledge he is able to direct his life and to help others; to do truly what the Savior wants and not merely by guess and imagination; to glorify God in truth until he is called to heaven.

Are you thus strong in the inner man?

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Hymn 158, American Lutheran Hymnal.

**“Love Divine, All Love Excelling.”**

- I. “Fix in us thy humble dwelling” (v. 17).
  - II. “Pure, unbounded love thou art” (v. 18-19).
  - III. “Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit, Into every troubled heart” (v. 16).
  - IV. “Thee we would be always blessing” (v. 20-21) .
  - V. “Till in heaven we take our place” (v. 21: “for all generations,” see the exegesis).
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A text on immensities. Greater than those in the physical universe. Our salvation rests on

**The Infinite Immensities of God.**

- I. “The riches of God’s glory,” v. 16.
- II. “The breadth, length, depth, height of the love that passeth knowledge,” v. 18-19.
- III. “The fulness of God,” v. 19.
- IV. “Above all that we ask or think,” v. 20.

# The Seventeenth Sunday After Trinity. Eph. 4:1-6

## “The Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace”

The mature, properly developed Christian will always desire and labor for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and will do nothing which in any way would disturb or disrupt this inner unity. Thus, after presenting the doctrine of the *Una Sancta*, Paul tells the Ephesians that their conduct must be in full accord with the facts of this doctrine; and the first point in that accord is unity. Unionism is not unity. Often it is asked: “What is unionism?” And fault is found even with the best of definitions. Unionism is untrue unity, pretended unity, an outward fellowship that makes an impression that the parties are one, when in fact in doctrine and conviction and in the practice dependent thereon they are not one. Moreover, unity is oneness in the truth of the Scripture, not just a oneness as the Jews are one, or as the Mohammedans are one. The oneness found in Calvinism is not Christian unity, although it may be a strong unity. Oneness with any error or false doctrine is unionism when this is offered to the confessors of the true Scripture doctrine.

The gospel deals with an allied theme, for Luke 14:1-11 presents the healing of the man with the dropsy on the Sabbath, an act which divided Christ from the lawyers and the Pharisees and gained him their hostility. Christ never consented to a wrong conviction, he corrected it. With this false and really cruel opinion of the Pharisees regarding the proper observance of the Sabbath went their pride and desire for honor, which the Savior also sought to correct. Neither in their convictions nor in their conduct could Jesus fellowship the lawyers and the Pharisees, — true union between him and them was not possible.

**I accordingly admonish you, I the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling wherewith you were called, [2] with all humility and meekness, with longsuffering, bearing up with each other in love, [3] being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

Παρακαλῶ means to call upon someone in order to say something to him, to speak to him in a friendly and a helpful way, thus to admonish, or to comfort, to encourage, or to cheer. Paul is not pleading, “I beseech” (our versions), he is admonishing. When he emphasizes the fact that he is writing as “the prisoner in the Lord,” he is not making an appeal for sympathy or using his condition as a motive that should help to bring about the compliance of the Ephesians with his admonition. As one who is in prison because of his connection with the Lord (ἐν Κυρίῳ), who is himself faithful, he admonishes others who are “in the Lord,” in the same connection, and so counts on their faithfully heeding what he says. In 3:1 the wording is different and it refers to the office of Paul and his work for the Gentiles which brought about his imprisonment. Even “of Christ Jesus” (i.e. his prisoner) and “in the Lord” (i.e. a prisoner connected with the Lord), are different.

The opening admonition is comprehensive, with specifications following in due order; Paul follows the same procedure in Rom. 12:1 etc. The one thing that the members of the *Una Sancta* must always do is to walk worthily of the calling wherewith they were called. In ἄξιως lies the idea of weight: conduct placed in one pan of the scales must be as heavy as the calling placed in the other pan. All that the calling implies, the conduct must supply. God called the Ephesians by the Gospel to life and salvation. This κλησις was effective in them, taking them out of the world and making them God’s own ἐκκλησία (called body, Church). In the Epistles κλησις and its derivatives always signify the successful call, and not the *invitatio* which many spurn. Thus the calling wherewith we were called carries with it the obligation that we live accordingly. The genitive ἧς is attracted to the case of the antecedent τῆς κλήσεως; it is employed instead of the accusative ἣν which the passive ἐκλήθητε retains from the active.

[2] To walk thus in a worthy manner in our calling applies to everything in our life. The broad reach of this admonition is retained when Paul now specifies in the direction of unity. In the one *Una Sancta* we must all walk

in true oneness. Our conduct that is worthy of our calling in all respects will cultivate especially those virtues which support this oneness. There are four modifiers: two noun phrases, and two participles. The latter are weightier than the phrases, and the last participle reaches a climax. What is to accompany (μετά) is to help what the participles ask, and the main thing thus asked is the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Two virtues are combined: “with (μετά, in company with) all humility and meekness,” and paired with these two is a third, more specific, and thus placed by itself: “with (μετά again) longsuffering.” In the pagan world humility and meekness were not considered virtues but vices on a par with pusillanimity and cowardice. The admired man asserted himself, dominated, ruled others and, if necessary, bent them to his will by force. It was Christ and the Gospel that brought to the Greek and to the Roman world the Old Testament and the Christian ideal of humility and meekness, two attitudes of mind that go together. Humility or lowliness puts away all false pride and all false claims, and meekness is a mild, gentle, patient temperament, without violence, bitterness, and vehemence. The meek suffer wrong and commit themselves to God. How Christ humbled himself is described in Phil. 2:6 etc. “All” modifies both nouns and refers to all the forms which these virtues may assume under the varying circumstances demanding their exercise.

“Longsuffering” holds out long under provocation before proceeding to action, and is thus ascribed also to God. This virtue is thus more specific than the other two. We may say, it forms an outgrowth of the two. These Christian virtues are not by any means mere passive, powerless conditions of mind and heart. This was the pagan conception of them, namely that a person did not possess sufficient manhood or womanhood to assert himself or herself, but supinely and helplessly submitted to everything. But these virtues demand the greatest strength of soul, for they restrain the old Adam in us with his haughty and violent propensities, they submit to Christ and follow his noble example. They are marks of the greatest moral strength. Meekly to bear wrong without even the desire to strike back is the characteristic of a real spiritual man. Humbly to stoop to the lowest place while all others demand the high honors (like the Pharisees at table), and to stoop thus in all sincerity, calls for the highest strength of character. To wait

long, longer, and still longer when punishment is more than overdue, calls for more spiritual effort than a pagan ever possessed.

“Forbearing one another in love,” literally, “holding up” under a load of vexations, explains the longsuffering. The addition of the phrase “in love” excludes the notion that an humble Christian is to tolerate anything and everything on the part of anyone. There are limits to longsuffering, and dan marks them. This is the love of comprehension and corresponding purpose (see Rom. 12:9, Second Sunday after Epiphany and Rom. 13:8, Fourth Sunday after Epiphany). The limits are reached when it would not be intelligent and purposeful love to take no steps, when by further endurance we should do more harm than good. Not that violence is then in place, but other Christian measures such as any particular case requires should then be employed. I know a pastor who bore vilification for a long while, until the evil minded vilifiers proceeded to oust him from office. He then was no longer longsuffering, but brought the vilifiers before his elders, confronted them with their slanders, and stopped their wicked campaign.

[3] While the second participle formally matches the first, our versions do well to separate it from the preceding by means of a semicolon and to place it into anew verse, for the sense is: that by means of lowliness of mind, inner mildness, longsuffering, and loving forbearance when we are provoked, we are to do all that we can to keep our Christian unity intact. The verb τηρεῖν ever to guard, and thus to preserve and to keep the unity from harm or from being broken.

It is called “the unity, or the oneness, of the Spirit” (genitive of the author). When the Holy Spirit regenerated us, brought us to faith in the Gospel and to a new life in Christ, he joined all of us together into oneness, into one spiritual body. Once this oneness has been established, it remains. But it is to manifest itself. In v. 13 Paul calls it “the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.” Doctrine and life, confession and practice are to be one, — no sects, divisions, schisms, denominations. Also no strife, dissension, clashes, and the like. This is where the guarding is to be made effective. All of us are to stand guard in order to prevent anything of a disrupting nature from getting a start, and, in case it does get a start, from becoming permanent.

The *Una Sancta* ever is one and can never be rent. Believe that most firmly. For this native oneness Jesus did not pray in John 17, and it is pure ignorance on our part if we misunderstand Jesus' prayer and pray for this oneness. It is here, always will be, and needs not be prayed for. What Jesus prayed for was that they who are one inwardly by faith in the *Una Sancta* should be one in the Word, in the truth (John 17:6, 8:14:17:19), in the knowledge (John 17:3, 7-8), their minds, hearts, and lives ruled by these alone. One believer is not to contradict or to misconceive this doctrine or this passage of the Word, another believer that passage or that doctrine. All are to hold, believe, confess, practice what the Word says, the whole Word, and nothing but the Word. For this Christ prayed, and for this you too should pray. This prayer is prayed against every false prophet, every sectarian, every schismatic, every ignorant teacher, every fanatic, etc. To deviate in any way from the Word is to damage or to destroy the oneness for which Christ prayed. We have the ridiculous spectacle of seeing many who are shouting for oneness while the very oneness which so concerned Jesus is made impossible by their teaching and their practice. We guard and keep this oneness when in all respects we believe, teach, confess, practice, and live according to the Word.

In John 17 Jesus stresses the oneness in the Word, in the truth; in this text Paul stresses the oneness in the contents of the Word. Jesus and Paul agree. The virtues named in v. 2 support, further, and conserve this oneness. If all church leaders had practiced these virtues, there would be less division in the church on earth.

We cannot construe: "the oneness of the spirit," *concordia animorum*, for many are in close concord in some false doctrine, wrong type of worship, wrong form of piety (viz. the monks and the nuns). "Of the Spirit" excludes these wrong unities. "In the bond of peace" rounds out this participial clause, as "in love" rounds out the clause in v. 2. The genitive is appositional: the bond == the peace, hence the article with peace. Oneness always means peace; division means war. This is the case in the world in hundreds of relations; it is the case in the higher domain, in the Church. 'Ev is not what some call instrumental, so that if we keep peace we shall produce oneness. 'Ev == in connection with: we guard the oneness in its natural connection with Christian peace (ethical sphere).

[4] Paul names the Unit Basis. This he does in a triad, each member of which is itself a triad. Yet the expressions vary, and thus avoid formalism. No connective, no verb; just nine items, set down as such for the reader, therefore the more striking. The items are not admonitions nor admonitory, but they denote facts, objective facts. You may leave this basis of unity, that would not in the least alter it. Rest on it wholeheartedly or half-heartedly, the basis remains what it has been, is, and will be.

There are nine items, yet the word “one” occurs seven times. Neither number is accidental. Nine: three times three, — the Trinity is the basis, the multiplication emphasizes the fact. Seven 2:: three plus four, God drawing nigh to men (four, the number of the world or of mankind). In v. 6 three phrases are joined appositionally by means of one article, thus in a new way verbally expressing unity. The literary form is masterly to the highest degree and stands out even in Paul’s inspired writings.

**One body, — and one Spirit, — even as also you were called in one hope of your calling. [5] One Lord, — one faith, — one Baptism. [6] One God and Father of all, — he over all, and through all, and in all.**

“One body” == the *corpus mysticum*, the *Una Sancta*, the Church. This body is spiritual, hence invisible to our eyes: “I believe in the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints.” It is “one,” without division, and indivisible. Nor can there be another besides this one.

“And one Spirit” completes the idea of “one body.” This body lives, is animated by the “one Spirit.” God’s Spirit dwells in this one body; not a single member in it is without the Spirit. This Spirit is one, nor is it possible that there should be two, or that this one Spirit should suffer division.

The third member of the triad is not expressed by the brief term: “one hope,” but more lucidly and richly by the comparative clause with καθώς: “even as also you were called in one hope of your calling,” thus with “even as” connecting the clause to the two items “one body” — “one Spirit.” Note v. 1: “the calling with which you were called.” Here Paul inserts the personal note: “you were called.. your calling,” which lends a personal touch to all the items in this list. The “calling” involves the Gospel. “One hope” is the substance of this item, and this is the objective hope, salvation in heaven. Here we have the same ethical ἐν: “in one hope.” To be called in one hope is to embrace that hope subjectively, i.e. to hope for salvation on



the basis of our call. “One hope,” — there is but one, incapable of being converted into two, or of being altered in any way. God set that hope before us. We either embrace it or spurn it. Many invent their own hope (the Grand Lodge Above, and the like). Such hopes are fictions.

The first triad centers in the “the one Spirit” as related to the *Una Sancta*. Hence the call, the ultimate treasure which it brings, namely the one hope of salvation, and the body possessing that treasure, the Church. One might say, already this is basis enough on which all Christians may stand as a unit. It is, indeed.

[5] When Paul proceeds he presents the same one basis, but now from the angle of the Second Person. “One Lord” is meant soteriologically, in the sense of “our Lord Jesus Christ,” he to whom we belong, who bought us for his own with a great price (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23’), whom we serve in innocence and blessedness, in whom we have salvation now and for ever. Absolutely he is “one.” We hear of different “Christs.” He fits all men and all situations as the one Lord that he is. If that is meant, all is well, but if he is molded and shaped to suit this nation or that class of men, we have an impossibility. There is but “one Lord,” ever unchangeable.

“One faith,” followed by “one Baptism,” connects us with this “one Lord” and makes us his own. Generally faith is thought to be subjective and Baptism to be objective. But the basis of our oneness is entirely objective. The subjective side takes care of itself; for if we are in this oneness, we are in it subjectively by subjectively embracing the basis. To be sure, the subjective *fiducia* of all believers is also one and the same, whether such trust is strong or weak, whether in erring denominations it is hard or harder to obtain such trust. But this is not the point of Paul’s listing of items. He must list the ground and foundation on which our *fiducia* rests, and this is the objective faith, the Gospel doctrine. There is only one saving doctrine, all other doctrine is false and fails to save. Even in the *Una Sancta* no believing saves except that which holds the “one faith.” As hope means *Hoffnungsgrund*, so faith here means *Glanbensgrund*.

“One Baptism” == one door into the *Una Sancta*, one Sacrament of initiation for all who enter and by which they enter. The relation is obvious: one Lord to whom we belong; one truth that joins us to him; one Sacrament that seals us as his. “One — one — one” throughout. The Baptist Robertson

writes: “There is only one act of Baptism for all who confess Christ by means of this symbol, not that they are made disciples by this one act” (although this is What Jesus himself says in Matt. 28:19!), “but merely so profess him, put on Christ publicly by this ordinance.” This kind of a Baptism is a Baptist invention. An act of ours, a profession of ours, our use of a symbol can never be the basis of the oneness of the *Una Sancta*. Baptism is God’s act upon us, “the washing of regeneration” applied to us by God, and no mere use of a symbol by us. When Robertson says “confess” and “profess” he means to exclude all children. We quote him as the exegetical exponent of the Baptists. He violates every passage regarding Baptism which he touches.

Many very inadequate answers are given to the question as to why Paul does not list the Lord’s Supper in this basis of unity, and from these wrong answers wrong deductions are sometimes made. Most answers find the Supper included in one way or in another by implication. The reason why the Supper is not named in this list is the fact that the *Una Sancta* includes all the babes and the children of the Church who cannot as yet be admitted to the Supper. This list does not omit the Supper as if it were not a part of the faith and of the basis, as little as failure to mention other portions of the Word means to regard them as unnecessary.

The second triad centers in “one Lord.” He is the basis of our oneness, and thus the “one faith” and the “one Baptism” containing him and all that he is for us. Can there be more than one Lord?

[6] The third triad is entirely different from the other two in that it consists of a unit: “one God and Father of all,” in three relations to the *Una Sancta*: “he over all, and through all, and in all,” mi... mi cumulative. The three “all” are not only masculine (persons), but the persons who constitute the *Una Sancta*, the “one body,” with which Paul begins in v. 4. This appears in the individualization, “to each one of you,” in v. 7. In v. 7 “one body” is singular, now “all — all — all” is plural. Paul constantly writes in this way, now summarizing, now spreading out. “One God” is not enough, it must be “one God and Father,” for all these are his children in Christ Jesus. One God and Father makes all of them one, no matter what relation to him is considered.

In ἐπί, διά, and ἐν all of the relations are covered, so that Paul is now at an end. Nothing has been omitted in the list of nine items and the seven ones, and nothing could yet be added for properly presenting the basis of our oneness. The whole presentation forms a perfect pattern in substance and in formulation, — a spiritual gem in every way.

Ἐπί should not be translated by “above” (our versions). This translation, I fear, is due to the misconception that Paul means to say that God is above all things, Whereas Paul means that our God and Father is over all of us in the *Una Sancta*: “our Father who art in heaven,” with all that this implies for the family of his saints, part of whom are already in heaven. While ἐπί, “over” == exaltation and supremacy, διά == operative power making all of his saints means through whom our God and Father works. His Church on earth is to effect the world and to produce more saints, John 17:21 and 23. Ἐν == immanence and indwelling, the *unio mystica* of spiritual union. One such God and Father “of all” of us and in all relations, — a unit basis indeed. No other, no different or no greater can be conceived. On this basis rests the oneness we should ever guard.

Do these prepositions refer to the Trinity? They do, but not in the manner in which this is usually affirmed and also strongly denied, namely that only “he over all” == the Father, “he through all”= the Son; “he in all” == the Spirit. This is already excluded by the one article which makes all three phrases attributive to “God the Father.” This one God and Father who is in his own Person over all, is at the same time by means of our Lord and Mediator through all (διά == mediation), and by means of the Spirit in all (ἐν == immanence). Thus in this last triad, which names God the Father, all three persons are joined together in their soteriological relation. The idea of oneness arrives at its supreme height. Trust Paul to arrive at no less. No man, not even Paul, could add even one more thought when depicting the basis on which the oneness of the *Una Sancta* rests.

## Homiletical Aid

True unity consist not in one grand external organization in which men’s hearts are divided by contradictory religious opinions; but in the inner oneness, whether there be outward organization or not, by which all believe,

teach, confess, practice, and live in accord with the one Word and Gospel truth (John 17:17) which God has given us. Many cry for union and oneness without knowing what it really is, or understanding how it is attained. Consider

### **The True Unity of the Spirit,**

i.e. which the Spirit alone produces.

#### **I. The ties that make true Christians one.**

##### **1. One body: all True Christians in this one body.**

One Spirit: all have this one Spirit, being regenerate, being led and animated by him, heeding no other spirit.

One hope of our calling: the hope of heaven, the one way to attain heaven. No self-made hope and empty dreams.

##### **2. One Lord: all equally joined to Christ, to trust him, heed his Word alone, follow his steps.**

One faith: one doctrine to believe, confess, follow in life.

One Baptism: one door to regeneration, one seal to our faith, not a symbol but a Sacrament.

##### **3. One God and Father, who etc., to whom we look up (over all of us, exaltation), who uses us in this world (through us) by means of Christ, who dwells in us by means of the Spirit.**

##### **4. Whoever is not bound by these ties is not in the Communion of Saints, one with all these saints. Here is more than unity of race, blood, family, politics, patriotism. Here is a bond stronger than death. Do you consider it a minor thing? Do you care whether you injure this bond?**

#### **II. The lives that make true Christians one.**

##### **1. Devotion to the truth of the Word, opposition to all false doctrine. All unity is first of all doctrinal. Intolerance of sects. Every false doctrine rends the seamless coat of Christ, and even the soldiers under the cross had more respect for Christ than that.**

Doctrine is like a bridge. If true and solid, you need only go, you will reach the other side (heaven). If a few planks are out, some will fall through; if parts are broken out, many will not get across. If a lone plank be left, a few may manage to crawl across. Some one who is expert might cross on a rope. Do not say that all churches are alike; some offer you not even a rope.

2. Live in humility and meekness, — arrogance and haughtiness lead astray. In longsuffering, bearing with each other. Strife makes for separation and division.

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The scandal of Christendom, the many denominations, sects, and even insects. The false cures: agree to disagree; organization instead of oneness; unionism in place of unity. The one true way: to bind with the bond of the Gospel. Where this fails, nothing can help.

### **Divinely One.**

#### I. The three-ply bond.

The persons of the Godhead themselves are to make us divinely one. That makes a three-ply bond. Yet each person holds us in a special way, so that our bond is really nine-ply.

1. One Spirit: one invisible but divine body, called to one eternal hope of heaven. One body starts on one road to one goal.
2. One Lord: to whom we all alike belong, whose will and whose word we all alike trust, who has sealed us all alike by his one Sacrament, even the little babes.
3. One God and Father: over us all, to whom we look up in adoration, submission, trust, prayer, — through us all, all good wrought in us by him through Christ, — in us all, making us his Sanctuary through the Spirit.

What a wondrous, holy bond!

#### II. The twofold application of this bond.

The bond must be applied to hold us all in divine oneness. This means

1. That we must all alike hold fast to the true doctrine of the Triune God, namely to his Word and Gospel. To teach and to live contrary to what the Word teaches is to sever for ourselves the divine bond of oneness. Many think false doctrine harmless; not so Christ and his apostles.
2. The continuous application of the sacred bond includes constant warfare against sin. Examples: lowliness, meekness, longsuffering and forbearance destroy the disruptive sins of pride, violence, impatience, etc., which separate us from the divine oneness.

Divinely one, here in the Church of God's grace, above in the Church of his glory.

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I offer a sample of some of the shallow sermons preached on this text:

### **What a Treasure is the Unity of the Spirit!**

- I. Then each walks in his calling.
- II. Then each bears the other in love.
- III. Then each rejoices in the common salvation.

Some preachers fear to say "doctrine." Yet doctrine is the longer or the shorter statement of some saving fact, and nothing should be desired more than the saving facts, namely true statements of them. Also all human conduct is governed by what men regard as pertinent facts. We want our conduct governed by the saving facts of the Word.

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The mature and well-informed Christian must know all about the Church and the churches. His judgment in regard to what he sees in his own church and in the churches around him must agree with the Word of God. He must

not be affected by the shallow and mistaken opinions which are voiced by the ignorant and the immature. Our text helps us to review the facts which pertain to

### **The True Visible Church on Earth.**

Paul presents nine comprehensive points in three groups of three each, which form the basis for the oneness of all believers in Christ. But Paul is met by

#### **I. The spirit of indifference.**

This is a mark of the age in which we live. A large number of men do not care what Christ or his apostles say, do not care what is true regarding God and what is false, what is the way to salvation, and what only pretends to be. Any man may believe as he pleases about the divine facts, just so he lives as a decent citizen. Our daily papers constantly reveal this indifference. Church and church, faith and faith is entirely minor. If a Jew has been philanthropic and dies he is praised editorially just as much as if he had been some sort of Christian. The Bible is a good book because it tells men to be good. Etc.

It is this spirit of indifference in religion which produces

#### **II. The bane of unionism.**

Preachers officiate together who are not agreed in doctrine, and congregations of differing denominations worship together to please such preachers. They leave the impression that the differences are immaterial, that one could belong to one church as well as to another. This unionism has extended such public fellowship to what are called the liberal churches. The liberals at first begged only for toleration. When this was kindly granted them, they increased and soon demanded more power. Now these liberals or modernists are grasping the rule of the churches and are ready to oust the fundamentalists.

We see so-called Christian ministers officiate with Jewish rabbis, sometimes in the synagogue. Gross unionism. We see the denominations get together. Common unionism. We see Lutherans who are not agreed in confession and in practice officiate together.

Cheap unionism. All unionism undermines the true confession and true practice. No unionism ever did the opposite. Let sound churches and unsound churches fraternize, and the unsound win, the sound lose, eventually they' lose everything.

St. Paul sets up nine bulwarks against all this destructive unionism. We cannot surrender one of them,

In unionism we meet

### III. The disruption of denominationalism.

We call this sectarianism. A denomination or sect splits off from the body of the true church. But did not Luther do this, so that we now have the Lutheran Church? No. The papal church had forsaken the Gospel of the true church, and Luther led men back to this Gospel and to the true church. The Roman Catholic Church is the greatest of all sects. Zwingli and Calvin did not follow Luther, but went their own way in doctrine and in practice, and thus started the Reformed denomination or sect from which have sprung the many sects and sectlets we see today. The Lutheran Church would be a false church, in the same class with all these others, if it were also just another denomination or sect. Then I would not belong to the Lutheran Church, nor should you.

The Lutheran Church is

### IV. The one true visible church on earth.

You may say that any church can make this claim. The Catholic Church does so most notably. "No salvation outside of the Catholic Church." But St. Paul describes the Catholic papacy as the great antichrist in 2 Thess. 2.

In the Lutheran Church alone are found the two essential marks of the true church on earth: 1) the pure and unadulterated preaching of the Word of God, and 2) the administration of the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. The basis which St. Paul lays down for the oneness of the church is the basis on which we stand with our preaching and our Sacraments. Would that I could say: all Lutherans. But some are recreant and disgrace the Lutheran Confessions by deviating from them in doctrine and in practice. It is a crime to ordain a Mason and to



grant him a Lutheran pulpit. Yet our church as such bears the sacred marks. Review Paul's list of nine.

On every one of us rests the obligation to fight the spirit of indifference, to oppose the bane of unionism, to testify against the divisions of sectarianism, to support, defend, and spread the true visible church on earth and to maintain her undamaged to the end. To this end have I devoted my life.

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“I love thy Zion, Lord,  
The house of thine abode;  
The Church, O blest Redeemer, saved  
By thine own precious blood.”

American Lutheran Hymnal 79.

This is the holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints, invisible, composed of all believers, no matter in what visible church on earth they may be found. Yet I must belong also to some visible church and congregation. Which shall this be, since now there are so many? Which really is

### **The Citadel of my Soul?**

- I. The one with the nine sacred bulwarks.
- II. The one with the defenders of these bulwarks.

# The Eighteenth Sunday After Trinity. 1 Cor. 1:4-9

## “In Everything Ye are Enriched by Him”

This text concludes the third sub-cycle of the after-Trinity series of texts. It does so in a fitting manner. In five texts we have been shown the mature Christian. We see him again, but now enriched in all things, and thus here at the end of the cycle filled with thanksgiving. Our text reaches back over the entire five previous epistle texts and brings their line of thought to an end.

It is a companion to the gospel text, Matt. 22:34-46, which deals with the two great commandments of the law and with the supreme subject of the Gospel, Christ, whose son is he? Here is the fountain of all our spiritual wealth; if we draw from this, we shall be enriched in all things and shall never get through giving thanks.

Our text forms the introduction to First Corinthians. Paul has many things to correct in this church, yet by no means does he forget or disregard the many things which God's grace has accomplished in Corinth, and all these things call forth his gratitude to God. **I thank my God always concerning you on the basis of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, etc.** If Paul thanks God for what God has done for the Corinthians, they themselves certainly also ought to be greatly thankful. When Paul writes “always” he means every time his thoughts revert to the Corinthians. We see here how closely Paul's heart was connected with God, how easily and naturally it turned to God in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. In like manner every pastor should bear his congregation on his own heart. In like manner also our members should live with God and pray to him for their church.

Ἐπί views the grace of God enjoyed by the Corinthians as the basis of Paul's thanksgiving. "The grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus" is the grace given to them when they were converted, plus all the grace added since then. Χάρις is the unmerited *favor Dei*. The connotation is guilt deserving nothing but summary punishment. Grace extends pardon and release from guilt. This divine grace is extended "in ( == in connection with) Christ Jesus." He expiated our guilt, bore our punishment, atoned for our sins. In connection with him God's grace is able to receive us as his own. The connection expressed by ἐν is that of contrition and faith. The aorist participle δοθείση is constative. As such it is historical, yet it sums up into one act this entire gift of grace to all the many members of the church. Once they were nothing but Jews and pagans, now they are a church of God in Christ Jesus. The passive "was given" is quite natural, and Paul continues with passives, drawing the minds of the Corinthians away from themselves and from high thoughts about themselves toward him from whom alone all their blessings flow.

[5] The word "grace" is comprehensive, and thus Paul specifies: that in everything you were enriched in him, in all utterance and all knowledge. Paul often uses περισσεύειν "to abound"; here he has the choicer verb πλουτίζεσθαι, "to be made rich." Again the aorist is historical, constative, and passive. God enriched you, to him the thanks and praise! The intimation is that the Corinthians were poor, yea, utterly destitute, until without any merit or worthiness on their part God in his grace stooped down to them, lifted them up, and made them gloriously rich indeed. God's grace is never niggardly, it is royal and bestows no less than riches. What should we be, if God's grace were taken from us? We should be like the Laodiceans, beggars indeed, and beneath all beggars. "In him," in connection with Christ (the connection again contrition and faith), is vital. No grace, no spiritual riches apart from Christ.

When Paul adds: "in all utterance and all knowledge," he names two features of the spiritual wealth as specifications of his thought. We, however, have no good English expression for ἐν παντὶ λόγῳ. While we translate "in all utterance," λόγος is more than utterance, it includes the thought uttered or spoken. What Paul has in mind is the teaching of the Gospel. With this he himself had founded the congregation at Corinth, by means of this it had grown, and by such word and teaching the riches of

divine Gospel truth had been dispensed in fullest measure to all the members. When Paul places “all knowledge” after “all logos” he refers to the fruit and result of faithful and diligent teaching. This spreads knowledge, makes many rich in Gospel truth. Of course, to offer the logos to others requires knowledge on the part of the teacher; this is understood, and Paul’s reference is not to the teacher’s knowledge.

“In everything” enhances the idea of great wealth. Paul does not try to unfold all that the phrase includes, he selects only the two items: “all logos” in the teachers that God sent the Corinthians, and “all knowledge” which thus enriched them. I pause here. There are congregations that are not properly enriched, not filled with knowledge. Their pastors are too indifferent to study the Word and to preach sermons rich in Gospel truth. A sermon talk of twenty minutes, a Sunday school teaching period of not more than thirty minutes, catechetical instruction abbreviated to as few hours as possible, but full time for golf, weeks for vacation, long night hours for bridge. Hence congregations with no more than a few rattling coppers in their spiritual purse. This text should be preached to such preachers instead of to their helpless congregations. “Enriched in everything,” — look at your flock, Mr. Preacher, and ask whether this word applies to it.

**[6] Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you,** namely in your hearts by producing faith in you regarding this testimony. This statement adds the thought as to how the Corinthians personally were made rich. “Was confirmed” is again passive with God as the agent. “The testimony of Christ” is not the testimony of the preachers (Paul, Apollos, etc.) concerning Christ, but the testimony which Christ himself made (1 Tim. 6:13 and other references to this testimony). To be sure, these preachers brought Christ’s testimony to the Corinthians (Luke 10:16), but it was Christ himself who thus testified concerning himself, concerning his person and his work. The truth of this testimony was deeply implanted into the hearts of the Corinthians, and this made them Christians. Paul is counting on this confirmation in all that he writes to them. He expects them to heed his admonitions and to receive his corrections. He could not hope for this, if the Corinthians did not have this essential testimony confirmed as true in their hearts.

[7] Ὡστε with its present infinitive states the result of all God's grace etc., toward the Corinthians: **so that you come behind in no gift**. You do not fall short in a single necessary χάρισμα or gracious gift. God has not neglected you in any respect, whether you compare yourselves with other congregations, or whether you regard only your own needs and the full supply God has bestowed upon you. The word χάρισμα in this introduction to the letter cannot refer to the so-called charismatic gifts which Paul discusses later, prominent among them the gift of tongues.

We may ask how Paul determines when we come behind in no gift. We have the answer: **waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ**. When we are ever ready to receive Christ at the last day and only look forward to his final coming, we are supplied in all respects and fall short in nothing. The word "coming" in the A.V. should be "revelation." At the Parousia Christ will reveal himself to the entire universe in all his glory, hence his Parousia is also called his revelation. Note the full soteriological name: "our Lord Jesus Christ," which is a formal confession: "our Lord" to whom we belong, who has bought us as his own to save and to bless us (6:20; 7:23); "Jesus," his personal name; "Christ," his office as our anointed Redeemer. The first great aim of the apostles always was to get their congregations ready for Christ's return to judgment. Are we ready?

[8] "You do not come behind" and "waiting for" refer to the present, yet Christ's revelation lies in the future. Paul bridges the gap: **who shall confirm you till the end as not to be accused in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ**. Once more the full confessional designation "our Lord Jesus Christ," see also v. 9. The confirmation referred to is the same as that mentioned in v. 6, but now you are to be confirmed in place of the testimony of Christ. Yet when Christ confirms his testimony in us, so that we believe it, he thereby confirms us ourselves. "Till the end" means the last day, here called "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." We see what kind of a day this shall be when we note the predicative accusative verbal: shall confirm you "as not to be accused." It shall be a day of judgment. Then woe to him who can be rightly accused before the Lord Jesus Christ, for he shall be lost. To be confirmed as ἀνέγκλητος, as unindictable in that day (or in connection with that day) means to possess Christ's own assurance that all our sins are pardoned. that God declares us righteous in his sight. that we shall at last stand at Christ's right hand.

[9] Paul doubles this assurance and promise: **Faithful is God, through whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord!** Πιστός is emphatically forward: “faithful,” entirely worthy of trust, is God as regards our salvation. If we had to depend on ourselves we certainly should be lost, but now our trust is placed in God who cannot disappoint us. Paul reaches back when he writes: “through whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son,” etc. He might have said: “by whom,” ὑπό, the regular preposition to express the agent. This agency is already implied in the passive verb. And makes God the personal medium of our call. It depends on the writer as to how he wishes to view the relation of an action. The call which brought the Corinthians to faith offered them the Gospel. The Scriptures speak in various ways about the call: as a call into God’s or Christ’s Kingdom, into the grace of Christ, unto holiness, unto sanctification, and here “into the fellowship of his Son,” κοινωνία, communion. The Son is named for the third time with the full confessional name: “Jesus Christ our Lord,” this time placing “our Lord” after “Jesus Christ.”

Our fellowship with anyone of the Three Persons and with all Three is mediated by Word and Sacrament, by means of which they come to us and we can hear their voice and receive their grace and their saving gifts. On our part the fellowship is mediated by faith which opens the heart to receive the gifts. Love, devotions, worship and all good works by which we serve God are only the evidences of our faith. Take away faith and there is no communion. Our fellowship with God is as pure as our faith is pure, as intense as our faith is strong, and as true as our reception of his Word is true. Many claim fellowship with God and with Christ, but they are those whom John calls liars (1 John 1:6) and to whom Jesus will say at last: “I never knew you” (Matt. 7:23).

Why does Paul say that God called us into the fellowship of his Son, instead of saying into fellowship with himself (God)? Because it is the Son, the Second Person, who wrought our salvation, and because he is the Mediator, — no one comes to the Father save by him. We may assign such reasons, but in reality to be in fellowship with One of the Three is to be in fellowship with all Three. The blatant claim is made by rationalists and modernists that Jesus never called himself God nor that Paul thus designated him. “His Son” means nothing less than the deity of Jesus Christ

our Lord. The Son has the nature of the Father. But denial cares little for truth, it only seeks to bolster up itself. "All men should honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent him," John v. 23. "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father," 1 John 2:23.

A silent significance runs through this introductory paragraph. Paul does not praise the Corinthians themselves, either for their faith or for their love and works. He only thanks God for God's grace, gift, confirmation, etc. The passive verbs are not accidentally passive. Paul also concluded with a reference to the final judgment. The Corinthians are to feel that in various respects they still need confirmation. They are to think of the last day and are to be sure that they are fully ready for what that day shall bring. On God they can rely, but how about themselves? No better introduction to this letter could have been written. The passive verbs do not say too much and yet they say quite enough.

## **Homiletical Aid**

If someone were to call us the richest people in the world. we might think he were joking. Well, no one is going to call you the richest people in the world in View of your financial standing. And yet you have a wealth that is far more valuable than earthly pelf. If you could see this wealth in its true value, you would cry out in astonishment at its greatness. For I say, that because we have this wealth we are indeed

### **The Richest People in the World.**

The wealth that is ours. At how much do you estimate:

- I. The grace of God in Christ Jesus?
- II. The fellowship of God's Son?
- III. The testimony of Christ?
- IV. All the preaching and the knowledge?
- V. No lack of any gift?

- VI. God's faithfulness for the future?
  - VII. Your standing unaccused at the last day?
- 

The mature Christian is always a thankful Christian, for he is intelligent enough to see and to appreciate what God has done for him. We close the series of sermons on the mature Christian by considering his thankfulness. St. Paul thanked God for what the Corinthian Christians had, — how much more should not they themselves have thanked God for their spiritual riches.

### **The Thankful Christian.**

- I. He appreciates all that he should be thankful for. — Grace — fellowship of the Son — testimony of Christ — Word and knowledge — lack of no gift — God's faithfulness — blamelessness on judgment day.
  - II. He realizes from whom all his blessings come. — From God and his grace and from Jesus Christ, his Son. Why should they take such an interest in me? — By the testimony and preaching of Christ which fill him with saving knowledge — The more he thanks God, the more he receives from God for which to thank him. — The more he waits for the ultimate blessing at the day of Jesus Christ our Lord, the more he appreciates his present blessings; and thanking God for them, finds them multiplied.
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The normal and mature Christian is a happy person indeed. He has no fears for the past, the present, or the future. All is well with him whichever way he looks.

### **The Happiest Man in the World.**

- I. Happy when he looks at the past.
  - 1. There is the grace of God that was given him in Christ Jesus.



2. There is the testimony of Christ that was confirmed to him.
3. There is all the saving knowledge brought to him by the Word.

All is well as far as the past is concerned: grace removed all sin, the testimony assured him of being Christ's own, and the knowledge shed blessed light on all of it. Are you this happy person?

II. Happy when he regards the present.

1. He comes behind in no gift.
2. He simply waits for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For his godly life, for serving God, Christ, and his fellow men he does not come short of anything that he needs; God supplies him with ability and opportunity. So he spends his days and only waits with longing for the glorious day of Christ's return and for all that then shall be his. Others cling to earth, heaven is his home. Are you this happy person?

III. Happy when he contemplates the future.

1. God shall confirm him till the end.
2. This confirmation makes him safe from all accusation on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.
3. God is absolutely faithful, and he has proved it by calling us into the fellowship of his Son.

We depend not on ourselves but on God's confirmation, his making us solid in the faith; if we relied on ourselves, we could not endure. It is a terrible thing to be accused at the judgment bar of Christ at the last day; but no breath of accusation shall disturb us. All our sins are removed for ever. We can trust God, who otherwise would not have called us into fellowship with his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who came to save us. Are you this happy person?

Twice our text speaks of confirming. Indeed, a mature Christian is one who has been confirmed and thus is firm, solid, safe. We confirm our children when they come to a sufficiently mature age, — explain what we seek to do with them. But a process of confirming, making firm, is carried on by God in us, it has been, and it must continue to be.

### **The Firm Christian.**

- I. The testimony of Christ is confirmed in him.
  1. It is all that Christ testified concerning himself as the Godman, our Savior, and as to his work of saving us.
  2. To have this confirmed and made firm in us is to make us safe and solid in our faith. to establish us in grace and to fortify us against attack.
  3. Many waver, are easily shaken, etc. The Savior's testimony not firm in them. The great need, etc.
- II. God shall continue to confirm. him till the end.
  1. All depends on the end, the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the essential thing is that we be not accused on that day.
  2. For this reason God never stops his work of confirmation, of making us more and more solid and safe in the fellowship of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.
  3. If we let God keep us in fellowship with his Son, never turning away from him to the world, we shall be safe, unaccused on that great day.

# The Fourth And Last After-Trinity Cycle

## The Christian Facing the End

**The Nineteenth Sunday After Trinity.**

*“The New Man”*

**The Twentieth Sunday After Trinity.**

*“Redeeming the Time”*

**The Twenty-first Sunday After Trinity.**

*“The Panoply of God”*

**The Twenty-second Sunday After Trinity.**

*The Good Work Finished At The Day Of Jesus Christ*

**The Twenty-third Sunday After Trinity.**

*Our Commonwealth is in Heaven From Which also We Expect as a Savior the Lord Jesus Christ*

**The Twenty-fourth Sunday After Trinity.**

*Rescued out of the Authority of the Darkness, Transferred into the Kingdom of the Son*

**The Twenty-fifth Sunday After Trinity.**

*“The Trump of God”*

**The Twenty-sixth Sunday After Trinity.**

*“We Look for New Heavens and a New Earth”*

**The Twenty-seventh Sunday After Trinity.**

*“You are Not in Darkness, that that Day Should Overtake You as a Thief”*

# The Nineteenth Sunday After Trinity. Eph. 4:22-28

## “The New Man”

### *The Fourth and Last Section of the After-Trinity Cycle*

The third sub-cycle (Thirteenth to Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity) takes us to the seventh of September, St. Michael's Day. All of the remaining Sundays of the Church Year constitute the eschatological section, having the general subject: *The Christian Prepared for and Facing the End*. There would be nine texts, if the year contained the full count of twenty-seven Sundays after Trinity, but this is not often the case. When the calendar shows fewer Sundays after Trinity, it is not well to drop the last ones, but rather to review the entire series and drop a text here and there so as to obtain the required number of texts.

This group of texts forms a natural sequence, by no means difficult to recognize.

The eschatological feature seems to be wanting in our text. Indeed, we may say this with regard to the first three texts of this group. The intention seems to be not to overload, not to offer nine texts in succession with strong portions of eschatology; six texts of this group bear an eschatological implication. The day of judgment would not be healthy for the old man; you must be rid of him. We redeem the time in view of the end of all time. We go armed and stand victorious because we want to be crowned at the last day. These are well-chosen texts.

The admonition which begins at v. 17 culminates in v. 22-24, the first part of our text. If we are to walk differently from the pagans about us, we must put away the old man and put on the new. In this manner we have learned Christ (v. 20-21). The text begins with three infinitives, objects of

“you were taught.” These infinitives state what the Ephesians had been taught in connection with Christ: **that you put away from yourselves once for all as concerning your former mode of life the old man which is in process of corruption in accord with the lusts of the deceit, [23] and continue to be renewed as regards the spirit of your mind; [24] and that you put on once for all the new man which in accord with God is created in the truth’s righteousness and holiness.**

These infinitives are not indirect discourse, for all that is contained in this paragraph is admonitory. Paul is not calling upon the Ephesian Christians to put off the old man and to put on the new man now, as if they had not already done this. The Ephesians were not being brought to conversion now. Paul reminds them how they had learned Christ, how they had been taught to exchange the old man for the new. Ἐδιδάχθητε in v. 21 is an aorist: they had been successfully taught, they had done what they had been taught, they now had on the new man. But they needed to be reminded of this fact in order that they might perceive that the old pagan life of sin was no more to be their life.

It is of vital importance to understand the force of the tenses here used; to disregard their significance is to miss Paul’s thought. The first and the last infinitive are aorists: to put off the old man and to put on the new man are punctiliar acts, done once, done once for all. The second infinitive is in the present tense and thus durative, progressive: the renewing is continuous and it advances. These tenses refer neither to past nor to present time, they express *Aktionsart*, the aorists are punctiliar, momentary (here not constative), the present tense indicates duration, continuation.

In v. 22 we have the negative side, in v. 24 the positive, but there is no interval of time between them: the old man is put off the instant the new man is put on; either is impossible without the other. The aorist “that you put off or away from yourselves (middle) once for all the old man” calls for a decisive and a permanent break. The aorist means no less than that. It calls for no half-way measure. It is an either or. True indeed, that after the decisive break the old man still clings to us and he must be put away again and again. But this does not make the break less decisive, and this latter putting away is only the consequence of the one decisive break. The old man who has been dethroned once for all seeks by futile efforts to get back on the throne, but he is easily kept from realizing his ambition. In reality we

should combine the first two infinitives: 1) that you should put away and be renewed — 2) and that you put on.

“As concerning the former mode of life” refers to the old, unregenerate life, when the old man was on the throne and ruled in his evil way. This is the old sinful ego, derived through our natural birth from Adam, plus the entire old sinful habitus, i.e. thoughts motives, emotions, volitions, all devoid of God and Christ. Not merely this and that is wrong with men, so that a little patching and mending will correct what is amiss (Pelagianism, the philosophy of the street and the press); the entire nature is wrong. Nor is putting off the old man a painless operation, for Paul calls it a mortification or murder and a crucifixion.

Do not imagine for one moment that the old man can be converted and changed into a new man. He is not even susceptible to reform. The one effective remedy is to kill him. It is hopeless to think that you yourself can do this. The very idea is absurd. Nor do you need only some help to down the old man. Of yourself you could not even make the first move against the old man, for by nature you are and ever want to be his willing slave. The efficacious grace of God alone frees us by its use of law and of Gospel. Paul indeed writes that we put off the old man, but in the very nature of the case we do this when the power of grace works contrition and faith in us. We and yet not we.

The old man is described: “which is in process of corruption (durative present participle) in accord with the lusts of the deceit.” The tense is graphic: left to himself, the old man is constantly busy working his destruction. The idea is not that the old man goes into a moral decline and becomes morally worse; he is utterly depraved from the beginning. What is meant is that he lets the lusts work themselves out and thus progressively plunges himself downward into everlasting ruin and damnation. The old man is like a virulent disease, which if left to run its course, wrecks itself by wrecking the patient in whom it rages. The disease and the patient are not to be identified, even as we and the old man are not one. We are to be rid of him and become a new creation. Ἡ ἄπάρτη is “the deceit” which the old man constantly uses, for he is full of lies and deception. All lusts have this deceit back of them, for if the honest truth were told about lusts and wicked desires men would not plunge into them so readily. The deceit is the old man’s servant and it presents the cup that tastes sweet, but has death in it.

Many are the lusts to which the deceit lures men, but the deceit is always the same. Yet men want to be deceived, so deep is their depravity.

[23] The decisive putting away is followed by a constant process of renewal. The tense is marked, a present between two aorists. But the verb is passive, — not we renew ourselves: “we are renewed” by God and by his grace. In ἀνανεοῦσθαι we have the adjective νέος which means “new” as not existing before. Elsewhere ἀνακαινοῦσθαι is used which has καινός as the word for “new,” namely different from old; so also the new man is called ὁ καινὸς ἄνθρωπος, the opposite of the old man. The English has only one word for “new,” but both of the ideas contained in the two Greek words apply to our spiritual renewal.

The old man, once dethroned, is to be kept dethroned. But Paul does not state this negatively, he uses the more expressive positive statement: “that you be continuously renewed as regards the spirit of your mind,” τῷ πνεύματι κτλ. the dative of respect (not locative “in,” our versions). Our spirit is the immaterial part of our being, named *pneuma* or spirit as being capable of receiving impressions from God’s Spirit. The limiting genitive “the spirit of your mind” refers to the mind-activity of our spirit, to all our thinking and our judging. These thoughts and these judgments control our actions and our entire person. Here a perennial rejuvenation is to take place. The thoughts and the judgments are to be entirely new, derived from God by way of his Word. When our spirit is filled with such newness, all the old thoughts of “the deceit,” all the false judgments will be ousted. The very ground will be cut away from under the feet of what yet may remain of the old man.

[24] Adding the positive to the negative completes the thought: “and that you put on once for all (aorist) the new man,” etc. Yet this is not a mere formal opposite; Paul describes the new man: “which in accord with God is created in the truth’s righteousness and holiness.” The figurative verbs “to put on” and “to put off” do not mean to reduce the new man and the old man to mere garments, which one can change back and forth *ad libitum*. These verbs are chosen because both the old and the new man involves a life which is visible to men. We behold them as we see a man clothed in his garment.

The new man is not put on at the end of the process of renewing (V. 23), nor is this the glorified man. Καινός makes him the opposite of the old man, παλαιός. The instant he is put on, the old man is put off, and then begins the renewing of v. 23. Once our Whole nature was “old,” like Adam since the fall. This nature is also called “the flesh.” By the power of God’s grace this old man who is in the center of our being or ego is to be replaced by the new man. A new ζωή or life-principle and the *habitus* that goes with it are to be implanted in us.

Only by a divine creation is this new man produced, κτίζειν, “to call into existence” (comp. 2:5 and 10; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15). Monergism cannot be expressed, nor every trace of synergism denied more decidedly. Yet it is a mistake to think that this creation is effected by means of omnipotence. The latter does not operate in the spiritual domain, in the *ordo salutis*. Here grace alone operates. When grace is confounded with omnipotence, it is Calvinized. To speak of two kinds of omnipotence, one of them producing spiritual products, is to invent what does not exist.

“According to God” points to the likeness mentioned in Gen. 1:26. God is the model, the new man, the copy. The point of likeness is expressed by the ἐν phrase: “in the truth’s righteousness and holiness.” “The truth” is the opposite of “the deceit” (v. 22). That “the truth” is the entire saving reality, or sum of saving facts, expressed in the Gospel should never have been questioned. Why change it to mere “moral truth”? Righteousness and holiness are the Qualities which go with the saving reality, the truth revealed in Scripture. In fact, we may say that the truth produces these qualities. “Righteousness,” as always, is forensic, the Quality due to the verdict of a judge who acquits of all guilt. No man is able to attain this quality apart from “the truth.” Justification is included, as well as righteousness of life. Ὁσιότης is holiness in the sense of sanctity, the opposite of pollution. One is ὅσιος who accepts the everlasting sanctities and their obligation. The noun occurs only twice in the New Testament. "Amos and its derivatives convey the idea of separation unto God.

The image of God which Adam lost is thus to be restored in us. But in Adam it was concreated when God brought him into existence; while again a creation, in us it is a creation mediated by “the truth,” by the means belonging to the *ordo salutis*.



[25] Upon the truth that the Ephesians have put off the old man, have put on the new, and are being constantly renewed in the spirit of their mind rest all the following admonitions, a few of which belong to our text: **Wherefore, having put away the falsehood, do you ever speak truth each one with his neighbor, because we are members one of another.** Note the causal aorist participle and the articulated τὸ φεῦδος. Because we have once for all put away from ourselves *das luegenhafte Wesen*, the thing that is falsehood, the deceit, v. 22, the deception (v. 14), which dominates the unregenerate even when they tell the truth, let us speak nothing but the truth.

“The lie” is far more than a moral vice, the fact that one cannot trust a man’s word. This is the lie by which men are darkened, blinded, and alienated because of the ignorance and hardness of their heart, and by which they are thus impelled into all manner of uncleanness in life (v. 18-19). This lie lies about God and about man, about sin and about punishment, about godliness and about morality. This lie shapes the natural man’s religion. It has multitudinous forms, though here they are viewed as a unit. Truth is one, and could not even be two. Truth is reality. Every lie is fiction, pretended reality, asserting that something is true when it is not true, or that it is not true when it is true. To trust a lie is heading for a wreck, especially to trust “the lie” which substitutes fictions for the saving realities of God and the Gospel; the wreck that results is irreparable. “Putting away” of our versions changes the Greek aorist into an iterative present with imperative force.

The present imperative == ever be uttering the truth each one to his neighbor. Having “the truth,” the everlasting truth of the Gospel in our hearts, let us use nothing but what is truth (no article) in our intercourse with men. There is a further reason for such truthfulness: “because we are members one of another,” namely we Christians. If anyone of us tells a lie, he would be injuring some of the members of the body to which we and they belong, — the example would be bad, they would lose confidence in us, they would be shocked to find us liars, etc.

Is a lie never justified? Never! But here come the casuists: the doctor knows his patient must die, shall he tell him so when the patient asks and thus hasten his end? Every preacher, lawyer, soldier, business man, laborer, member of a family, man with men gets into such tense circumstances. A

maniac threatens to kill me, if I do not tell him where my brother went. I know where he went. Shall I tell?

Under such circumstances many lie and then justify themselves: they did it because of helplessness, loss of presence of mind, cowardice, panic. A lie is not the true way out. Confront a direct question with a direct question of your own. This turns the tables on the questioner and often changes the entire situation. There are two ways of telling a patient the truth, one the blunt, inconsiderate way, the other the way of love. We are not enjoined merely to speak the truth, but to speak it in love (v. 15). No lie was ever spoken “in love.” Again, decline to speak at all. Again, speak and take the consequences. So Jesus declared himself to be the Son of God and he died because of this testimony. Often the dire consequences that would drive us into a lie do not follow as we feared. Any business or profession which demands lying and dishonesty cannot be engaged in by the Christian, no matter what the profit may be.

[26] Next to harm resulting from lying is placed harm caused by anger. **Be angry and do not sin! Let not the sun go down upon your exasperation, nor give room to the devil!** Only the harm done to ourselves is emphasized; the harm done to our fellow members apparently needs no mention after the last clause of v. 25.

The ethics that forbids all anger and that demands unruffled coldness in every situation is Stoic, not Christian. Paul does not write: “Be not angry!” He actually writes: “Be angry!” and adds: “and sin not.” There is anger that is sinful and other anger that is not sinful. Jesus was angry, Mark 3:5. See also Matt. v. 22. When God, Christ, the holy things of God are reviled, shall no anger stir in us? When hypocrites come with their masks of holiness, when injustice parades as right, when tyrants trample helpless victims under foot, anger is justified. “And sin not” forbids all sinful anger, as when we become provoked, impatient, cannot keep our temper. These are the common outbursts of anger.

Παροργισμός found only here in the New Testament, a few times in the LXX, and not at all elsewhere, == exasperation, and names the cause for justifiable anger. Even this is not to continue too long. Let it end before the day closes, before the sun goes down. Then, when the Christian turns to God in prayer, let him lay also that which has rightly aroused his anger

before God. By committing it to God (1 Pet. 2:23), it will be taken care of. As far as unjustifiable anger is concerned, this is forbidden in the first place, and when it occurs, it should call forth immediate repentance.

[27] When διάβολος is used as a noun it means the devil, and not merely some human slanderer. Our versions translate correctly. “Nor give room to the devil” means room to exercise his devilishness. He was behind the wickedness that caused our righteous exasperation. It is he who now would tempt us to carry our exasperation too far. Allow him no room for his activity. Place everything into God’s hands by the end of the day; give God room to exercise his righteousness. This is the Christian way.

**[28] Let the stealer no longer be stealing, but rather be laboring, working that which is good with his own hands, in order that he may have to share with him who has need.**

Ὁ κλέπτων == one who makes a practice of stealing. “Him that stole” is interpretative, for the reference is to one who made a practice of stealing before his conversion. The temptation to repeat the old sin is bound to return. Paul knows men as they are in actual life and he operates with no illusions. We must remember that many Christians were slaves, and that heathen slaves did not think it wrong to pilfer from their masters. But we need not think of slaves and servants only; the vice of getting something for nothing is world-wide. Graft, bribery, so-called “gifts,” and many other forms of this sin meet the Christian in certain walks of life again and again. Why does Paul say nothing about restitution? Because no stealing of any kind is to occur among Christians, and thus no restitution of any kind is ever to become necessary.

Instead of obtaining anything wrongfully, the Christian way is “to be laboring, working that which is good (τὸ ἀγαθόν) with his own hands” in honest toil, and this not in order to secure as much as possible for himself, but “in order that he may have to share with him who has need.” Honest labor, and an Open, charitable hand. Both as fruits of the new man. “The good” is more than *sein redlich Teil* (Luther). It is earnings and wages acquired in a good way, in a way good also for others and without harming anyone; it is to be held as something good, a gift from God, a blessing; then it is to be expended to good purpose, where need occurs, it is to be shared with the needy. The present tense == may continue to have.

Here our text concludes. Paul, however, continues his specific elaboration of the life and the activity of the new man. The features of the new life embraced in our text are thus to be treated as samples.

## **Homiletical Aid**

We may say that the worldly man has a better self. This, however, is not spiritual, for his better self can be only the natural virtues which a man may cultivate without God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. In the case of a Christian the better self means much more.

### **Your Better Self as a Christian.**

- I. It is your noblest part.
  1. A creation of God's grace in your soul, the new man.
  2. Formed in God's image, making you like God, in particular in holiness and righteousness by way of the Gospel truth.
  3. The spirit of your mind, the dominant power that is master of everything else.
  4. Its manifestation, shown in part in v. 25-28.
- II. It has great enemies.
  1. The devil who seeks room to injure the new man.
  2. The old man remaining in us seeking to rule us again by lusts, by the deceit, by the unregenerate sins of the former life.
- III. It must be preserved and strengthened at all costs.
  1. The old man, once for all put off, must remain put off. Samples in v. 25-28. When we commit sin, repentance must save us.
  2. The new man, once for all put on in conversion, must receive constant renewing in the very spirit of our mind, in new, pure thoughts, motives, and desires, all derived from God, building us

up in the holiness and righteousness of God's image, by means of Word and Sacrament.

3. The inward renewing apparent in the outward life, v. 25-28.

Do you on the day of judgment want to meet Christ with the old man or with the new man, with the lusts of the deceit or renewed in the spirit of your mind, with sins like those named in v. 25-28 or with the opposite good works?

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Since you became a Christian you have two sides to yourself.

### **The Two Sides of Yourself:**

*The Black Side — The White Side.*

The side that is left over from the old man. In process of corruption like a disease working its own ruin. The seat of lusts and evil desires. Full of the deceit that fosters lusts. Trying to offer the devil room. Trying to revive the old sins. This is the black side in you and in me that must ever be restrained and not be allowed to assert itself again.

The side that God created in us at Baptism and conversion. Born of the truth. With the image of God restored, in holiness and righteousness. With the spirit of the mind renewed. Prompting you to all good works. This is the white side in you, which is to dominate your entire life and is to crush out the black side completely.

All this is to be accomplished by the grace of God in Christ Jesus by the use of the Word and the Sacrament. So that on the day of judgment we shall not be cast out.

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How a man can cling to his old corrupt nature when God comes to create a new man in him, passes all right reason and sane explanation. How such a person can ever hope to answer to God even he cannot say.

### **Which Shall it be for Your Soul?**

I. The old man? Do you want:

1. The old corruption of which the world of men is full?
2. The old deception with which men blind themselves in their corruption?
3. The old lusts which have created havoc ever since the days of Adam?
4. The old crimes and sins that have produced untold injury and wretchedness in all the world? Samples: lying, wicked anger, stealing.

You can easily have all this, — but do you honestly want it? God deliver me from all of it.

II. The new man? Do you want:

1. An actual new creation in your soul?
2. The spirit of your very mind renewed?
3. Holiness and righteousness in your heart, — the image of God restored to you from Paradise?
4. This newness by the divine truth in Christ and his Gospel?
5. And thus a new life? Samples: truthfulness — only righteous anger — honesty and honest labor — charity. All these and other good works for Christ's sake.

You can easily have all this as the free gift of God through Jesus Christ, — can you say that you do not want it? God grant you the new man and all his blessedness.

Note: Compare *The Sermon*, the section on p. 262 etc. about the Norms of the Religious Will.

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Let me introduce you to

**The King in Your Soul. (The New Man.)**

- I. His royalty.
    1. Created by God himself.
    2. In God's image.
    3. Enthroned by him in your soul.
  - II. His nobleness.
    1. Opposed to all corruption, deceit, lusts.
    2. Renewed in the spirit of the mind.
  - III. His triumphs (v. 25-28).
    1. Some of the viciousness he overcomes.
    2. Some of the godly works he produces.
- 

The crimes in the world. They spring from the old man inherited from Adam. Cain killed his brother Abel. Jesus -taught us regarding all of the lesser crimes that fill men's lives, Matt. v. 21-28.

### **The Criminal that Lurks Within You. (The Old Man.)**

- I. His criminal character. Corruption, deceit, lusts.
- II. His criminal deeds. Samples offered in v. 25-28.
- III. His thorough elimination. Put away, ousted. Your very spirit renewed. The new man in power.

# The Twentieth Sunday After Trinity. Eph. V. 15-21

## “Redeeming the Time”

One might say that this text deals with walking in Christian wisdom, which is quite correct. But the idea of wisdom is broad, and Paul specifies the activity in which he wants wisdom employed, namely in redeeming the time, literally in buying out the opportunity that offers itself to us during these wicked days. This, then, is the main import of the text, around which the remaining admonitions group themselves. We note the mild eschatological implication: we have our *καιρός* or opportunity now, and the days are evil, — presently the end shall come, the accounting which we must all render. Connecting with the epistle for the preceding Sunday, we may say that it should not be difficult for the new man in us to make the most of the opportunities that offer themselves to him during wicked days.

The gospel for the day is Matt. 22:1-14, the parable of the Wedding Feast of the King's Son. When homileticians explain this gospel as depicting the final judgment they forsake Christ's own summing up of the parable, literally: “Many are called ones, few are elect ones.” In the language of the epistle text: Many are unwise ones, few are wise ones. Many men live through these wicked days and let the wickedness carry them away; they see no opportunity, either for obtaining the wedding garment or for anything else of a spiritual nature, and so cannot possibly be among the chosen; but like the guest who refused the wedding garment they are only called ones and end in the outer darkness.

Three other admonitory sections precede our text (4:17-5:14). In line with them is the fourth one in regard to the exercise of Christian wisdom. **Therefore see how accurately you are walking, not as unwise, but as wise, [16] buying up the opportunity, because the days are wicked.**



Some excellent texts place the adverb “accurately” before “how,” so that we must translate: “See accurately how you are walking,” etc. We adopt another reading because βλέπετε, “see to it,” usually has no adverbial modifier, in fact, needs none, for to tell a man to see to something means that he is to see to it carefully. What we are to see to is our walking, our daily way and mode of life: how accurately you are walking, — i.e. whether it is accurately enough. To walk with some care and accuracy when pleasing God is not enough. We must use every care, fail in no point. We ourselves are to watch and to see that we do not grow careless in some respects. There are many who seem to be afraid that their Christianity will be too good, too perfect. To go to church every Sunday is too much holiness; to pray daily and to read God’s Word daily again appears to them like too much piety. So we might go on naming specific instances. The danger is that in the end they who feared that their Christianity might become too good will find that it is not good enough by far, and they will realize with horror that the time for making good any deficit is past for ever.

“Not as unwise, but as wise” begins to specify more closely. The accuracy referred to pertains to Christian wisdom. In all our walk and life we should ascertain with accuracy whether what we think, want, say, or do is really wise, or whether it is unwise or contains un wisdom. By adding the negative to the positive Paul emphasizes the matter of wisdom, and, of course, Gospel wisdom is meant. To be wise is not merely to know, but it is to use what we know for the ends for which the knowledge is intended by God. Many know what it means to do good, know that they ought to do it, know even that they deserve severest blame if they fail to do it, and yet they do not do the good, or do it only feebly and partially. This is un-wisdom. Μή in the clause “not as unwise” is due to the implied participle: “not as being unwise,” — discard other explanations.

[16] “Wise” — “unwise” is still rather broad and to this extent indefinite, hence the further specification: “buying up the opportunity,” and the special reason for this buying up, “because the days are wicked,” reducing the opportunity which therefore is the more precious. Ἐξαγοραζόμενοι == “to buy out for ourselves completely.” Whenever there is an opportunity to get what we Christians should want (iterative present), We should step up and buy out the entire market, willingly pay the price. This is true Gospel wisdom. To hesitate, buy nothing, and to wait for another opportunity, or to

buy up only a little, is un wisdom. A καιρός is a special time or period adapted for a certain purpose, hence also an “opportunity.” Paul deems “opportunity” sufficiently specific. The word implies both an invitation and an incentive. We say that opportunity beckons. If you ask: opportunity for What? the answer would be a long catalog. For instance, to increase your own faith, knowledge, Wisdom, love, and Christian virtues; to do all spiritual good to the members of your family, to aid and help your brethren in the church, to reach those outside. The list is endless. In Go]. 4:5 Paul has the same expression, but it is there limited to those outside; in our text this limitation is not imposed.

A strong reason should urge us to see to it that we step up and buy out to the limit. Do not imagine that opportunities abound. “The days are wicked,” πονηραί, actively, viciously wicked, spreading wickedness around everywhere. In Revelation we are shown the antichristian power, propaganda, and seduction at work. Some imagine that the wicked days multiply the opportunity offered. But when did wickedness ever serve in such a capacity? It reduces the opportunity. Our καιρός is limited, it should therefore be prized more than ever, and certainly it should be bought out in full, no matter at the price of whatever effort.

**[17] For this reason,** because the days are Wicked, **be not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.** ἄφρονες is “foolish,” senseless, not possessing good judgment or not using it when the time comes. Wicked men make the days wicked, and since this is their character, we are prone to be affected, doing what is wicked because others do it. The young are most easily affected. Then the Wickedness that we do is usually called good, which is only the deceit mentioned in 4:22.

As an antidote to this Paul urges us “to understand what the will of the Lord is,” i.e. constantly to understand it, συνίημι, to bring the mind into conjunction with its object and thus to grasp that object, — very nearly our expression “to put two and two together.” To do this is sensible. For the Christian it is essential and imperative to understand the Lord’s will. He may lack understanding of a thousand earthly things; to lack understanding of the Lord’s will is fatal. He knows where to find the record of the Lord’s will, and how he can attain the understanding. Others may disregard the Lord and in their senseless way ask only what will bring them earthly gain, pleas — ure, honor, ease, etc. Thousands all about us live such empty,

useless lives. The more of satisfaction for their fleshly desires they get, the more they imagine they are getting out of life. But they are buying up no Wheat but only chaff, which the wind of the judgment shall blow away. .

There is one danger. Men try to persuade us that the Lord's will is not what the Lord himself in his Word says that it is. We must assure ourselves, and then must let no deceiver move us from our certainty.

**[18] And be not drunk with wine, wherein is dissoluteness, but be filled in spirit, [19] making utterance for yourselves by means of psalms and hymns and spiritual odes, singing and playing with your heart to the Lord, [20] giving thanks always for all things in our Lord Jesus Christ's name to the God and Father, [21] submitting yourselves to each other in fear of Christ.** To understand What the will of the Lord is, is to do that will, and here Paul tells us how to go about doing that will, namely with a joyful, enthusiastic, grateful heart. This is good sense when one is passing through wicked days. Did not Luther say that music drives the devil away? Of course, he did not have in mind jazz.

Many cannot understand how Paul comes to speak about drunkenness in the middle of this paragraph, and then they find inadequate reasons for his doing so. Drunkenness is the common way in which worldly men exhibit their folly during wicked days. It is a sample of how fools make themselves utterly incapable of wisdom, sound judgment, and real understanding. They drug and dull even their physical brain and wickedly add to the wickedness of the days in which they live. The word about drunkenness is not an oddity in the present connection.

Robertson confuses the present imperatives. They are by no means diverse, they are alike and all of them forbid or enjoin courses of conduct. To make the negative imperatives mean: stop doing so and so! and the positive imperatives: begin doing so and so! conveys the false impression that the Ephesians were engaged in these sins and must now stop, and that they had not practiced the good deeds and must now begin. But no such implication is intended, no such charges can rightly be made. We preachers often speak in warning, and do not wait until sins are beginning and then cry: Stop! or wait for good actions to show themselves and then at last cry: Begin!

Ἄσωτία is *Liederlichkeit*, “dissoluteness,” an abandoned, debauched life, when mind and body are dragged down into sin so that they are wholly incapable of spiritual impressions. Dissoluteness is in the wine when it is abused. Wine is the common drink in southern Europe and in the orient, and thus often becomes a means of intoxication. Its abuse, not its proper use, is forbidden. Fanatics would forbid the use of all wine in these lands, yet wine is a necessity in countries where it is so hard to obtain pure water and where the necessity for its purity is even not understood. Paul speaks of drunkenness by means of wine because he wants to convey his thought concretely. He uses a gross example, but with the understanding that by mentioning the worst course of senseless conduct he includes all similar and lesser cases. Murder is forbidden in the Fifth Commandment, but see all that this prohibition includes, Matt. v. 21 etc.; the same is true with regard to adultery.

Our versions certainly err by translating ἐν πνεύματι with: be filled “with the Spirit.” It is a crime to pair wine which makes a man drunk and dissolute with the Third Person of the Godhead. Yet even dictionaries are guilty of doing this. It is in vain to pair the dative οἴνω with the phrase ἐν πνεύματι and to justify this by calling ἐν instrumental. The Holy Spirit is never an instrument. Paul does not need to say With what we are to be filled, but he does need to say, that what fills us must fill us in our spirit, in our new man. The contrast which Paul posits centers in the verbs, which for this very reason are placed forward. With these verbs go their natural modifiers: “be not drunk with wine — be ever filled in spirit.” The reason Why Paul does not need to say with what the spirit is to be filled is that you cannot fill your spirit with just anything. It will receive only spiritual contents. Here the context points to spiritual joy, happiness, enthusiasm, gratitude. We deduce this from the overflow: the utterance of psalms, hymns, and odes. The mouth speaks out of the abundance of the heart (spirit). As far as the Holy Spirit is concerned, all holy stirrings in our spirit are ultimately derived from him. So we need not fear that the Holy Spirit is forgotten.

[19] The participles report the minor actions of the Christians in whose spirit is the fulness of holy thoughts and emotions: “making utterance for yourselves by means of psalms and hymns and spiritual odes, singing and playing with your heart to the Lord.” The dative ἑαυτοῖς means that the

singing is not intended for the ears of others but for the singers themselves. They simply cannot keep still, they must become vocal (λαλεῖν, make utterance). Beautiful examples of this are seen in the wife busy with her household tasks, yet humming the lines of some beautiful hymn, humming it over and over again. Again, a group of Christian young people on an outing sing such hymns as they ride or drive along, or when gathered at their destination. Did Paul and his companions sing in such a manner? We know what they did in the inner prison in Philippi in those wicked days.

“Psalms” etc., are datives of means. Psalms are Old Testament Psalms, set to music and sung by the early Christians. Hymns are uninspired poetical compositions in praise of God or of Christ, also set to music. We have them now in our hymn-books, yet our hymn-books include more than just hymns of praise. Ode is any song, secular or religious, hence the adjective: “spiritual odes.” “Singing and playing with your heart” means employing the voice and also some instrument, — φάλλω == to let a string twang, the string of a lyre or a harp, and then also to play any instrument to accompany the voice. The dative τῇ καρδίᾳ is not locative: “in your heart” (A.V.), as if silent singing and playing were referred to, — how could the latter be silent? This is the dative of means: “with your heart” (R.V.), not with the lips only.

Look at Is. v. 11-12 and at Amos 6:5-6 and you will see how Paul comes to write about wine and drunkenness on the one hand and about Christian music on the other. No commentator need be surprised, lest we be surprised that he does not know his Old Testament as he should. Paul knows it, and this Old Testament seems to be rather modern, — think of the night clubs, cabarets! Drinkers yowl their songs. Now add Is. 14:11 and Amos v. 23 and preach a bit to our church choirs, to our organists, and to players of others instruments in our services. Unless all of their music is for themselves and the Lord, sung and played “with the heart,” the Lord will have none of it. Worldlings are rank and ribald when they carouse, — at least they make no pretense of singing and playing to the Lord. They know, and all men know, that they are wicked. The worst sin is pretense and hypocrisy in religious worship. Jesus denounced no others as he did the scribes and Pharisees: “Hypocrites!” Matt. 23:13 etc.

[20] The participle defines the intent of all this utterance of singing and playing: “giving thanks always for all things in our Lord Jesus- Christ’s

name to the God and Father.” This is the expression of deepest gratitude. “Always” might mean that always we have at least some cause for gratitude; but the addition “for all things” shows that actually all things are to cause our gratitude. Rom. 8:28 explains that literally all things work together for our good, whether we recognize it at the time or not. I become sick and suffer, — God is humbling me, making me turn to him, drawing me away from the world, etc. During the world-depression I lost my savings, — I can live without them, I am less extravagant, my great treasure is in heaven, God takes care of me the rest of my days. These are examples.

The grateful heart is the truly happy heart. There is nothing better than singing with gratitude of spirit to drive away worries.

“In our Lord Jesus Christ’s name” is no mere formula. “In” == in connection with, and ὄνομα, “Name,”= the revelation by which our Lord Jesus Christ has made himself known to us, by which we embrace him and believe in him. Yes, only in connection with this revelation of his do we give thanks always for all things, — we could not do it otherwise. Follow this use of *onoma* through the Scriptures and see how it sheds light on many passages.

Our thanks are “to the God and Father,” one Greek article because “God” and “Father” denote one and the same person. The addition of “Father” injects the thought of our relation to him as his children. This is what the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ has made of us. This Father ever takes care of us, and our gratitude to him cannot be too great. Note the full soteriological title: “our Lord Jesus Christ,” our Lord, who has bought us as his own, whom we trust, obey, acknowledge and confess, accepting no other Lord, — Jesus, the personal name he bore while he lived, suffered and died for our salvation, — Christ, the Anointed, his official title as our Redeemer and Savior.

[21] Some think that the participle: submitting yourselves, should be a part of the next paragraph, but this deals only with the special relation of wives to their husbands. In v. 22 we enter the family, in v. 21 each is a member of the Church irrespective of family. Take this as Paul wrote it. In the world one person wants to dominate the other, none wants to stoop to another. But in the happy, grateful circle of God’s children all this worldliness is to be nonexistent. No rivalry, no self-exaltation, no divisive

pride is to intervene. Rich and poor, learned and simple, high and low are to be one, submitting themselves to each other, not in false humility, in sycophancy, but in the fear of Christ. As Christ served, so we should serve (John 13:14). “In fear of Christ” is not slavish fear, yet it is the fear that would dread to offend the Lord, thus arousing his anger. This true fear is ever coupled with faith and love. Paul does not seem to leave a place for the church boss, not even a little corner, or, as regards the preacher, room for little Protestant popes. Perhaps it is Paul’s intention not to leave such room.

## **Homiletical AID**

Good times — bad times - — wicked days. Good times when everybody has plenty of money; bad times when money is scarce. But wicked days are times when the wickedness increases and shows itself in flagrant sins. There is no financial decline, but a moral and spiritual disintegration. St. Paul sketches for us

### **The Lovely Picture of a True Christian in the Midst of Wicked Days.**

#### **I. How he escapes the threatening dangers.**

Sees to it that he walks with special care. Uses wisdom, is not a fool.

Recognizes the danger.

Learns, keeps in mind, and prizes the will of the Lord. Makes that will his shield and guard.

Everything wicked that he meets he thus keeps from his soul.

Example: the world and drunkenness. The Christian fills his spirit with joy and light in the Lord.

#### **II. How he keeps his heart joyful and grateful.**

His spirit is filled with the Word, its joy, light, and peace.

His heart is full of gratitude always for all things which his Father sends him.

He sings and plays in his heart to the Lord. So should all singers and players render their music.

He submits to others and they to him, and so all serve each other in the fear of the Lord.

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The formulation can, of course, be changed:

### **The Days are Wicked.**

- I. The Christian escapes the danger.
- II. The Christian keeps his heart joyful and grateful. Or

### **Wicked Days.**

- I. Wise Christians;
  - II. Grateful children of God.
- 

When the days are wicked because men riot in wickedness, some Christians only complain. You are entitled to complain, but you must do far more, namely you must be

### **Redeeming the Time.**

- I. That requires wisdom, the knowledge that is properly applied to get the most out of the opportunity that still offers itself to you. The fool cannot redeem the time, he will drift with the time. Many young people imagine that is the proper thing to do. But think of the end.
- II. This wisdom must know the Lord's will, else it would not be wisdom. To disregard that will is to be carried away, to redeem nothing. This will is in the Scriptures. It keeps us safe and helps us to make others safe. It shows us what the days are and what opportunity is still open to us.



- III. The Lord's will is to fill us in spirit. While the world loves excess (drunkenness, dissoluteness), the Lord wants to put joy and gratitude in our spirit, plus all truly spiritual feelings.
- IV. Our spirit is to overflow in melody of thanksgiving. Singing in gratitude for every happiness because the heart cannot contain itself. No singing or music for show.
- V. Our thanks is to keep us humble, each submitting to the other as in a loving family.

Thus we Christians are to be like an oasis in the desert, by the Lord's help preserving faith and goodness despite all wickedness.

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This outline presents the common chain formulation, which, however, may state the terms in reverse order (*The Sermon 209* etc.):

- I. Wisdom is required for this.
- II. The Lord's will is wisdom.
- III. To be filled in spirit is the Lord's will.
- IV. Melody and song is to fill our spirit.
- V. Humbleness is to be the result.

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### **A Fine Recipe for Evil Days.**

- I. Clear eyes, v. 15-16.
- II. An understanding mind, v. 17.
- III. A temperate spirit, v. 18.
- IV. A melodious mouth, v. 19-20.
- V. A submissive heart, v. 21.

(Seybold).

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**Light for Dark Days.**

I. The Lord's will. II. Christian wisdom. III. A singing heart.

# The Twenty-first Sunday After Trinity. Eph. 6:10-17

## “The Panoply of God”

The text forms the closing admonition of the letter to the Ephesians, in which Paul calls on them to stand against the greatest enemies of the *Una Sancta*. This text is most appropriate for the present Sunday. “The days are wicked,” we heard last Sunday. The devilish source of this wickedness is now fully revealed to us. We also hear about “the wicked day.” Our victorious stand is to continue to the last day. Each new generation of believers continues the victory, until at last the eternal triumph is inaugurated.

The four Germans who discuss the relation existing between these lections, Lisco, Alt, Strauss, and Nebe, assert that there is a close connection between the gospel, John 4:46-54, the Healing of the Nobleman’s Son, and the epistle, — in the gospel the battle of faith in the nobleman’s heart, in the epistle the battle against the hellish horde. Nevertheless, I doubt that the epistle was chosen because of such a tenuous correspondence with the gospel. No special correspondence seems to be intended. It is not needed. The general thought of the texts for the first three Sundays of this sub-cycle has in mind what is necessary in View of the end, and the gospels say 1) forgiveness (Matt. 9:1-8, Nineteenth after Trinity); 2) the robe of Christ’s righteousness (Matt. 22:1-14, Twentieth after Trinity); 3) faith (John 4:46-54, our present Sunday); the epistles say 1) the new man; 2) the wisdom that redeems the time and knows the Lord’s will; 3) the panoply of God and the victorious stand against the devil. This broader correspondence is sufficient.

Τοῦ λοιποῦ is an incipient adverb, des weiteren, certainly not “from henceforth” (R.V. margin). But the reading may be τὸ λοιπόν, adverbial

accusative, was *das Uebrige betrifft*, “with respect to the rest.” Paul here offers his final admonition, which is to cover all that remains to be said by him.

**As regards the rest, be powerful in the Lord and in the strength of his might.** Ἐνδυναμοῦσθε may be either middle or passive. If it is the latter, the verb would have to be permissive, “let yourselves be made powerful.” Since no agent is indicated, the middle seems preferable, “make yourselves powerful,” i.e. by means of the source of all spiritual power, Word and Sacrament. Hence also ἐν Κυρίῳ, “in connection with the Lord,” who is our strength. This is not enough, so the apostle adds: “and in connection with the strength of his might.” The closer this ἐν draws us to the Lord, who conquered all the forces of hell (Col. 2:15), the more spiritually powerful shall we become. Note the durative verb: “ever be powerful.” Κράτος is strength in action, ἰσχύς is might in possession, whether put into action at the moment or not.

Three terms expressive of power in one brief command. Certainly this strikes a virile, manly, even martial note. Here is no room for weaklings, cowards, defeatists. We have too many who not only are weak but who even do not intend to become robust, strong, and victorious. No wonder the enemy carries off many of these as his prey. Our source of power is the Lord, the Stronger One, who conquered the strong one (Luke 11:21-22). Can it be a delight to be spiritually weak, an invalid? How delightful to be strong and bristling with power!

[11] Like a general who issues commands and instructions to his army Paul issues the order: **Put on the panoply of God, for you to be able to stand against the expert methods of the devil!** It is the aorist that rings out with its peremptory tone. One decisive act of assuming the armor is meant. The emphasis is on the verb: “Put it on, put it on!” Having this armor on, the Ephesians will indeed be powerful. We too use the word “panoply,” meaning the whole armor; “of God” makes God the creator and the provider of this armor. The imagery which follows pictures the Christian as a Roman hoplite, a soldier of the line, a heavy-armed legionary, not a light-armed fighter of the auxiliary contingent, armed only with the bow. The dependence of Rome was on her legionaries, which she considered invincible; for they had conquered the world for her. We are right in singing:

“Onward, Christian Soldiers,  
Marching as to war,  
With the cross of Jesus  
Going on before.”

Not that Christians are bellicose, but that they have an implacable enemy who forces battle upon them and will not let them rest in peace.

The entire twelve instances of *πρός* with the infinitive found in the New Testament indicate that this phrase denotes purpose, not result. So here: “for you to be able to stand against the expert methods (*πρός τὰς μεθοδείας*, the same word used in 4:14) of the devil.” The armor is not for purposes of parade, but for grim battle. Here Paul names the leader of our enemies and at the same time he states how he fights, namely with “expert methods.” He is cunning and skillful as well as powerful. When he attacks, we are “to stand,” we are not to yield and give way in defeat. This means a victorious stand against every attack. Paul uses the verb “to stand” several times; the opposite is not flight, but to go down in defeat. Luther sang well about our foe in his famous battle-hymn:

*Gross’ Macht and Mel List*  
\_Sein’ grausam’ Ruestung ist.

**[12] Because there is for us not the wrestling against blood and flesh, but against the principalities, against the authorities, against the world tyrants of this darkness, against the spiritual (forces) of the wickedness in the heavenly places.** Ours is not a lone merely human enemy, one individual, a physical being with whom we can come to grips and who at the worst can only lay us prostrate on our backs; ours is an enemy composed of a vast army of invisible, intangible, impalpable spirit beings, Satan and all his wicked angels, whose aim is our spiritual and our eternal destruction.

I grow impatient with the criticism that Paul here mixed his figures, making the hoplite, the heavyarmed soldier a wrestler, Paul’s ill-advised friends then trying to save him by saying what is not true, namely that “the wrestling” is to be taken in the general sense of “combat” or “battle.” “The wrest — ling” is the correct word, and it is used here because it is correct. With “flesh and blood,” a physical opponent, one can come to grips and

wrestle. Such an opponent does not stand invisibly at a distance and shoot fiery arrows at us. Wrestling means to suggest only a game, the worst that can happen to one engaged in it is to lose the bout, to be laid with the back flat on the mat. No, not an opponent of this kind is the Christian's enemy. We must note "blood and flesh," with "blood" placed first; this is not "flesh and blood," the usual expression. The latter implies depraved moral quality, the former implies only our physical condition, which is all that Paul here means to refer to.

They know little Greek who pedantically follow the English idea and supply: "but (we wrestle) against the principalities," etc. The Greek mind needs no verb, since it lays all the stress on the *πρός* phrase, where it belongs. We must not divide principalities, authorities, world-tyrants, spiritual forces, perpendicularly, obtaining four classes, but horizontally into an unknown number of classes. So also in 1:21 and 3:10. "Principalities" are not one class of evil angels, "authorities" another class, etc. But each of the evil angels has his *ἀρχή*, his principality or domain where he may do his evil work, and in that domain his *ὄνομα* or authority corresponding with the character and the extent of his domain, also his *Μορφή* or title, likewise corresponding. Here Paul gives us their summary title, they are all *κοσμοκράτορες*, which is best translated "world-tyrants," who exercise their might at will in the world. Hence the genitive: the world-tyrants "of this darkness." "This darkness" is conceived as a power opposed to "the light" and to the children of the light. "This darkness" is the one which holds this world in its thrall; there is an "outer darkness" beyond this world, in hell. From this darkness and the dominion of these world-tyrants Christ has delivered us, hence their war against us.

Paul adds a designation for the nature of the demons: "spiritual forces of the wickedness in heavenly places." Since *τὰ πνευματικά* is an apposition, this neuter cannot mean things, but must mean beings, the demons referred to by the other terms. Instead of using the noun *τὰ πνεύματα* Paul has the adjective, which as such describes their nature. This is the opposite of bodily beings such as our fellow men are, the opposite of "blood and flesh." These beings are invisible, impalpable; their frightfulness is accordingly. These spirit beings belong to "the wickedness in the heavenly places" (characterizing genitive).

Paul uses ἔπουράνια repeatedly. The varying contents determine the meaning. The word refers to low, not to bond. It may mean heaven; again, according to the context, it may mean the Kingdom of God on earth. Here the entire context deals with demons; hence “the wickedness in the heavenlies” means in the super-mundane world, whence all the wickedness found among men on earth has come. It is difficult enough to fight the wickedness which so viciously shows itself among men here on earth, what then shall we say about the battle against the forces of this super-mundane wickedness in the world of the demons? The A.V. is wrong with its translation “spiritual wickedness in high places” and the marginal “wicked spirits.” Τὰ πνευματικά with the article and in the plural cannot possibly be adjectival and modify the articulated genitive τῆς πονηρίας.

**[13] Because of this take up the panoply of God, in order that you may be able to withstand in the wicked day, and having accomplished everything, to stand!** “To stand (V. 11) — to withstand (v. 13) — to stand” (v. 13), and then (V. 14) the imperative: “Stand!” No thought of anything else. Who goes down in defeat? Not you, lone warrior of Christ, but this entire vast army of demons, horrible and frightful beyond description. Is it possible? It is, when you are armed with the panoply of God.

Once more the command: “Take up the panoply of God!” again a peremptory aorist. Nothing save this armament can possibly make us stand as victors. First the effective aorist: “in order that you may withstand” (successfully), then the effective aorist “to stand” (triumphant). In v. 11 Paul states against what we are to stand, now he adds when this is to be. We must Withstand “in the wicked day.” This is the day when the wicked host makes its assault upon us. There are such days. They come unexpectedly. The demons seek to take us by surprise. We must ever be armed. Jesus said in Luke 22:53: “This is your hour and the power of the darkness.” It is not the day of the last battle, Rev. 20:7-9; for only they will see that, who are living at the time of the end, and not the panoply of God but fire from heaven shall overthrow that enemy. It is not the day of death, for many die in a state of unconsciousness. It is any critical day, when the general assault is made. Be that day ever so wicked with the wickedness of hell itself:

“All watching to devour us, —  
We tremble not, we fear no ill,

They cannot overpower us.” (Luther)

“Having accomplished everything” means having done so with this full armor of God. This armor will prove itself invincible. All we need to do is to trust it and to use it. No other armor can resist the assaults of this enemy.

“With might of ours here nought is done,  
Soon were our loss effected.”

It is in vain to trust in “our unaided strength.” Our own armor and defense would be no better than a shield of paper and a sword of lath. For this reason so many fail “to stand” in triumph, all unharmed, when the assault is over.

[14] In figurative language, beautiful and powerful at the same time, Paul describes the panoply of God. As he had permitted the whole vast and terrible army of Satan to parade in its might before our eyes in v. 12, so now he lets us inspect our entire armor as we put it on. This armor is mightier than the entire demon host. **Stand then**, as ever ready for battle, **having girded your loins in truth, and having put on the breastplate of the righteousness, (15) and having shod your feet in the preparation of the Gospel of the peace, [16] in addition to everything having taken up the long-shield of the faith, in connection with which you will be able to extinguish all the arrows of the wicked one, those that have been set on fire.**

The items are seven in number, a number that we expect Paul to employ: truth — righteousness — Gospel of the peace — the faith — salvation — the Word of God — prayer (v. 18). The last is not included in our text. To these items Paul adapts the imagery of the hoplite. Note well that Paul does not do the reverse, as we so often do, letting the figure dominate the reality. Hence the fact that Paul drops the figure when he comes to prayer is perfectly in order for him. “Stand thus!” ever ready, and three participles (indirect middle) tell us how we are to stand: having belted ourselves — having clothed ourselves — having shod ourselves, all aorists, definite acts.

Paul follows the natural order. The legionary first buckled on his belt, next he drew on the thorax, then he tied on his sandals. But in the items that follow Paul abandons the natural order, he subjects the figure and lets the



reality rule. We must not think of the long, loose robe worn by the civilian, which was tucked up and held up by a belt when rapid action was undertaken. The legionary wore only a short tunic, and when he stood in the line of battle his long mantle was left behind in the camp. He wore a strong belt about his loins (idiomatic singular in Greek) to which was attached the scabbard for his sword, and to which also his thorax was fastened. The Christian warrior is to be belted “in truth” (not instrumental: “with truth,” our versions). This ἀλήθεια is not subjective, *sittliche Lauterkeit*, moral truthfulness; this truth that is to belt us is the divine saving truth or reality.

In substance “truth,” “the Gospel of the peace,” and “the utterance of God” are identical. No one has ever pointed out a real difference. Paul sees more in the Word of God than we commonly do. In this armor the Word has three different functions. Like a strong belt it is to encircle our vital parts and to give us firmness. Again like sandals the Word is to speed as a Gospel message. Finally, like an invincible sword the Word is to crush our enemies.

Truth is the belt, “the righteousness” is the breastplate or thorax. We ask ourselves in vain how Luther could think that here “the righteousness” is the *justitia acquisita*, the righteousness we attain in this life by our good works, when surely it must be the *justitia imputata*, Christ’s righteousness imputed to us in justification. Our own righteousness is ever imperfect, — how could we ever want to take it into the battle against Satan. Our works of righteousness, being imperfect, ever need Christ’s perfect righteousness to make good the imperfections. No, Paul is not sending us into this battle on the wicked day with a righteousness that Satan would pierce at the first assault. Righteousness is the quality produced by God’s own verdict of acquittal. Against this verdict and the quality it lends us no attempt of Satan avails. This is our breastplate, protecting the very heart and all the vital organs of our spiritual being. After τὸν θώρακα the article is in place with τῷς δικαιοσύνης the genitive is appositional: the thorax is the righteousness.

[15] The third item is more complex, literally: “and having shod yourselves as to the feet in readiness of the Gospel of the peace.” The general sense is: ready, eager courage, due to the Gospel, which fills us with the peace of God. The context forbids that we think of invading the territory of the enemy and with the Gospel snatching away men out of the devil’s power. The ἔτοιμασία, “preparedness,” readiness here meant is the readiness at any time to plunge into the fight with the hellish host. We are to

have no fear, experience no hesitation, feel no uncertainty. The genitive of source tells us that “the Gospel of the peace” is to produce in us this readiness. This Gospel fills us with Christ’s peace (John 14:27). All is well with us in regard to God, he is with us. All the devils in hell cannot harm us. We are above defeat. The vast Persian armies scattered like chaff before the onset of the Greek hoplite phalanxes of Cyrus when they sang their paeon of battle, or closed in with ominous silence; so will these demon hosts scatter when our feet charge with the readiness inspired by the Gospel of peace.

“Of the peace” is the genitive of the substance. This is war, hence there is no missionary idea of bringing peace to others. Peace has the article, because it is not peace in general, but this specific, divine peace of the Gospel. It fills our hearts, but it shows itself in the feet ready to leap into the fray when Satan attacks. Truth must girdle our loins, Gospel truth; any sham or pretense would cause our overthrow at the very outset. The Gospel as the fount of peace must fill us with true courage; any self-made courage would rush our feet into nothing but defeat. To these two functions of the Word Paul will add a third.

Note the paradox: *our peace with God* makes us avid for *the battle with Satan*. We, *the men of this divine peace*, we alone have the true power to win *the battle against Satan*. Occasionally, when these “world tyrants of the darkness” (v. 12) bring on excessive outrages (gangster rule, crimes that cry to heaven), a spasm of revolution takes hold of worldly men, — these outrages must cease! Are these tyrants defeated thereby? No. Soon the rebellion with its reform movement subsides. True victory is only for those shod with the Gospel of peace. Because the world spurns this Gospel, it has the devil upon its neck constantly.

[16] As between the reading with ἐν or ἐπί, we adopt the latter: “in addition to everything.” The reading with ἐν encounters various difficulties. The R.V. “withal” says nothing, and the A.V. “above all” is too strong. Paul does not discount the other parts of the armor, nor does he want this peace to be discounted. “In addition to everything” forget not to take up this shield.

The θυρεός is the long-shield, *scutum*, about four feet high, extending from the top of the greaves below the knee to the level of the eyes. Hoplitēs

drawn up in line literally held an extended wall before their bodies. The ἄσπίς, *clypeus*, was round, about two and one half feet in diameter and was carried by the auxiliary troops, the cavalymen. The genitive is appositional: the great-shield == the faith. As “truth,” the “righteousness,” and “the peace” are not subjective, so also “the faith” is plainly objective, despite those who here find only subjective terms. It is not the act of believing which protects me like a massive shield, but What I believe. Ever the contents are the essential thing. Taking up this shield is the subjective act of believing. This is also true with regard to the other pieces of armor; the subjective action is expressed by the participles.

It is objected that no shield of a hoplite extinguished fiery arrows or darts (*malleoli*), and that therefore Paul is straining his figure or forsaking it. This is perfectly true. When will commentators learn that the apostles, as well as Jesus, made the reality dominate the figure, not the figure the reality? This they do so often, and at times in such striking ways, that all commentators should understand the matter. Too many human figures play out; then the figure is simply made to say more than it ordinarily can say. This wondrous shield does extinguish the burning darts. It has a power which an ordinary human shield does not have. Why object? Be glad that it has. Any human shield would soon be set on fire.

The perfect participle, “having been set on fire,” means that the arrows burn and blaze when shot, and if they are not extinguished they would cause a conflagration. See the arrow that penetrated the heart of Eve; it caused a conflagration that still envelops the world. When Satan injected the question: “Did God say?” Eve did not reply: “Yes, he did!” and abide by that. When Satan shot the burning arrows at Jesus, they were met by the shield of the faith *quae creditur*: “It is written, it is written!” and promptly those shafts were quenched and fell harmlessly to the ground. In the fight with Satan rely not on “I believe,” “I think,” but only on “the faith,” “it is written,” and heaven and earth cannot change an syllable.

[17] The imperative marks a division: **And the helmet of the salvation do you take, and the sword of the Spirit, which means God’s utterance.** By being placed forward the object becomes emphatic; this affects also the second object, the sword. The helmet == the salvation (appositional genitive). When Paul uses τὸ σωτήριον (neuter) instead of ἡ σωτηρία he may have in mind the LXX of Is. 59:17, where Jehovah himself puts on the

helmet of the salvation. This is not salvation as an ideal, or salvation in future prospect, despite 1 Thess. 5:8: “as a helmet, hope of salvation,” for “hope” is the very word not in our passage. Paul means our present salvation, which is ours since Baptism. This acts like an impenetrable helmet, rendering the head safe against any blow. Salvation, the true, divine salvation is ours, — what can any devil do to us? If we were without this helmet, a blow would strike us down in a flash.

The one offensive weapon is “the sword of the Spirit.” Here the genitive denotes a Person and thus cannot be appositional, but must be the genitive of source or of origin. This sword is invincible, coming as it does from God’s own Spirit. Ὁ ἔστιν is an idiom, and it is used without regard to gender or even to number: “which means” etc. The expression “the sword of the Spirit” means “God’s utterance.” Μάχαιρα is the Roman short-sword used by the legionary.

“God’s utterance” is without the article, hence qualitative. As being what it is, namely “utterance,” ἐφίνα, leaving God’s mouth, its power is invincible. Advog would refer to the substance of something spoken, ἐφίνα refers only to the speaking, the leaving God’s mouth. Whether what God utters is afterwards written or preached is not considered in the term “utterance.” What lends invincible power to this sword of the Spirit is the fact that it consists of God’s own utterance. When we use it in battle, we must use it as God’s utterance. Is. 55:10-11.

To be sure, “God’s utterance” is filled with substance, for it is the expression of his will, and when this is meant we call it God’s logos and it is written and preached. It is remarkable, indeed, that this utterance is the only weapon before which Satan flees in defeat. The trouble with us is that we do not trust God’s utterance, that we fail to believe.

“One little Word overthrows him.” (Luther)

Many suppose that their own utterance or word is stronger, but Satan laughs at their imagination. Jesus has shown us what God’s utterance does against Satan. Let us believe it, and let no cunning ever snatch this divine, invincible sword out of our hands. Learn to Wield it with deadly effect. The power of God’s utterance is twofold, destructive against Satan, saving for poor sinners.

# Homiletical Aid

The Christian is a man of peace, and at the same time he is most decidedly a man of war. A pacifist and a militarist in one. In the latter capacity St. Paul describes him in imagery taken from the best soldiers in the world of his day, the Roman legionaries or soldiers of the line, by means of whom Rome had conquered the world and held it in its power. What made the legionaries invincible in their day was their own valor. What makes Christ's soldiers invincible is their divine armor. To be sure, it must be used, but the victory lies not in us but in this armor.

## **The Invincible Soldier of Christ.**

- I. Against the legions of hell
- II. He stands completely victorious.

No wrestling bout, but mortal combat. The hellish host, invisible, intangible, each demon with his domain, authority, etc. Filled with hellish wickedness and the power of darkness, world tyrants, who have caused all the moral and the spiritual wreck that we constantly see, all the sin, crime, misery, damnation. Who cannot endure it that we should escape through Jesus Christ.

Our armor makes us victorious: the girdle of truth, etc., as in the text. With this we can be strong and courageous, even in the wicked day when temptation hotly assails us. The long procession of victors. The celebration of the triumph in the end.

You are to be an invincible soldier of Christ!

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Your good intention to be let alone. The wicked intention of Satan not to let you alone.

## **Am I a Soldier of the Cross?**

answer this question yourself.

- I. Look at your enemies and see whether you would for one moment submit to them and to their hellish tyranny.
- II. Look at God's armor and say whether you wish to use it against these demon enemies.
- III. Look at the victory when you shall triumph for ever after a well-fought day.

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**“Onward, Christian Soldiers, Marching as to War!”**

- I. The war and the foe.
- II. The armor of defense and of offense.
- III. The victorious stand in battle and at the end.

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**Hell Let Loose.**

I. To swallow us up. II. Unless we take the armor of God. III. And stand victorious.

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There is no devil! There are no demons, no demon kingdom, no demon army. There is no hell! There is no damnation! We refuse to be scared by these old bogies! So the modern wisdom. It surely ought to know.

Then man is his own devil. Then all this hellish sin, crime, cruelty, misery, despair are man's own product. These smart denials only write in man's name where God writes in the devil's name as being the author of all wickedness, the destroyer of our bliss, and the enemy that cannot endure it to see any of us go to heaven.

Instead of denying the devil and hell and thus playing into the devil's hands, we heed the call to arm and to conquer the devil and all his hellish host and power.

## Down with the Devil!

- I. The folly of denying his existence when the evidence of the darkness and the wickedness is all about us and reaches out to destroy us also. We know his power. The revelation of the demon host made in our text.
- II. Are we not lost when this host comes against us? Human efforts to stand against this host. We fear him not. This is a different courage than that which imagines that the devil is only old folk lore.
- III. We have full cause for our defiance of the devil and of all his power. God is our ally. He makes us strong and invincible. We arm to meet him. All our armor is from God (describe). All the demons in hell quail before this armor. No fiery dart touches us, the sword of the Spirit causes complete defeat.
- IV. The attacks may be many. Satan's expert methods. The powers of temptation. None to be despised or treated lightly. We stand victorious over him. This is by the power of God and his armor. Every individual victory in the wicked day of attack a surety of final victory in the end.

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The inevitable battle.

### St. Paul Transmits the Battle Orders

of our great Captain, the Lord Jesus Christ. Short they are, but absolutely to the point.

I. Be strong! II. Put on the whole armor of God! III. Stand, **WITHSTAND, STAND!**

# The Twenty-second Sunday After Trinity. Phil. 1:3-11

## The Good Work Finished at the Day of Jesus Christ

The eschatological features of the text are pronounced: “confident of this very thing that he who began in you a good work will finish it up to the day of Jesus Christ” (V. 6), — “that you may be unalloyed and uninjured in regard to Christ’s day” (v. 10). In the epistle text for the previous Sunday (Eph. 6:10. 17) God furnishes us with the panoply by means of which we are to stand victorious to the end; in the present text God finishes the good work which he has begun in us, and he keeps us uninjured till the last day. The connection of thought is obvious. Less evident is the connection with the gospel text for the day, the parable of the Unmerciful Debtor (Matt. 18:23-35). Is the idea one of contrast, as between negative and positive, the forgiven but unforgiving debtor being an example of the sadly alloyed and fatally injured Christian, who loses his pardon and salvation, while the Philippians are to be kept safe for the last great day without such loss? Here we have another instance, where the contact between gospel and epistle is not close and where it must be left to the estimate of the present-day preacher to find a point of contact.

In the opening section of his letter Paul tells the Philippians about his joyful prayers for them. We must not fail to note the apostle’s comprehensive view, extending from the first day of their entrance into the Christian fellowship until the time of his writing the epistle and then until the day of Jesus Christ (v. 5-6 and 10). Too few of us think only of the immediate present and not even back to the beginning of our Christian life, to say nothing of ever thinking forward to “the day of Jesus Christ” and the judgment which all of us must face. We should be truly eschatologically-minded.



Paul has had a most happy experience with regard to the church at Philippi. He is able to utter his petition for them “with joy” (V. 4). There has been no invasion of heresy into Philippi, no division and no factions, no inroad of vices. The fellowship in the Gospel has been undisturbed (v. 5). In addition, the joint-fellowship of the Philippians with Paul in his confinement and in his trial before the imperial court (the first stage of which had passed off favorably) had been strong (V. 7). Yet delightful as all of this is to Paul, not on this present excellence of the Philip — pians does the apostle rest his assurance regarding them when he contemplates the future. Paul’s confidence rests in God, “that he who began in you a good work will finish it up to the day of Jesus Christ.” God must preserve the Philippians and enable them to persevere. Paul turns to God in prayer. We must do likewise for our own preservation. With God’s help we can reach the last day uninjured.

In v. 3-8 the apostle states what induces him to pray for the Philippians, and in v. 9-10 he mentions for what he asks God in their behalf.

**I thank my God upon all the remembrance of you, [4] always in every petition of mine for you all making the petition with joy [5] on the basis of your fellowship as regards the Gospel from the first day up till the present, etc.** Would that every faithful pastor — we shall say nothing about the other kind — could thank God upon all remembrance of his congregation and make his petition for all the members with joy, on the basis of fellowship as regards the Gospel, from the first day of the congregation’s history to the last! How many members are causing the faithful pastor grief instead of showing gratitude and are bringing him sorrow instead of joy by disregarding the Gospel fellowship on many occasions?

Paul was not the present pastor of the Philippian congregation, but he was the founder of the church, and in his apostolic capacity he exercised constant oversight over its development. Paul begin his letter in the most natural way. His mind traveled back in remembrance to the very day, when he won Lydia as a convert. Of course, he remembers also his frightful experience, when he and Silas were arrested, beaten, were thrown into prison and were delivered by God through an earthquake. Ἐπί states the basis of Paul’s thanksgiving; μνεῖα (with the objective genitive) means

Paul's remembrance of the Philippians. He remembers all their faith and their faithfulness, their loyal adherence to the Gospel, etc.

A piece of misunderstanding is introduced at the very opening of Paul's letter by von Hofmann and his follower Zahn. *Mneía* is made to mean what it never means, namely "substantial remembrance," i.e. donations of money. We are asked to believe a number of things of which there is no trace either here or anywhere else, namely that ever since Paul first left Philippi the congregation had sent a continuous succession of donations to him and that this series of gifts is their participation in the Gospel. Then We are to add that their last remittance had been delayed too long, and Paul had indicated his dissatisfaction in the receipt which he returned, whereupon the Philippians sent a letter to Paul expressing their regret, which letter Paul is now answering to the effect: "I for my part" (*Ἐγώ*) do not feel as you do about this last remittance: you have always been helping my missionary work by your many donations. In order to obtain this emphatic *Ἐγώ* and its contrast with "you" resort is had to the reading of codex D, which is textually so inferior for this passage that Souter does not even list it as a variant. The scribe who produced this codex loved to tinker with the original text to his way of thinking, improving it by making all manner of editorial changes. He did this to such an extent in the Acts that he rewrote much of the book in his own fashion, leading Zahn to think that Luke wrote Acts in two editions, correcting many errors of the first edition in the second.

The facts of the case are that years before Paul had received exactly two gifts from Philippi, to which gifts he refers in the proper place and manner in 4:16, and not until recently, after an interval of years, had he received a third gift by the hand of Epaphroditus (4:10). *Mneía ὑμῶν* does not mean: "your substantial donations to me," *ὑμῶν* being a subjective genitive, but "my remembrance of you" (objective genitive), i.e. Paul's recollection of the Philippians. Of course, no letter exists in which the Philippians excuse themselves, and it is fiction to make what Paul writes a reply on the part of Paul.

[4] Our versions punctuate in such a way that Paul is made to thank God for the fellowship of the Philippians in the Gospel. Both prepositions, *ἐπί* and *εἰς*, are misunderstood. Construe together as a unit thought, with not

even a comma between v. 4 and v. “always in every petition of mine for you all making this petition with joy on the basis of (ἐπί) your fellowship as regards (εἰς) the Gospel from the first day up till the present.” Paul thanks God for all that his memory recalls regarding the Philippians, which certainly was a great deal. His thanks include all of the past. Note that “always in every petition of mine for you all making the petition with joy on the basis” etc., is a participial and thus a subordinate clause. Whenever Paul remembers and thanks God for his past blessings to the Philippians, he always adds petitions for future blessings upon them. Αἴησις is *Bitt(?) gebet* (petition), much narrower than προσειχή (?) in general.

Paul’s two statements make it plain, that as to the past, so in the future, the entire spiritual welfare of the Philippians depends on the grace and the gifts of God. Note the repetition of “all”, some of them we must translate “every”: all Paul’s remembrance is full of thanksgiving, and always all his petitions for all the Philippians are made with joy. The emphasis is on “with joy,” literally in company with joy Paul uses the phrase subjectively. Of course, objectively as far as the Lord is concerned, we always petition him with joy, for we have his command and his promise: “Ask, and ye shall receive!” But sometimes we ask with a heavy heart, as in behalf of a prodigal son, for church members who have not been faithful. Happy was Paul’s heart when he thought of his Philippians; he could ask for them only “with joy.” What a delight it must have been to them to read this phrase! It is the first expression of joy in this letter which contains many more of this nature.

[5] What Paul asked God to bestow upon the Philippians he rested “on the basis of their fellowship as regards the Gospel,” εἰς expressing relation. For the continuance and the further activity of this fellowship the Philippians would need further grace and gifts from God. All that Paul asks is related to this fellowship, and this entire fellowship is in regard to (εἰς) the Gospel. When Paul points back to “the first day,” he surely has in mind Acts 16:15, the day on which he baptized Lydia, the day when she insisted that he and his assistants lodge at her house. That was the beginning of this fellowship “as regards the Gospel.” “Up till now” takes us to the day on which Paul writes this letter. He has been separated from the Philippians for a long time, but through the years their fellowship has remained.

“Your fellowship” has its modifier: “as regards the Gospel.” It is a mistake to call it a singular expression and then, in order to remove the supposed singularity, to alter the meaning of the word *κοινωνία*. “Your fellowship” means neither your fellowship with each other, or with me, the apostle, but simply states that the Philippians were in the great union and fellowship that concerned itself with the Gospel. On this fellowship rested all of Paul’s petitions, — may we not say also all of his thanksgiving? “Fellowship” includes all of its manifestations, for the word is an active term.

*Κοινωνία*, “fellowship,” is a great and glorious term. All of us should ponder its meaning. Fellowship binds us together and makes us one. It is concerned wholly with the Gospel, with faith in it alone, with the confession of every one of its doctrines, with its preaching and promulgation, with our living this Gospel, with our love to each other in this Gospel. Every member should be in this fellowship with heart and soul. Many, alas, break this fellowship, and commit the evil deed lightly. No need to catalog in what manner they do this. Let us not be among their number.

In 2 Cor. 8:4 and 9:13 our versions translate *κοινωνία* “distribution” and “contribution”; commentators and some dictionaries adopt this translation. Zahn transfers this misunderstanding to our present passage, so that instead of “your fellowship as regards the Gospel,” Paul is made to write about the money that the Philippians have sent to him. *Κοινωνία* *never* means a contribution or collection of money. This idea crept into the above mentioned passages in 2 Cor. because the translators thought that Paul ought to mention contributions of money, whereas he has in mind nothing but fellowship. Observe that sometimes our dictionaries are unreliable, namely when they are influenced by mistaken commentators.

[6] Paul adds: **being confident of this very thing that he who began in you a good work will finish it up to Jesus Christ’s day.** This clause modifies all that precedes. Paul states the inner conviction from which his thanks to God and his petitions for the Philippians flow. It is impossible that Paul act on the assumption that God will not finish the work which he has begun. The perfect participle *πεποιθεις*(?) has its full meaning: this confidence of Paul’s dates far back and still continues, namely “from the first day till now” (v. 5). Paul is not mistaken in his confidence, as so many are who base their confidence on their own ignorant ideas.

Many interpreters do not know what to do with αὐτὸ τοῦτο, since πείθω does not govern the accusative. This includes even grammarians. Πείθω is construed with ὅτι, and αὐτὸ τοῦτο ὅτι belong together, “this very thing” intensifying “that” etc. “Will finish” is voluntative, not merely futuristic: it is God’s will to complete his work. Yet Paul does not write “the good work,” as if he referred to the fellowship regarding the Gospel (v. 5). “A good work” is sufficient. Because it was his work, all that God had begun is good. Here once again we see that the apostle attributes it entirely to God alone, not only its beginning, but its every step.

As far as God is concerned, the finish of his work will take place in every believer; this does exclude the believer’s apostasy and thus his failure to reach the end of his faith. “Jesus Christ’s day,” — there is but one such a day, and the genitive makes it very definite. The moment we ask ourselves how God will finish his work at that day and not before, all wrong interpretations ought automatically to drop away. God’s glorious completion will consist in raising the dead believers’ bodies, uniting them with their glorified souls, and ushering them into the Eternal City (Rev. 21:10 etc.). As for those still living at that day, 1 Thess. 4:15-17 supplies the information.

Paul writes this to the Philippians, and yet “Jesus Christ’s day” has not yet come. The times and the seasons were not given him to know (Acts 1:7). Their postponement in no way affects what God will indeed most wondrously finish when that day arrives. What Paul here writes is a glorious promise, in the light and the joy of which we ought to pass our brief earthly sojourn.

[7] Paul now speaks about the relation of the Philippians to him. This has only been implied thus far: **even as it is right for me to mind this in behalf of you all, because of my having you in my heart both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel, you all as being my joint fellowshippers of this grace.** Τοῦτο == What is said in v. 3-6. What Paul is minding “in behalf of you all” is his thanking God, his making petitions to God, and the performance of these acts in the confidence which he describes. This is so “right” (δίκαιον, not “meet,” A.V.) that his conscience would condemn him, if he failed to attend to this. Φρονεῖν is here not “to think,” but is to be taken in its original sense as

indicating the action of the φρήν when moved to mind and to attend to something.

Everything that follows διά must be read as one clause, not as two (our versions): “because of my having you in my heart, . . . you all as being my joint-fellowshippers of this grace.” ὄντας is not an accusative absolute, nor does it mean “inasmuch as you are” (our versions); it merely expands the appositional object by stating in what capacity Paul regards all the Philippians, namely as his joint-fellowshippers. Cancel the R.V. margin which reverses subject and object: “ye have me in your heart,” — ἔχεις has the same subject (Paul) as φρονεῖν.

“I have you in my heart” means more in the Greek than it does in English; for in English the heart is the seat of the affections. To the Greek mind the viscera are the seat of the affections, and when this expression is employed it means “I hold you dear.” According to the Greek way of thinking the heart is the seat of the entire personality, including its mind, feeling, and will, notably the latter. Paul’s whole person and his inner being hold to the Philippians, and that not only in a general way as being his fellow believers, but, as he says, “as being my joint-fellowshippers in the (this) grace.” Thus he holds them in his heart at all times, in his bonds as well as in his defense and his confirmation at his trial before the imperial court. Συγκοινωνοί matches κοινωμία (V. 5) and is an advance upon the idea; so we coin the word “joint-fellowshippers” to correspond with “fellowship.” In v. 5 Paul rests his petition on the fellowship; here he advances the idea, — the Philippians are in joint.fellowship with the grace that is Paul’s during his imprisonment and during his trial at court.

The word δεσμά is often misunderstood and is taken to denote chains. Both this neuter plural and the masculine plural signify imprisonment, confinement, and a δέσμιος == a prisoner. The fact that fetters were used to secure the prisoner is only incidental, that idea is not expressed by the word. Discard Cobet’s note in Thayer. Paul’s imprisonment had continued for a period of about four years. Now his trial had been held, he had had his first hearing before the imperial court and this had turned out favorably for him. Paul was looking forward to his acquittal and his release in the near future. Ἀπολογία is the regular legal term for what the defendant pleads before a judge in a trial at court. Here the word is combined with βεβαίωσις, “confirmation,” another court term. The defendant was obliged to make his

defense and then was called upon to add the “confirmation,” the factual proofs to convince the judge or the judges. During all the years of Paul’s imprisonment and now especially also at his trial he had the Philippians in his heart, yet, strange to say, not in order to support and encourage him as dear friends although then living at a distance from him, but as joint-fellowshippers of the grace that had come to Paul.

We note that Paul writes “my bonds,” but not “my defense.” It is the defense and the confirmation of a far greater defendant, namely “of the Gospel.” To Paul the fate of his own person was of small moment, the fate of the Gospel in the empire everything. That the Gospel should suffer no harm when he pleaded his case and proved his facts before the emperor’s court was Paul’s one concern. So we understand what he means by τῆς χάριτος, “the or this grace” in which the Philippians have fellowship with Paul. It is the grace of God which was using Paul who was a prisoner for so long a time, using him now at last at the imperial trial when he offered the defense and the confirmation of the Gospel before the supreme court, using him “to bear Christ’s Name before the Gentiles and kings” (Acts 9:15). What joint-fellowship the Philippians had in this grace is evident. While they could not stand at Paul’s side in the court room at Rome, they believed and held fast to this same Gospel. Their cause was on trial before this court, all of them would be affected by the verdict about to be rendered, for it would either acquit their religion or it would outlaw it throughout the entire empire. Most certainly the Philippians were deeply concerned, and prayed most fervently, and most anxiously awaited the news of the outcome.

When Paul resumes ὑμῶς with the apposition πάντας ὑμῶς, “you all,” nothing sinister should be read between the lines. This “all” repeats the two “all” used in the ὑπέρ phrases in v. 4 and 7 a, and corresponds with the “all” expressions of v. 3. Let us remember that Paul had been absent from Philippi for a number of years and that during this time many new members had entered the congregation, — all of them, whether they had had personal contact with the apostle or not, are most deeply involved in what was happening in the imperial court. To bring in fancies, such as we have noted, about the recent gift sent to Paul only ruins the true meaning of what is here conveyed.

**[8] For God is my witness how I long for you all in the viscera of Christ Jesus.** This completes What Paul wishes to say concerning his

personal connection with the Philippians in the present connection. Note how naturally “you all” flows into his pen again. “My witness God” (comp. Rom. 1:9) is no oath, but an expression of Christian assurance, since the longing is hidden in the heart, and since the apostle also is far from Philippi. Paul certainly longed to get back to Philippi, to see the old faces again and to get acquainted with all the new members.

If Paul had written: “in my viscera” all would have been plain, for the Greek made the nobler viscera, lungs, heart, and liver, the seat of the feelings or affections, much as we speak of the heart, — “bowels” (A.V.) is wrong, for this commonly means the intestines; “tender mercies” is inexact. Many fanciful interpretations deserve only to be forgotten. That of Bengel has found much favor: *In Paulo non Paulus vivit, sed Jesus Chi-isms; quare Paulus non in Pauli sed Jesu Christi movetur visceribus*. Bengel thinks that Paul is using mystical language and then he confuses mystical language with the *unio mystica*. So many follow Bengel because they do not know what mystical language really is. We have such language in Rom. 6:4 etc.: buried, dead, raised with Christ, — what happened to Christ physically while engaged in the saving acts is repeated in us spiritually in saving effects. The interval of time is disregarded, the means of grace are the medium, see at length in connection with Rom. 6 (Sixth Sunday after Trinity). We should see at a glance that when Paul longs “in the viscera of Christ Jesus” he is not employing mystical language; nor does ἐν indicate the *unio mystica*, for this denotes that Christ dwells in us and we in him. It is impossible here to think of the physical viscera of Christ, and still more impossible to think of a union of his viscera with ours.

“Christ Jesus’ viscera” is not to be understood in the physical but in the metaphorical sense: the tender feelings and the yearnings of Christ Jesus (not necessarily “mercies,” R.V.). The identification goes no farther than the feelings of Christ, with which Paul connects (ἐν) his own. We are not taken beyond 2:5: “Let this mind be in you which also was in Christ Jesus.” He is our model also in respect to our feelings (viscera in the Greek). Paul expects that his longing to see the Philippians will be fulfilled, and that in a short time (2:24).

[9] The apostle now states the contents of his joyful petitions for the Philippians. **And this I keep praying, that your love may yet more and more abound in full knowledge and in all perception, [10] so that you**



**may keep testing the things that differ, in order that you may be unalloyed and uninjured in regard to Christ's day, [11] filled with fruit of righteousness, this (fruit) through Jesus Christ, for God's glory and praise.** Here is the whole prayer in brief. "And" connects it in a simple way with all' that the apostle has been saying about his petition for the Philippians and about his personal relation to them. It is mere pedantry to claim that Paul should say: "And this I keep petitioning," instead of "keep praying." All petitions are prayers, and the more general word is also in place.

Non-final ἵνα, in apposition with τοῦτο, states the contents of the praying. "That your love may yet more and more abound in full knowledge and in all perception" implies that it has already been abounding in this way. High praise is accorded the Philippians. Paul's prayer is that the Philippians may never decline in love and in all that enlightens love. It is the pruyer we all need.

The word love is bandied about a great deal. especially by those who have never learned what the Scriptures really mean when they say ἀγάπη. This is the love of true understanding and of corresponding purpose. It is never blind, its aim and purpose is never ignorant and uninformed. Hence also Paul connects this *agape* with ἐπίγνωσις, a stronger word even than γνῶσις, meaning "full knowledge" and often used for what we may call heart-knowledge. The less of this knowledge, the weaker and the more ineffective the love. Paul even adds a second term, "all perception." This ἀίσθησις is the result of experience, hence the addition of "all." We learn many things by experience and we are to learn them and not let our experience be in vain but serve as a true aid in directing our love.

Paul is imperfectly understood when this definition of ἀγάπη is not known, in particular love's relation to knowledge, wisdom, understanding, etc. Then, too, these idle comments will continue which try to read between the apostle's lines and to imagine that he is striking at various faults extant in Philippi. Love is the fruit of faith, and an essential element in faith. too, is knowledge of what it trusts.

[10] Εἰς τό κτλ, denotes result: "so that you may keep testing the things that differ," and may not be deceived when told that one thing in religion is as good as another, that falsehood is as good as truth or even better than

truth. Paul loves the word δοκιμάζειν. In his day metals and coins were tested to determine both weight and purity. So, equipped with proper knowledge and experienced perception, we must ever be making tests, accepting only what is genuine and rejecting all else. To complete the thought Paul adds the purpose clause: “in order that you may be unalloyed and uninjured in regard to Christ’s day.” Here again we have the eschatological viewpoint. But note the surprising turn informing us that the great purpose deals not with the outer objects that we are testing, some being appropriated, others rejected, but With ourselves, that we be “unalloyed and uninjured.” This turn of thought is typical of Paul, a piece of masterly thinking, leaping across the intermediate links and at once reaching the ultimate point. We indeed test this and that, find it so or so; but even with regard to coins and metals, to say nothing about divine truth and base religious lies, moral excellence and moral depravity, while we do the testing, or fail to do it, while we test with real knowledge and perception, or with half-knowledge, not perceiving what we should, we ourselves really undergo the test and are revealed as either up to par or below par, perhaps as altogether spurious.

Εἰλικρινής == of unmixed substance, unalloyed, and in this sense sincere. But the English “sincere” (our versions) is misleading, for one possessing no equipment or ability for testing may undertake the testing sincerely enough, but his testing will be valueless, and he himself is thus proven to be entirely below par. We need not examine the other derivations of εἰλικρινής. The verb “to test” and “unalloyed,” both to be understood in the ethical sense, correspond. It is to be expected that the test will show that the metal is pure and not mixed With base alloy. The final test is to be made on “Christ’s day”; then none of us wants to have in himself any secret alloy of unbelief, worldliness, secret sin, and the like; he wants to be like pure, refined gold.

The second adjective, ἀπόσκοπος, forms a complement to the first. For an object may be found to be entirely of unalloyed metal, but it may be damaged and thus suffer rejection on this account. Some take this word in the active sense: “not causing damage to others,” but this is entirely out of the line of thought; here we have the passive: “uninjured,” “undamaged.” “Without offense” (A.V.) and “void of offense” (R.V.) are metaphorical, but leave us guessing between the active and the passive ideas. At that great

day the Lord wants no damaged Christians. If your faith, confession, worship, and life are worth no more to you than this that you let the devil and the world damage and ruin them, be not surprised that at the last day you stand rejected. It makes a great difference with the Lord whether your faith is based on the pure doctrine or not, whether your confession is true or not, whether your worship accords with the Word or not, whether your life is full of good works or not. There must be no alloy or mixture, there must be no damage or injury. Keep Christ's day ever before your eyes.

[11] The last clause makes us think of what may cause our rejection at the last day, hence Paul adds what will cause our acceptance: "filled with fruit of righteousness, this (fruit) through Jesus Christ, for God's glory and praise." The perfect participle "having been filled" means all along and continuing thus. The passive retains the accusative: filled as to fruit. The genitive in "fruit of righteousness" is qualitative, fruit that is marked by righteousness and is counted as righteous by the final Judge. This fruit consists of good works (Eph. 2:10), see the list in Gal. v. 22. He will judge the works of all men (Matt. 25:31-46). Are we filling ourselves with fruit of righteousness?

Τὸν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, "that (fruit) through Jesus Christ," signifies that we cannot produce this fruit ourselves, by our own unregenerate powers. Even the passive "having been filled" points to God as the agent who fills us with this fruit, and the attributive διὰ phrase states that God uses as his medium Jesus Christ. Christ's grace, Spirit, Word, and gifts make us good trees, rich in good fruit (Matt. 7:17-19), good soil bearing up to a hundredfold (Matt. 13:23). In testing this fruit the Lord will use his norm of righteousness, and not the foolish norms men may wish to apply (Matt. 7:22-23).

"For God's glory and praise" is like Eph. 1:6, 12:14 and modifies the entire object for which Paul prays. See John 15:8. God's glory is the sum of his attributes, or anyone of his attributes, shining forth. Thus what his love, mercy, grace, etc., have wrought in us is to reflect these his attributes, is to praise him for them and for what he has wrought through them. Man can have no greater joy than to offer such glory and praise to God.

Make an inventory of what the prayer in this text contains: love abounding more and more — in knowledge and all perception — ever

making true tests — the purpose, that we may pass the test — our hearts and our lives filled with fruit of righteousness through Christ: — all this to God’s glory and praise. Verily, a sermon *in parvo*!

## Homiletical Aid

We meet outlines of this text which deal with the Fellowship in the Gospel, with the Manner of Prayer, a School of Prayer, “I Believe in the Communion of Saints,” the Apostle and his Congregation, The Progress in Christianity, its Marks, what Pertains to this Progress, and other subjects of this type. In all such outlines the purpose for which this text was chosen and appointed for this Sunday is disregarded. Sermons on these subjects might be preached on quite a number of other Sundays, if the plan of the Church Year is not to control the selection of subjects.

We are now in the eschatological section of the after-Trinity Sundays. Our text twice refers to “Jesus Christ’s day.” We have been urged “to redeem the time” (Twentieth Sunday After Trinity), to stand in full armor victorious to the end over our unseen enemies (Twenty-First Sunday After Trinity). Now we are given the comfort that God will finish the good work in us on Jesus Christ’s day, and on the following Sunday we shall hear how our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a good homiletical rule to look for that which is distinctive in a text, — in the text on the Syro-phenician woman, for instance, not merely faith in general, but the perseverance of faith. With regard to texts fitted into the structure of the Church Year it is equally important to discover the reason for their selection, and to learn why each is placed just where it is.

Nebe’s outline follows the right idea:

### **How Are We to Approach the Lord’s Day?**

- I. With confidence;
- II. Rich in love;
- III. Unalloyed;

IV. Filled with the fruit of righteousness.

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Nebe has another acceptable theme:

**God will Complete the Good Work until Jesus Christ's Day.**

But the division is not acceptable:

- I. He has begun it.
- II. But it is essential that we pray and labor, in order that we may grow in the good work, — which sounds as though God only begins the work, while we must, finish it.

This is better:

- I. We see what God is doing now.
    1. Keeping us in the fellowship.
    2. Hearing our prayers for love, knowledge, and perception.
    3. Helping us to remain without alloy and injury.
  - II. We know what he will do at Jesus Christ's Day.
    1. Raise our bodies from the dead and reunite them with the souls.
    2. Acquit us in the final Judgment before all men and angels.
    3. Receive us into the new heaven and earth, into the eternal city (Rev. 21).
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A brief account of the prisoner Paul's relation to the Philippians may serve as an introduction.

**How Would We Fit In Among the Philippians?**

- I. Could the apostle thank God for us as he did for the Philippians in view of Jesus Christ's day?
  1. Here consider your fellowship as regards the Gospel from the first day until now, how much you mean it and how much it means to you. How much is there that a man like the apostle might thank for in your case?
  2. Next consider the day of the Lord Jesus Christ; how much does this day mean to you? Can a man like Paul feel confident that God's good work will reach its glorious completion also in you on that day?
- II. Could the apostle pray for you as he did for the Philippians in view of Christ's day?
  1. Here consider what the petition of the apostle presupposes in the Philippians: a great measure of love, knowledge, ability to make tests, and fruit of righteousness. You can pray for increase only where there is progress to some extent.
  2. Next consider again Jesus Christ's day and how much it means for you. Do you really mean to appear on that day unalloyed and uninjured, and made acceptable by God's grace to the great Judge?

It is well to think of that great day and to compare ourselves with the members of some true congregation like the one in Philippi. So often some of us do the reverse. We think only of the present time. We compare ourselves with congregations lax in doctrine, full of worldliness and unchristian practices, and ask: "If they can do so and so, why cannot we also?" But what about the Lord's day?

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### **God must Prepare us for the Day of Jesus Christ.**

Shall we interfere with this preparation and prevent its glorious completion?

- I. He must join us in fellowship as regards the Gospel. Our faith must rest on the pure Gospel alone. Thin we must confess with all our heart.

In this we must support every true leader (v. 7). Nothing is worse than to injure this fellowship in the Gospel.

- II. He must make us grow in love, knowledge, and good works.
- III. He must keep us unalloyed and uninjured.
- IV. He must finish the work at that day. By raising our dead bodies, etc.

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**Let us Live in the Light of Jesus Christ's Day!**

- I. In fellowship as regards the Gospel.
- II. In confidence of what God will complete in us.
- III. In love enlightened by knowledge. Praying God that he increase both in us by his Word and Spirit.
- IV. In the fruits of righteousness.

The four parts are stated in the analytic order. Synthesis may be obtained when this order is changed so that part two is placed last.

# The Twenty-third Sunday After Trinity. Phil. 3:17-21

## **Our Commonwealth is in Heaven, From which also We Expect as a Savior the Lord Jesus Christ**

The epistle texts for the Twenty-second and for the Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity evidently form an eschatological pair, even as they are taken from the same biblical book. The text for the previous Sunday fills us with confidence that God will finish the work he has begun, finish it most gloriously for Jesus Christ's day. The present text fills us with hope and tells us how God will finish his work at that day, namely by making our vile body like the glorious body of Christ. We need no further instruction in regard to the main purport of these two texts.

At first glance one might conclude that the epistle has no inner contact with the gospel for the day, which deals with the propriety of paying taxes to the Roman emperor (Matt. 22:15-22). But this would be a mistake. The point of emphasis is not at all, as Nebe imagines, that in the gospel text Christ conquers his enemies; Christ does that in every text which describes his clash with his enemies. The gospel is so important because of Christ's answer: "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." During our entire life we render unto God what belongs to him, — in this way our conversation is in heaven. Gospel and epistle teach the same eschatology, only in the latter the eschatology is fully expressed. We pay taxes to earthly rulers, but this arrangement will not endure very long, and is not a matter to excite us unduly, as it did the Jews under the Roman emperors. Our home is in heaven, and hence while we are still here on earth we render unto God the things that are God's. We even pay our taxes to the government for conscience sake, so as not to sin against God. The gospel and the epistle text harmonize.



[17] In v. 13 Paul writes regarding himself, “One thing, yes, — forgetting the things behind and stretching out goalward to those in front, I continue pursuit for the prize of the lofty calling of God in Christ Jesus.” He is setting himself up as an example and in v. 15 he adds: “Accordingly let us, as many as are mature, keep minding this thing,” namely (v. 16) to keep in line with that to which we have attained. Thus he continues: **Be joint imitators of me, brethren, and watch those walking so as you have us as example!**

We may translate γίνεσθε: “continue to be,” for the implication is that the Philippians are already imitators of the apostle. “Get to be” is wrong, for it would imply that hitherto they have not been Paul’s imitators. We must note the word συμμιμηταί μου, which means not merely “imitators,” but “joint imitators of me,” associative σύν being a part of the word. The Philippians are to imitate the apostle in association with each other. Not only is one to do what the other does, but each is to watch what all the others do and then in company with them do the same thing. Thus each is to derive help and encouragement from all the rest, and each is also to contribute to the rest his help and his encouragement. To add the little prefix σύν to the noun is a fine touch.

Wherein are the Philippians to be the apostle’s joint imitators? In being on their guard against the Judaizers (V. 2); in counting all things as dung in order to gain Christ (v. 8); in casting away all righteousness of my own in order to have the righteousness of faith (v. 9); in attaining, if possible, the (blessed) resurrection of the dead (v. 11); in reaching forth unto the things that are before (v. 13); in pressing forward to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (V. 14).

Is it proper for Paul to set himself up as a model for the Philippians? That is exactly what he should do. Every preacher is called to be a model to his hearers. Woe to him, if he must say, as one is reputed actually to have said to his people: “Do what I tell you, and not what I myself do!” Yet the apostle is not making himself a paragon, one who alone is the model, for he writes: “and watch those walking so as you have us as example.” Paul speaks of himself as one model among many others. “Us” is not a majestic plural referring only to Paul; the apostle never uses this plural, although Robertson imagines that he does. “Us” refers to Paul and Timothy (1:1), the writers of this letter. Many walk (conduct themselves) just as these their

former teachers do, a good many do so in the Philippian congregation itself. Everyone is to keep an eye upon them, σκοπεῖν is here not used in a hostile sense, but means to watch so as to imitate. Περιπατεῖν, “to walk” is constantly used in the metaphorical sense with the meaning to conduct oneself, to live. When at this point the apostle inserts the affectionate address “brethren,” he strengthens his appeal and asks them to imitate him as they would imitate one who is a brother, as one who is not far above them but who travels by their side on the same heavenward road as one of them.

[18] There is grave reason why the apostle draws the Philippians so closely to his heart and asks them to imitate him and all those who do so imitate him. Γάρ states this reason: **For many are walking, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, the enemies of the cross of Christ, [19] whose end (is) perdition, whose god is the belly, and (thus) their glory in their shame, — they minding Hm earthly things.**

In v. 2 Paul warns against “the concision,” meaning the Judaizers of his day. We see them at work in the Galatian churches, then also in Corinth. These errorists had at first invaded Antioch and had then brought about the apostolic convention at Jerusalem (Acts 15), which passed a strong resolution against them that was to be sent to all the churches. While these Judaizers believed in Christ (Acts 15:55, — a fact often overlooked), they demanded circumcision and obedience to the ceremonial laws of Moses, and thereby destroyed the very heart of the Gospel. Like in some of the fanatic errorists of today, these Judaizers did not build up churches of their own, but invaded true churches built up by others, — we know about those in Galatia and in Corinth. From the beginning Paul feared that during his absence these errorists would invade his congregation in Philippi. Hence when he first established the congregation and every time that he returned to it, he warned the members most earnestly, so that if Judaizers at any time made their appearance they might be strenuously excluded.

Paul betrays his deep feeling when he writes that, now he tells his readers about these enemies κλαίων, “with weeping.” Despite their faith in Christ they will end in perdition, and it is their joy to drag the members of the true churches with them. To write about their character and their actions saddens the apostle to the point of shedding tears. Yet while the apostle sheds tears, many Christians are so blind that they open their homes and

their hearts to the worst errorists who come in the name of Christ to deceive them to their ruin. We need name only the Russellites who believe that Christ is the angel Michael and not the Son of God. The Judaizers were “the enemies of the cross of Christ.” Yes, they believed in Christ and also in his cross, but their legalism nullified the atoning and the justifying effects of the cross (Gal. v. 2 and 4). Let us understand well that the worst enemies of the cross are not the open atheists and blasphemers of Christ. All Christians can without difficulty see What these are and can flee from them. The worst enemies are those who come with a pious air in the name of Christ and speak highly of his cross, yet erase its sacrificial, expiating power and base salvation on something else, not on the cross and on the cross alone.

The ancient Judaizers made Jesus himself a Judaizer. Had not Jesus been circumcised? Certainly, then, we too should practice circumcision! Had he not kept all the ceremonial laws of Moses? How then can we dare to set them aside? Had he not died on the cross for this very cause? Must we not follow his example to be saved? So the Judaizers could argue, and Christians, not well fortified, could be easily deceived. Legalism is still as great and as dangerous an error as ever, an “enemy of the cross of Christ.” Circumcision, kosher eating, etc., have disappeared, but the ancient Jewish falsehood is present one hundred percent: that the law and not the true Gospel saves, that the law is the real Gospel, that we must have a righteousness of our own (v. 9) and the righteousness through faith and by faith (v. 9) is nothing, that works, good character, merit of our own save. Whatever guise this teaching may assume today, even in grand churches and cathedrals, it is nothing but the old hoary error of Judaism which the apostle annihilated so thoroughly.

[19] “Whose end is perdition,” ἀπώλεια, everlasting ruin in hell. But is this not too harsh? Alas, it states the simple fact as a warning to us. Like the ancient Judaizers, men may have faith, but their faith does not trust the one thing that brings the σωτηρία, eternal salvation. Here read Matt. 7:22-23, the substance of which Paul is repeating.

The clause “whose God is the belly” makes many commentators think that the apostle is not now speaking of the Judaizers as he did in v. 2 etc., but of libertinists, members of the churches who were loose in morals, such as thought that sinning could not hurt them, yea that giving the flesh free rein is the way to conquer the flesh. They abused Christian liberty by turing

it into license. In Rom. 16:18, Paul has another reference to “the belly.” The word “belly” is in a drastic way used figuratively in both passages, and refers to that which is lower and the lowest, in man’s nature. In Rom. 16:19 Paul defines “belly” by τὸ κακόν, “that which is base,” while here in Philippians he uses “their shame (disgrace)” and “the earthly things.”

Certainly all Epicurean, antinomian libertinists “serve their own belly,” but the word used in Rom. 16:18 is not διακονέω, to render service to the belly, it is δουλεύω, to be a slave not to our Lord Jesus Christ, but to their own belly. So also Paul now writes: “whose god is their belly.” Let us get the thought, of these passages correctly. These are people who do not as slaves bow to our Lord Jesus Christ, acknowledging no will but his will and his Word; they have another god whose will they as slaves accept. Remember, a δοῦλος; or slave is one who has no will of his own, whose will is altogether that of his owner. A διάκονος is one who freely serves to benefit some person, and this is not the word used in Romans. In his warning Paul does not suddenly revert from one kind of errorists, the Judaizers, to another kind, the libertinists. The word “belly” is far from indicating such a leap in thought. Every error, and especially the great error of the Judaizers, is a false and deadly emancipation from Christ, his Word, and his will. Every error thus enslaves us to our own lower nature and lets that dictate as “god.” We must get beyond the unbiblical idea that error is only intellectual. With this error goes the further idea that intellectual aberrations are only mistakes of the head and not of the heart, are therefore quite pardonable,- — men merely do not know any better. The intellect is only the tool, the slave. In the errorist “the flesh” is the lord. The coarsest term for this old depravity in us is “our own belly.” Even in a physical way the term “belly” has its application to the Judaizers, for they demanded kosher food; read Matt. 15:17; Col. 2:20-23. Yet Paul does not confine “the belly” and its rule as “god” to this physical sphere, as we see from the entire context, especially from the following.

In apposition to “the belly,” and thus defining what is meant, Paul writes: “and (thus) their glory in their shame,” the Greek articles are used in the sense of possessive pronouns. What their belly nature dictates to them as their god, what they thus consider “their glory,” is in reality and in the sight of Christ their shame or disgrace. Paul’s great glory is the cross (Gal. 6:14). Everything Judaistic, in particular all righteousness of his own, is to

him dung (v. 8), yea, everything else in the world is crucified for him, and he for it (Gal. 6:14). To Christ and to his cross alone he looks in obedience as does a slave, and there he finds his glory.

Another elucidation is added; it is the simplest and therefore placed last: “they minding the earthly things.” The nominative is used *ad sensum*, describing the persons here meant. To have the belly as one’s god is to keep minding the earthly things. “For they that are after the flesh (in accord with it) do mind the things of the flesh (the earthly things); but they that are after the spirit (in accord with it) the things of the spirit,” Rom. 8:5. “To mind” is to fix the interest and the attention upon, thus including both thought and conduct.

[20] “For” in v. 18 supports the admonition of v. 17 by pointing to what the Judaizers and their followers are; “for” in v. 20 does this by pointing In what “we” are in contrast with them. It is the same contrast as that found in v. 2 and 3 and not a contrast between an entirely different class of errorists (liberalists) and us. **For our commonwealth exist. in the heavens, from which we expect as a Savior the Lord Jesus Christ, [21] who will change the fashion of the body of our lowliness conformable to the body of his glory, in accord with the working of his being able also to subject to himself all tho things** (that exist). The Judaizers and their adherents mind the earthly things; we are the directly opposite, our commonwealth is in heaven. Πολίτευμα is not “conversation” (A.V.), nor is it “citizenship” (R.V.). for the suffix — μα does not indicate something abstract, but a result, here “a commonwealth” that actually is formed by citizens. The commonwealth of the Judaizers is on earth, and for this reason they keep minding the earthly things.

In πολίτευμα lies another implication. A commonwealth is closed to its enemies, and these Judaizers are “the enemies of the cross of Christ” (V. 18). Our commonwealth bars them out. We must get the apostle’s full blast against these errorists: he sees vile dogs (V. 2), a belly-god (V. 19), and thus perdition (V. 19). The commonwealth of heaven, where lies our true home, bars them out.

The antecedent of ἐξ οὗ is πολίτευμα and not the plural οὐπανοῖς, which would be a clash in number. From our commonwealth the Lord will descend to earth. We are living here as pilgrims and strangers in constant

expectation of our Lord's coming in his Parousia. "As Savior" is predicative. He will bring our final deliverance. The effort is made to read into "Savior" a conscious contrast with the pagan use of the word "Savior" as a title for their deified emperors. It is a mistake to think that every time Paul wrote "Savior" he thought of these emperors. Their title was nothing more than a decoration. It was applied to them in the sense of being a *Nothelfer*, but they were not much of a helper in need at that. We must go to the Old Testament for the true meaning of *Savior*, "divine Deliverer," and must keep in mind that it is applied to God, and not only to Christ. Naturally Paul uses the full designation "Lord Jesus Christ," the divine Lord and Master, who bought us and to whom we belong, who rules this heavenly commonwealth, whose personal name is Jesus and whose official name is Christ or Messiah.

[21] The relative clause states a part of that which we expect this our Savior to do, namely to raise up our bodies and to cover them with glory: "who will change the fashion of the body of our lowliness conformable to the body of his glory," etc. This will be done at the time of the resurrection, yet Paul's wording is such as to include also those who will be living at the last day. Here is a description of the resurrection which we may place beside 1 Cor. 15:52-54. The dead bodies of the blessed which have turned to dust, have mingled with the elements, have been burned up in conflagrations, consumed by animals, devoured by fish, these the Lord will bring back. Paul calls the body "the body of our lowliness" (not "our vile body," A.V.), the genitive being qualitative. Already while we are alive "lowliness" marks our body, — it has lost its original perfection. What little beauty we may have in youth soon fades, aches, pains, the ravages of disease set in, until some fatal ailment overtakes us and the poor body is buried and rots.

But this lowly body the Lord our Savior will suddenly raise up, "will change the fashion of it, conformable to the body of his glory." Note that Paul uses two compounds, one with *σχῆμα*, "fashion," and one with *μορφή*, "form"; compare 2:7-8; "form of a slave — fashion as man," the order of the two reversed. All that gives our bodies the fashion of lowliness here in life and at last in death shall be completely removed, and in the same instant our bodies shall be "conformable to the body of his glory," have the same essential form as the glorious body of Christ. So completely shall the

fashion of our body be changed that its wry form shall be glorious like the body of Christ. His body shining as the sun with divine glory and effulgence, our bodies shining with created glory as the stars.

“Body — body,” yet in the face of this and of all other glorious passages the host of modern Sadducees denies the resurrection of the body. They regard it as impossible that the dead should arise. Some accept the immortality of the soul, but that this poor body of ours should also be immortal they refuse to believe. Some philosophize and try to make it easier for the almighty Lord and Savior, by letting him conserve only a germ, which at last he brings forth. — misinterpreting 1 Cor. 15:35-38. Some dispense with the germ, letting the Lord create entirely new bodies. Some let the soul alone remain, without body. Omnipotence laughs at such puerilities. Why insult omnipotence by coming to its rescue?

How will the resurrection and the transformation of the bodies take place? “In accord with the working of his being able to subject to himself all the things (that exist) ,” τὰ πάντα, definite. The genitive infinitive τοῦ δύνασθαι is qualitative or descriptive and is used as a noun. It may also have consecutive force: “working so that he is able.” The resurrection will be a miracle, wrought by omnipotence. To make us conscious of what omnipotence really is the apostle describes it as the ἐνέργεια, the energy or power of the ability to subject to himself everything that exists in the entire universe. Just leave the resurrection of the body to the Lord, and let no Sadducee disturb your soul regarding that subject.

## Homiletical Aid

Pilgrims here on earth and beset by dangers.

### **A Citizen of Heaven.**

- I. His eyes are upon his fellow citizens.
  1. He is not alone. The procession whose van is within the gates, whose numbers are about him, many near and dear to him.
  2. He is encouraged, cheered, supported, instructed. The more when he keeps the best of these his brethren before his eyes to

copy their example, and by so doing to supply an example also for his brethren.

II. His back is toward all the enemies of the cross of Christ.

1. Instead of Christ, his Word and his will, they obey the belly as their god, the dictates of their fleshly nature and heart. What is really their disgrace they treat as their glory. Their end is perdition.
2. He is not attracted but repelled by their doctrine which rejects Christ's blood and righteousness and sets up their own works as the way to salvation. He has pity and tears for the way they treat the saving blood of the Savior. He keeps clear of any trace of their false teaching and their mode of life.

III. His heart is with his Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. He has it fixed in joyful hope and anticipation upon the glorious coming of the Savior at the last day.
2. He has the sure hope of the resurrection of his body and its transformation in glory, like the Savior's own body. He knows the omnipotence by which the Savior will do this. All this fills his heart with heavenly light and joy as he proceeds on his pilgrimage.

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I would preach on the theme: "**Heavenward doth our Journey Tend,**" if Benjamin Schmolcke's great hymn were preserved in the American Lutheran Hymnal. Since this hymn is missing, I turn to number 312.

**I'm but a Stranger here: Heav'n is my Home."**

Hence

- I. I cling to my brethren.
- II. I keep from the enemies.
- III. I rejoice in my Savior's return.
- IV. I glory in advance in the resurrection of my Inn!"



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## **On the Way to Heaven.**

- I. The predecessors, whom to regard, v. 17.
- II. The dangers, which to shun, v. 18-19.
- III. The glory, which to attain, v. 20-21.

Sommer.

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Luther's rendering of πολίτευμα: *Unser Wandel ist en Himmel*, was copied by the A.V.: "Our conversation in heaven." This translation has given rise to sermons that use this statement as the theme. Nevertheless, our conversation is still here on earth, and we must confess that, despite all that the preacher in the pulpit may urge upon us, we cannot as yet live and act as if we were already in heaven. Hence the better theme is

## **Our Commonwealth is in Heaven.**

- I. How our souls reach this commonwealth. After imitating the holy apostle and repudiating all the our mies of the cross of Christ.
  - II. How our bodies shall follow. When Christ returns in glory and transforms our bodies by means of him omnipotence.
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The text speaks of the "brethren" and of "the enemies of the cross of Christ." When these are used as a division of the sermon the danger is that the main feature of the text, its eschatological message, is crowded too far into the background. Thus Sommer's first outline:

## **The Friends and the Enemies of the Cross of Christ.**

- I. Their mind.
  1. The enemies mind the earthly things, etc.

- 2. The friends have their treasure in heaven, etc.
- II. Their conversation.
  - 1. The enemies are slaves of their belly, etc.
  - 2. The friends love Christ, etc.
- III. Their end.
  - 1. For the enemies perdition.
  - 2. For the friends glorification even of their bodies.

Among these six subdivisions there is practically no room for the eschatology except perhaps in the last. It would be far more desirable to let the eschatology of the last two verses control the entire sermon.

### **The Hope that the Savior shall Change our Dead Bodies.**

- I. It rests on the cross of Christ. Its expiating, atoning power. Which is for the body as well as for the soul. Which has made for us the commonwealth in heaven.
- II. It will be fulfilled at Christ's return. Already at death our souls enter the blessed commonwealth of heaven. But the Savior will return to complete his work at the last day. Then he will raise our bodies from the dead and will make them glorious like his own body. The miracle. The omnipotence. This is hope indeed.
- III. It is not for the enemies of Christ's cross. Those who reject the cleansing blood of the cross. Those who, like the old Sadducees, think the dead bodies will remain dead. Those whose god is their belly, i.e. who in their religious thought are slaves of their base lower nature or flesh. Those who mind earthly things and follow earthly ideas in their religion. Their end is perdition: their bodies shall indeed be raised, but only to accompany their souls into hell.
- IV. It is for the true imitators of St. Paul. Who imitate him in clinging to Christ's cross, in making Christ the God whom they obey, in minding the heavenly things of his Word.

The Apostolic Creed: “From thence he shall come” etc.; “I believe in... the resurrection of the dead.” The resurrection, the crown of Christ’s redemptive work.

**“I Believe in the Resurrection of the Dead.”**

- I. Because of the Scriptural promises.
- II. Because of the Savior’s return in omnipotence and glory.
- III. Despite all the ancient and the modern skeptics.

# The Twenty-fourth Sunday After Trinity. Col. 1:9-14

## Rescued out of the Authority of the Darkness, Transferred into the Kingdom of the Son

The sequence of thought is the following: 1) God will finish the good work on Jesus Christ's day; 2) We expect Jesus Christ as our Savior from the commonwealth of heaven; and now 3) Already are we transferred into the Kingdom of the Son. For this third thought we might choose that other expression from v. 12, but with the correct translation: Already made fit for the part of the lot of the saints in the light. The Kingdom of the Son of the Father's love is the great eschatological concept in the text; it is the Kingdom of grace that shall become the Kingdom of glory at the last day, in fact, its glory exists already now. The eschatological features of these texts are so important and so necessary for our people that they must be allowed to dominate the sermon.

In the text for the Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity and in the present text, as also in Eph. 1:15 etc., Paul prays for knowledge for his congregations. Of course, the wording is varied. Superficial judgment might object to the sameness, yet we shall see that the situation obtaining in each congregation was specific, so that each had a specific field in which to apply the knowledge and wisdom for which the apostle kept praying. Indeed, he prayed for each as he did because of their specific situation.

Our epistle accompanies the gospel text, the raising of Jairus' daughter, Matt. 9:18-26. The eschatological thought in the gospel is that Jesus is the Master of death. He is able to deliver from temporal death because he delivers from the power of the darkness (v. 13). Our epistle carries the eschatological thought of the gospel forward to its goal.

It was not Paul but Epaphras, one of Paul's converts, who had founded the congregation at Colosse, and also the one at Laodicea. He also gathered a band of believers in Hieropolis. Recently the work of Epaphras had been threatened by a peculiar Judaistic movement that seems to have sprung up in Colosse itself. These Judaizers claimed to be the real, genuine, superior type of Christians and looked down upon the members of the church as constituting a most inferior type. Their slogan was: "Touch not; taste not; handle not!" (2:21). According to their philosophy the demons used various earthly, physical elements, among them certain foods and drinks, to cause great spiritual damage to the Christians. Hence these Judaizers urged all Christians to keep away from these dangerous elements and to rise to the safe heights which the Judaizers enjoyed. Before these errorists succeeded in making inroads among the converts of Epaphras, this loyal pupil of Paul hurried to Rome, where Paul was being held in confinement, and counseled with him regarding the best method of meeting the Judaistic error. Just at this time the apostle sent the slave Onesimus back to his master Philemon who resided in Colosse and, since Epaphras did not at once return to Colosse, Paul wrote a special letter to the Colossians on the general subject of the Judaizers.

Our text is taken from the opening section of the letter. Paul is preparing the Colossians for the main things that he will have to say. Timothy is associated with him in the writing (1:1). **For this reason also we on our part, from what day we came to hear, do not cease praying in your behalf and duly asking that you may be filled with the true knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so as to walk worthily of the Lord etc.** We see at once why Paul and Timothy pray for knowledge for the Colossians; they will need it in full measure to ward off the Judaizers who were assailing them. The Ephesians were in no such danger. Paul prays for knowledge for them, because his letter presents to them the great doctrine concerning the *Una Sancta*. In this Holy Communion of Saints they are to live intelligently for the glory of God, so that they need a great measure of knowledge. The Philippian had also been spared, no errorists had invaded their fold, but there was great danger that at any time such invaders might appear. They must be fortified in advance with true knowledge. So to this day every congregation needs ἐπίγνωσις, by which the apostle means true heart-knowledge. The word γνῶσις is used also to designate the spurious knowledge of the world. much as unbelievers

today boast of their “science” (which is the Latin derivative for knowledge); ἐπίγνωσις is used only with reference to true spiritual knowledge.

Ignorance is always full of spiritual danger. It is dangerous even in secular life. The ignorant easily fall prey to designing men. When we meditate on these prayers of the apostle for knowledge, we should examine our own personal situation and the situation and the condition of our congregation, to see where we are deficient or in danger and thus in need of knowledge. None of us should be content to be a spiritual ignoramus. A congregation composed of spiritual ignoramuses would be a pitiful sight. When one ignoramus tries to lead another, will they not both fall into the ditch? The aorist used in prayers: “that you may be filled,” is due to the urgency of prayer, and also means “may be actually filled.” The vessel of our heart and our mind is not to be filled only partially. In Greek the passive retains the accusative which is used with the active. The agent of the passive points to God. He has sent his Spirit to supply us with true knowledge. This knowledge does not come into our minds flying through the air whenever we may happen to need it. They who expect such phenomena will be disappointed. The fountain of knowledge is the Word, which we must faithfully read and study and must have taught and preached to us.

Paul writes “the knowledge of his will,” and by θέλημα he means what God has willed, namely in regard to our salvation. Men are always falsifying this “will,” some do it with base intent, some in ignorance. They claim: “This is what God has willed!” or: “That is his will!” when such a claim is not true, and when we can see its falsity from a reading of God’s own Word, where he plainly and with much repetition tells us precisely what he has willed. To be deceived regarding it, or to be left in ignorance is dangerous. How shall we answer God when at last he confronts us with the question: “Did I not tell you my will? Why did you listen to liars when you had my Word?” I fear there will be no answer to that question. There is, indeed, invincible ignorance, for which God will make some excuse, namely when one has no possibility of knowing; but we have the full and the open Bible and great opportunity for all manner of instruction and abundant preaching, so that our ignorance must be classed as Vincible and hence inexcusable.

Paul feels that the word “knowledge” is not enough; he adds “in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,” — ἐν == “in connection with.” When it is connected with knowledge, σοφία knows how to apply this knowledge to all the problems and the situations that arise in life, for instance when error tempts us. Σύνεσις (bringing this and that together), “understanding,” is the ability to analyze and to combine, when, for instance in the case of error, one point after another is taken up and the true will of God is then pointed out point by point. All three of these qualities in the combination here presented: knowledge in connection with wisdom and understanding, the Colossians needed more than ever at this time of danger.

Hence Paul and Timothy include them in their continuous prayers. “For this reason” refers back to the entire preceding paragraph (v. 2-8). With this phrase is to be construed ἡμεῖς, “we on our part,” we as especially concerned about you. “From what day we came to hear” (aorist), implies that neither Paul nor Timothy had founded the church in Colosse, but that the news of the work of Epaphras had come to their ears. What day and date this was, is not stated. Ever since that day Paul and Timothy “do not cease praying in behalf of the Colossians and duly asking” for what they need. Note the middle voice of αἰτούμενοι, which always indicates a certain right to ask, as for instance in a business transaction. Here God’s command and his promise entitle Paul and Timothy to ask as they do. ἵνα is non-final and it states the contents of the prayer.

[10] With a consecutive infinitive, stating the result of being filled with the spirit, Paul proceeds (disregard Robertson’s grammar): **so as to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, in every good work bearing fruit and growing by means of this knowledge of God; [11] being made powerful in all power according to the might of his glory for all perseverance and longsuffering with joy; [12] thanking the Father who made us fit for tho (our) part of the lot of the saints in the light; etc.** Right knowledge, applied in connection with wisdom and spiritual understanding, is bound to produce corresponding results in right conduct. Certainly wrong knowledge and ignorance cannot produce right conduct. Yes, Christians often know better, and yet they do wrong. This is due to the flesh, and must drive us to repentance. There is also a dead orthodoxy, but this does not deserve the name *epignosis*.

With the decisive aorist Paul says: “so as to walk once for all worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing.” The thing is to be settled without further question or debate. In ἄξιως lies the idea of weight: so that the scales balance, the Lord on one side, we on the other. “Unto all pleasing” shows in what respect we are to be of proper weight, in respect to all that pleases our Lord. So many think it enough to please him a little, and beyond that they please themselves and the world, — a sad and a dangerous attempt.

The participial addition makes the thought still clearer: “in every good work bearing fruit and growing by means of this knowledge of God.” The nominative is not to be constructed with the infinitive but with the subject of the main verb “be filled with.” The figure of bearing fruit and of growing is repeated from v. 6, compare Matt. 7:17 etc. Naturally, a tree that bears well is one that is growing; one that stops bearing is probably dying. We may translate “in every” or “in all good work,” none omitted. Good works are not such as the world calls good. Its criterion and norm is not of God. The definition of good works found in the Catechism is very good: the works that spring from faith, are in accord with God’s law, and are done for his glory. It is not apparent how the dative can be translated: “increasing in the knowledge” etc., meaning that we obtain more and more knowledge. Paul would use ἐν, just as he does with “in every good work.” This must be a dative of means, with the article of previous reference: the result is to be that we ourselves grow spiritually, and this by means of the true heart-knowledge for which Paul prays. Such knowledge is like spiritual food. It makes us grow, so that we are no longer babes easily deceived, but capable men, Eph. 4:14-15. A moment before Paul spoke of the knowledge “of his (God’s) will”; he means the same when now he writes: by means of the knowledge “of God.” No man knows God unless he knows his will.

[11] The next participial clause states how this knowledge is able to do what Paul has just said: “being made powerful in all power according to the might, of his glory for all perseverance and longsuffering with joy”; etc, Ἐν δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι repeats the word δύναμις, while our versions use different words. By means of this true knowledge we grow, and this is done when God fills us with dynamic power. It is a common saying that knowledge is power, so also spiritual knowledge is spiritual power. “In all good work” is matched by “in all power.” In no power that we need for fruitbearing and growing will God leave us deficient. If we ever prove



deficient, it is never because he fails to supply power; it is always because we do not let him “fill us with the knowledge of his will,” with this knowledge which is ever so efficient a means for making us bear fruit and grow.

Here is the place to take true account of ourselves personally and of our whole church work. Thin, watery sermons, the supposedly strong part of which are anecdotes and little stories, produce no power and growth. Abbreviating the instruction of children and catechumens, in particular also of adult catechumens, is the crime of unspiritual pastors. Many members are afraid that they and their children will learn too much. There are too many, including preachers, whose delight is not the diligent and ardent study of the Word. Too many places in our minds are left empty, or these places are often filled with sorry rubbish and fake religious knowledge which is like a noxious growth of weeds, and just as hard to eradicate.

God does not intend to give us but a half measure, but he means to empower us “according to the might of his glory” etc. Now the word designating power is not δύναμις but κράτος, might put forth in action, the might of his δόξα or attributes shining forth. Here we should think of his love, grace, and mercy as these shine forth in “the Word of the truth of the Gospel present with us” (v. 5). This “might of his glory” is not omnipotence. Our spiritual power flows from the Word; this is the source of our knowledge. Great indeed is this “might of his glory” and able to supply all our needs! Yet if we neglect it, our loss will be irreparable.

Paul does not revert to the good works and state that they require this power from God (v. 10), but he advances to those qualities in us from which such good works spring: God empowers us in all power “for all perseverance and longsuffering with joy.” We may see at once that ὑπομονή is not “patience” (our versions), when we note that patience is ascribed to God, while ὑπομονή never is and could not be. Trench has made this plain, for the word means “remaining under” hindrances, burdens, trials, temptations, persecutions, none of which burden God. The word is used with reference to adverse things, not adverse persons. With regard to the latter, the word is μακροθυμία, which applies also to God, “longsuffering,” holding out a long time against the provocation of men before proceeding to decisive action. Yet, it takes spiritual power to continue in brave perseverance against a thousand adverse things and in longsuffering against

a thousand provocative and irritating men. Paul even writes “for all perseverance and longsuffering” as both may be needed in the various situations we must face.

Even this is not enough, he adds: “with joy.” We are not to make a long face when things hurt us and when men provoke us. We are not to bear it with a sickly smile, behind which we sigh only for relief. No, we are to have actual joy in our hearts, because we are powerful. Hence nothing is too hard for us, nothing puts a strain upon us for too long a period. One who is spiritually weak and anemic can endure very little. He weakens, turns coward, runs away, and the good works that require the spiritually manly qualities are left undone. Let God fill you with real spiritual power!

[12] The Greek reads: “in every good work bearing fruit... in all power made powerful,” the modifiers preceding the participles. Hence some conclude that now we must have the same combination: “with joy thanking the Father.” Yet no reader would pause before “with joy” and draw this phrase to “thanking.” The Christian life must ever be filled with thanksgiving. This is what makes it a truly happy life. The more thanks, the more happiness. Let the voice of thanksgiving cease, and gloom, grief, despair enter. “The Father” (best attested reading) must not be restricted to his relationship to us, because in v. 13 “the Son of his love” follows.

Instead of naming the object for which we thank the Father, the apostle adds a participle to “the Father” describing what he has done for us that so merits our thanks: “who made us fit (literally, sufficented us) for the part (portion) of the lot of the saints in light.” How the Father did this, is stated in the next clause, namely by a mighty act of rescue and by a glorious act of transfer into his Kingdom. With “us” the apostle includes himself and Timothy.

A great many suppose that Paul refers to “heaven.” This view is encouraged by the wrong translation of κλήρος, our versions following Luther. Even some of the dictionaries are guilty. The word means “lot” and not “inheritance.” Even in the hymn, “My Father’s House on High,” Montgomery sang: “The bright inheritance of saints, Jerusalem above.” The Germans are so obsessed by the idea that heaven is meant that they draw τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου together into a compound: *Erbteil*, as if in the Greek two articulated nouns could ever have the force of a compound. Some cite

as a parallel “the hope laid away for us” (v. 5). Paul, however, is speaking of “the lot of the saints” in this life. He says that each of us has his part or portion of the lot allotted to the saints, namely here on earth, and that the Father has made us fit or sufficient for that, i.e. has given us the required ability. The part of the lot which each of us has is altogether “in the light.” Our versions have no right to cancel the article. This is a most definite light, not, of course, the light of glory in heaven, but the light of “the Word of the truth of the Gospel (here) present for you” (v. 5). Its rays are the knowledge, wisdom, and understanding mentioned in v. 9, knowledge again in v. 10. The Opposite of “the light” is “the darkness” in v. 13. In the Scriptures both are spoken of as powers, especially τὸ σκότος, the devilish power of hell, from which God has rescued us.

Follow the line of the apostle’s thought and see that this is his meaning: the lot of the saints is to bear fruit and to grow in every good work by means of the knowledge of God, — to do this as empowered in all power for perseverance and longsuffering with joy, — and while doing this while so empowered, to thank the Father for this lot, and for the part of it for which he has fitted us. These participles and their modifiers form a unit. There is no sudden turn of thought so that the last participle speaks of thanking God for our heavenly inheritance.

Yes, the saints here on earth have a blessed lot, entirely lighted by “the light” of the Gospel, its knowledge filling them with power to bear all manner of fruit of good works. Each saint has his part or portion of this lot. Paul has his portion as an apostle. The Father needed only a few of these. Timothy had his portion as an apostolic assistant. There were a number of men in this class. Read Eph. 4:11. Each of the Colossians had his place, and thus has each of the members of our congregations. The Father has fitted each one for the place assigned to him. The whole lot is vast and great, comprising all that the Church is to do on earth. To have part in it is blessed indeed. The entire lot and every part of it that is allotted to anyone of us is entirely “in the light,” illumined by the Gospel.

[13] Paul continues: **he, the One who rescued us out of the authority of the darkness, and transferred us into the Kingdom of the Son of his love. [14] in connection with whom we have the ransoming, the remission of the sins.** What a blessed lot is ours! Once slaves of the darkness, now partakers of the Kingdom.

We should feel the strong demonstrative force of the relative ὅς. Note the difference: in v. 12 only the attributive participle τῷ ἰκανώσαντι, but now the relative with finite verbs. This is not an ordinary “who.” We seek to render its full force by: “he, the One who.” We have found a number of these demonstrative relatives in Paul’s letters. An English writer would probably use an emphatic independent sentence.

Note the terms indicating power. ῥύομαι, “to rescue” requires power, and power greater than that of the enemy from whom the rescue is effected. It is the power of love, grace, and mercy, which provided ransom for us great enough to rescue us. “The authority of the darkness” again denotes power. Ἐξουσία is the right and the power that goes with it. Hence our versions: “out of the power,” and others: “out of the power-domain.” “The darkness” is a monstrous, tyrant power. It holds all men as they are by nature in its deadly grip, and they are powerless to escape. But the Stronger overcame the strong. He spoiled principalities and powers (2:15). In the verb “he rescued us” redemption and justification are combined. To rescue out of the authority of the darkness is the negative side of the act. The positive side is again full of power: “he transferred us into the Kingdom of the Son of his love.” From the deepest depth the Father carried us to the greatest height. “The darkness” is the entrance to hell, “the Kingdom of his Son” is the entrance to heaven.

Matthew writes “the Kingdom of the heavens,” and now and then “the Kingdom of God.” It bears a heavenly character, in it God rules. Nine times it is called “the Kingdom of Christ,” the last time in Rev. 1:9. He is the King. Improper perceptions of the Kingdom prevail. Many imagine that they are building this Kingdom, and they proceed to do it by reforming social, economic, political conditions. A common idea is that this Kingdom is like earthly kingdoms, a king ruling subjects. See the author’s *Kings and Priests*. This Kingdom is the reverse. It does not make its King, but he makes his Kingdom. Wherever he rules with his grace, there is his Kingdom, he makes us partakers of it, heirs, ourselves kings who rule with him already now and shall sit on his throne with him in eternal glory. This Kingdom began with Adam and shall reach its consummation at the last day. Here on earth we call it the Kingdom of grace; in heaven and in eternity it is the Kingdom of glory. It is a mistake to think that Paul is speaking proleptically and refers only to the coming Kingdom of glory.

Only here it is called “the Kingdom of the Son of his love,” which agrees with “the Father” in v. 12. The A.V. converts the genitive “of his love” into a weak adjective: of his “dear” Son. This is not a reference to the Son’s origin: the Son begotten in eternity of God who is love (the speculative idea of Augustine, Lightfoot and others). The deity is already expressed in “the Son.” “Of his love” refers to the redemptive work of the Son on earth, and is taken from the Father’s own declaration: “my beloved Son” (Matt. 3:17, and again Luke 9:35).

[14] The clause: “in connection with whom we have ransoming, the remission of the sins,” rounds out the thought and states what makes us members of the Son’s Kingdom, each with his part of the lot, of the saints in light. Ἐν ᾧ == “in connection with whom” and the context indicates what connection is meant; here it is the connection made by faith. The Son’s ransoming did indeed ransom all men, yet only those who believe “have the ransoming.” The word ἀπολύτρωσις denotes release by having a λύτρον, “ransom,” paid for us. A full discussion, also of the synonymous terms, as well as of Deissmann’s fictional pagan ransoming of slaves, is offered in my *Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (3:24). In Eph. 1:7 the ransoming-price, the sacrificial blood, is at once mentioned; here “the blood of the cross” is mentioned in v. 20. “Through his blood” is interpolated here in v. 14. Warfield is right, “the ransoming” is a better English term than “the redemption,” for the latter term has grown pale and lost much of the idea of “the ransom” (λύτρον ἀνεί, Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). It is essential that we resist the effort to make the word mean no more than “deliverance,” which may be accomplished without a ransom, without the blood of sacrifice and expiation.

Because only they who are in connection with the Son of God’s love by faith “have the ransoming,” therefore the apposition is added: “the remission of the sins,” which names the essential effect of the Son’s ransoming for all believers. The Scriptures never identify the ransoming and the remission. When the opposite is asserted on the strength of 2 Cor. 5:19-21, this passage is misinterpreted. God remits the sins only of those who repent and believe, the sins of all others “are retained” (John 20:23), on them the wrath of God abides, they are already condemned (John 3:36 and 18). Did Caiaphas, Annas, Pilate have the remission of their sins? Remission == justification by faith, the act of God by which, the moment

faith is kindled in a poor sinner's heart, God in heaven pronounces that sinner free from guilt and declares him righteous, for the sake of Christ's merits. *Concordia Triglotta* 918:9.

Ἄφεσις == “remission,” sending the sins away, so far and in such a way that they will never be found. How far that is Ps. 103:12; Micah 7:19; Is. 43:25; 44:22 state. As far as the east is from the west — the depth of the sea — blotted out — blotted out as a thick cloud. The English word “forgiveness” is not such a clear image as this “sending away of the sins,” and it should be explained on the basis of the expressive Greek word. “Of the sins” is definite to indicate each sinner's own sins. Ἄμαρτία — in Eph. 1:7 “trespass” — is that in which we have missed the mark set by God in his law which makes plain what we ought to be and to do. All sins carry with them their guilt. The sending away of the sins removes also their guilt. Once a sin is committed or a sinful state has begun, the sin remains and all the wealth, all the power, all the inventive skill in the world is unable to remove it and its deadly, damning effect. It is this ineradicability that must be impressed upon our hearers, old and young. Only one thing removes not merely one but all our sins, and that perfectly and for ever, and that is the ransoming of the Son, or more simply, his blood. In the final judgment (Matt. 25:34) not a single sin is found against a single believer; but look at the impenitent and the unbelieving, — all their sins are there.

## Homiletical Aid

This is not the Sunday for a sermon on prayer, as little as was the Twenty-second after Trinity. We will entertain no theme which speaks of “the inheritance of the saints in light,” meaning heaven; the correct exegesis of these words saves us from this mistake. It is made by Stoecker who sketches the right way, its beginning, the knowledge of the divine will; its progress, bearing abundant fruit of good works; its conclusion. the inheritance of the saints in light, — meaning heaven. Gerok made the same mistake, speaking on “the glorious state of the children of the light” and thus on viewing the light in faith; on walking worthy of the light in works; on obtaining the inheritance of the light at the end. These outlines contain the eschatology which this Sunday demands and which we must conserve;

the only fault to be found with them is the misinterpretation by which the eschatology is obtained.

Uhlhorn is even worse, for he builds his entire sermon on the mistaken exegesis. He links his parts together: the last, clause of the first part becomes the first clause of the second, and the last of the second part the first of the third, an admirable arrangement, if only the substance were sound.

### **The Inheritance of the Saints in Light.**

- I. The inheritance is there for us, let us view it and rejoice over it in hope.
- II. We dare rejoice over it in hope, for the Father makes us fit for it.
- III. The Father fits us for it, let its omit nothing on our part, that no one of us may remain behind.

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We have been rescued out of the power of the darkness and have been transferred into the Kingdom of the Son of God's love. That means:

### **We are Bound for Heaven.**

- I. For this reason our ransoming and our remission mean everything to us.
- II. For this reason we must have so much spiritual knowledge. Those who are bound for some other place, of course, would not need it.
- III. For this reason we must be filled with spiritual power. The weak are soon lost.
- IV. For this reason we must do good works. Not to earn heaven, but to please the Lord and to prove our faith.
- V. For this reason we thank God for our place in the Church (v. 12).

We may use the declarative (didactic), interrogative, or exclamatory form. Here is the interrogative. It may easily be converted into another form.

### **Do We Realize what God has Done for Us?**

I. That he has rescued us from the power of the darkness?

That this darkness comes from hell? That by ignorance and blindness, by making us powerless slaves, doing all manner of evil works, this darkness would plunge us body and soul into hell at the last day?

There is nothing more blessed than to be rescued from the power of this darkness.

II. That he has translated us into the Kingdom of the Son of his love?

That this required the great ransoming and the remission of our sins? That then we have a part of the lot of the saints in light, i.e. our place in the Church lighted by the Gospel-Word? That thus we must have knowledge, wisdom, understanding? Power from God? Abundance of good works pleasing the Lord? For we certainly mean to remain in this Kingdom of the Son, passing from its earthly to its heavenly side at the consummation at the last day.

There is nothing more blessed than to share in the Kingdom of our Savior.

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Almost any acceptable outline on this text will automatically employ one or more steps of synthesis (*The Sermon* 101 etc.), i.e. will in the sermon transpose the items of the text, changing their order. The reason is, v. 13-14 are basic and must be placed forward in the sermon, although they occur at the end of the text.

“Choose you this day whom you will serve!” Joshua 24:15. There are half-hearted, half-decided Christians. Are you one?

### **The Half-Hearted Christian.**



- I. Still wavering between the Kingdom and the darkness. What about the last day?
- II. Still halting between redemption and remission, and condemnation. Think again of the last day.
- III. Still undecided about a place in the Church among the saints (v. 12), with knowledge instead of ignorance, power instead of impotence, good works instead of sins, perseverance and longsuffering with joy instead of failure with grief. And the day of judgment not far away.

A sermon like this will apply with great power the psychological norms of the religious will as presented in *The Sermon 262* etc. Many sermons are weak because these norms are not used.

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Altogether too many people imagine that they are quite safe in religious ignorance and without true religious knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. We see how they avoid instruction, study of their Bible, the preaching of the Word, good periodicals and books. They do not clean their minds of the rubbish of false religious notions. How will they end?

Always the apostles pray for true and full religious knowledge for their people.

### **The Curse of Religious Ignorance.**

- I. Without true and adequate religious knowledge you cannot live the Christian life (v. 9-11),
- II. Keep a place among the saints in the light,
- III. Remain out of the power of the darkness,
- IV. Share in the Son's Kingdom as a ransomed and pardoned soul.

I will leave it to you to say how you will appear before the Lord, the Judge, at the last great day.

Perhaps it is well to remark at this point that all positives like those in this text, beginning with "knowledge," "wisdom," etc., naturally involve the

corresponding negatives; of course, also vice versa. Having the one, we may preach also the other. Yet no sermon should be entirely or even preponderantly negative.

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### **Our Part of the Lot of the Saints in the Light.**

(See the exegesis: our place in the Christian Church on earth.)

- I. Prize it! It required ransoming — remission — rescue from the power of the darkness — translation into the Son's Kingdom, to put you into this place.
- II. Fill it! By knowledge, wisdom, etc., walk worthily of our Lord, in good works pleasing him, in perseverance, etc.
- III. Enter the next place! The glory of the Son's Kingdom, when the power of the darkness shall be for ever abolished in hell, when all that was begun on earth shall be brought to its consummation.

# The Twenty-fifth Sunday After Trinity. 1 Thess. 4:13-18

## “The Trump of God”

Our epistle is one of the famous texts of the Bible. Like 1 Cor. 15:51-52 this text reveals the mystery regarding the Christians who shall be alive at the Parousia. Beyond stating this mystery, the text, aims to comfort the hearts of the readers. We are told how the Lord himself shall descend from heaven at the last day with the Trump of God. This is called “the last trump” in 1 Cor. 15:52. The epistle is just as eschatological as the gospel, Matt. 24:15-25. Yet the gospel intends to warn, the epistle to comfort.

[13] Timothy had just returned to Paul from Thessalonica, where Paul with his assistants, Silvanus and Timothy, had very recently and in about only four week’s time founded a Christian congregation. Timothy had been sent back to Thessalonica and on his return to Paul reports that the new converts in Thessalonica were grieving and troubled because a few of their members had died and would thus not be able to meet the Lord at his second coming. No doubt during his visit Timothy did what he could to instruct and to enlighten the Thessalonians. They were so young in the faith that they still needed to be fully cleared up on a number of things. Now, however, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy combine in sending them through this letter a complete and an authoritative statement which ought to relieve them completely. Note that 4:13 to v. 11 is the most important part of the letter. Thus the letter states: **Now we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those that fall asleep, in order that you may not grieve as also the rest, those who have no hope.**

Δέ is merely transitional, taking up the new subject. The “we” refers to the three men who unite in composing and in sending this letter. “We do not want you to be ignorant” is an expression often used by Paul when

introducing new and valuable information. Usually Paul uses the singular “1” instead of the “we” here employed. “Brethren” is affectionate as befits the comfort extended. “Concerning those that fall asleep” introduces the subject. The present participle “those that fall asleep” is timeless and general. Besides those who had died recently others would also die from time to time, and the instruction here offered applies to all of them. Κοιμάω == “to put to sleep,” the passive (which alone appears in the New Testament) == “to be put to sleep,” i.e. in the middle sense “to fall asleep.” Pagans also spoke of death as a sleep, but with them the word was only a euphemism. With the apostle the word denotes a number of glorious realities. Christ’s redemptive death has made our death nothing more than a restful sleep in the grave. Christ’s resurrection assures us that we shall awake in glory in the resurrection at the last day.

This sleep of death applies only to the body, not to the soul. The notion, being spread today with a pretense of learning, that at death the soul “leads a shadowy existence in the chambers of *sheol*, which cannot be called life, till the reawakening, i.e. the reunion with (the then glorified) body; and that this intermediate state for body and soul is here designated by κοιμᾶσθαι” — we quote a very recent prominent commentator as a sample of what is being spread, — this notion regarding the soul is pure fiction. It is swept away by Acts 7:59; by Phil. 1:23; by Luke 23:43-44, by all that the Old Testament says about *sheol*, by all that the New Testament so abundantly adds. No third place, between heaven and hell, exists in the other world. All the commentators in all creation cannot build one. In no sense is the soul “dead” or “asleep” after death. Was Abraham and was Lazarus who are mentioned in Luke 16:22 etc., asleep?

This, however, is not all. The chiliasts, ever ready to introduce their chiliasm, do so here. The Thessalonians grieved for their dead because by dying so early they would miss the millennium! But this thought encounters a chiliastic difficulty. For the chiliasts imagine that there will be two resurrections, one at the beginning and one at the end of the millennium, and that the first of these resurrections will bring the godly to life again, so they may enjoy the millennium. Yet many chiliasts stick to their guns in our passage. They make the first resurrection apply only to the martyrs, not to those who die a natural death. Well, then these poor dead Thessalonians would indeed miss all the millennialistic joy. They could never pick grapes

from that astounding grapevine of which Papias fabled and in which Zahn too believed. If you wonder how reputable men can insert such opinions into our text read Wohlenberg in Zahn's commentary. It is a curious fact, but chiliasm blinds men in an astonishing manner.

All these notions fade away before the plain clause: "in order that you may not grieve as also the rest, those who have no hope." Here we have indicated why the Thessalonians grieved. Do not let any commentator make up a fancy story for you from material gathered from outside sources, either Jewish or pagan. "The rest" are those outside, pagans, devoid of hope. Their grief is not assuaged by hope, as the Christian's always ought to be. Pagans and unbelievers may manufacture a sort of hope for themselves, but it is mere fancy like the happy hunting grounds of the Red Men, and the grand lodge above of the Masons. When the Thessalonians grieved for their dead members "as also the rest, those who have no hope," they thought that their dead were lost. That was the terrible thought that they had. But did they not know about the resurrection? We cannot explain the details, but in some way the Thessalonians got the idea that only those living at Christ's return would enter heaven. Accordingly theirs was no small grief for their beloved dead. We see how this cause of their grief is removed in v. 16b; "the dead in Christ shall rise first," and then the living shall be changed.

Perhaps the preacher will be interested in the comfort which the pagans had when death bereaved them. Deissmann offers this from the papyri. In a letter of condolence Irene, an Egyptian lady, writes to a family that has just lost a son. She speaks of how everything fitting was done for him: "But, nevertheless, against such things one can do nothing. Therefore comfort ye one another. Fare ye well!" While this document is dated in the second century and was found in Egypt, nothing more bare of comfort can be imagined. Poor Irene! Her comfort is as dead as that dead son.

[14] "For" is expository. **For if we believe that Jesus died and arose, thus also those who fell asleep will God through this Jesus bring with him.** These dead believers are not lost just because they died. The Thessalonians failed to make practical and personal application of the doctrine of the resurrection. This is often the case even now. We know the doctrine, but when the hour comes we do not apply it to our own hearts.

“If we believe” is a condition of reality and means: We certainly do so believe, you readers and we writers. Instead of saying that we believe in the resurrection of the dead, the basis on which our resurrection rests is stated as the object of faith. Everything depends on this basis. This basis is “that Jesus died and rose again.” “Jesus,” he who bore this name on earth. Note carefully the active verbs: he “died,” he “arose.” The passives would indeed be equally true: he was put to death, he was raised up by God, and the Scriptures use them. But passives make Jesus merely the object, the writers here want him as tho. subject, who laid down his life and took it up again (John 10:17) for our advantage. Moreover, he “died” is the right word. The Scriptures never say that Jesus fell asleep. For he died with all our sins upon him, he was not like we are who fall gently asleep because all sins are removed from us by his blood. When he died, his expiation was complete and thus he arose again in glory.

“Thus also those who fell asleep will God through this Jesus bring with him.” Most certainly! Jesus’ death and his resurrection guarantee this sure hope. Paul might have said that Jesus himself will bring these dead with him. But the name “Jesus” refers us to the Savior as he walked here on earth while a man. God is behind all that this Jesus did and shall yet do. Many wrestle with εἰ... οὕτω) and try all sorts of solutions to harmonize the two words. Throw all such labors into the waste-basket. The two words are not correlative at all, οἴτω has nothing whatever to do with εἰ, — even the old grammarian Winer saw that.

Here the resurrection is described so as to offer the comfort that the readers need. God will bring the believing dead with Jesus at the last day. God will call them from their graves, and they shall be with Jesus. No; they are not lost. Here is the full Christian hope in all its glory. Note τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, the article of previous reference: this same Jesus who died and rose again. “Through this Jesus” makes him the Mediator for what God will do in our resurrection. All efforts to construe: “who fell asleep through Jesus,” are in vain, — no one falls asleep through anything. Here the aorist participle is used, because reference is had to the brethren in Thessalonica who had already actually died.

[15] But further elucidation is needed: **For (that you may understand fully) this we tell you in connection with the Lord’s Word, that we, those that remain alive, those that are left for the Parousia of the Lord,**

**shall in no way be ahead of those who fell asleep.** So little reason is there for grieving over those who have fallen asleep. Those who are alive at the Parousia shall not even precede those who have died, to say nothing of the latter being hopelessly lost.

When the writers say “we” and then define by the appositions: “Those that remain alive, those that are left for the Parousia of the Lord,” we see how wrong it is to charge Paul with claiming that he would surely live to see the Parousia; v. 1 is entirely plain on the matter. No apostle knew the times or the seasons, — he might and again he might not see the end. Hence the apostles wrote as they did, always reflecting this uncertainty. But some commentators delight in faulting the holy writers, and, of course, they see an opportunity for doing so here.

Ἐν λόγῳ Κυρίου is not “by the Word of the Lord” (our versions), but: “in connection with the Lord’s Word.” What follows is no quotation, no reference to some special statement of the Lord, but only a reference to all that the Lord said about his Parousia, — all of it is to the effect that the living will have no advantage over the dead at the time of the Parousia. 1 Cor. 15:51-52 does not call this fact “a mystery,” but adds the additional fact that the living shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye.

[16] Read Ὅτι as stating another fact like the (Ὅτι in v. 15. It offers no reason (our versions, “for”): — **that the Lord himself, in connection with a command, in connection with an archangel’s voice and in connection with God’s trumpet, will descend from heaven; and the dead in Christ shall arise first, [17] then we, those that remain alive, those that are left, shall together with them be snatched in clouds, for meeting the Lord, into the air; and thus shall we be evermore with the Lord.** Here tho. Thessalonians learn exactly what shall happen. This removes all cause for grief regarding their dead. Not only is there hope for these dead, but the greatest, possible hope; these dead shall even have a slight advantage over those living at the last day.

Compare 1:10. The verb is majestic: *herniaderschreiten*, and αὐτός fixes all attention on him as he proceeds downward from heaven. Read his own words in Matt. 24:30-31. The Lord walks down in majesty to receive to himself all his own, whether living or dead. This includes our bodies. The ἐν phrases are placed forward for emphasis and ἐν == “in connection with.”

Thus “in connection with κέλευσμα.” The word is common to designate a loud military command, or the shout of the charioteer to his horses, or the hunter’s cry to his hounds, or the ship master’s call to the rowers. John v. 28 explains: “All that are in the graves shall hear his voice,” namely that of the Son of man. This, then, is not a command of God to the Lord, but the Lord’s own command as he comes down to order all the dead to arise.

The next two ἔν phrases are connected with καί. We decline to read the three phrases as denoting the same thing, namely that the Lord’s command shall be issued through the archangel and this through his blowing God’s trumpet. John v. 28 assures us that the Lord’s own voice shall speak. The archangel’s voice shall also be heard, so also the blast of the trumpet of God. On the trumpet comp. 1 Cor. 15:22 and Matt. 24:31. This voice of the archangel and the trumpet go together as being less than the command of the Lord himself, hence the “and.” What the voice of the angel shall say is not stated. As far as the trumpet is concerned, I feel free to say that this will blow a grand signal. Since it is God’s trumpet, its blast comes with God’s power, sending God’s signal to all the living and the dead. Curious minds may ask why an archangel’s voice and a trumpet blast besides the Lord’s own command? These minds will probably get the answer when the time comes.

The Scriptures know of only one archangel, and they call him Michael (Jude 9; Rev. 12:7; comp. Dan. 10:13 and 21; 12:1). Apparently there is but the one. It is here not stated who shall blow the trumpet; that it is not to be Michael appears to be the fact. All the angels of God shall accompany the Lord. No doubt Michael’s position will accord with his greatness. What is here written has only one purpose, namely to enlighten for true comfort. The purpose is not to answer speculative, useless, impertinent questions.

Καί states the result coordinately, that “the dead in Christ shall arise first.” The active verb “shall arise” is intended to match the same active verb used regarding Jesus in v. 14. “The dead in Christ” == “those fallen asleep in Christ” (1 Cor. 15:18). For our comfort we need know only about these; hence we here read nothing about the ungodly dead. “Dead” is expressive, because we always speak of “the resurrection of the dead.”

Πρῶτον is placed last so as to abut with Emma- “First” what shall happen with regard to the dead saints, “thereupon” what shall happen with



regard to the saints still living. “First” refers to “thereupon,” and “thereupon” refers to “first.” This is so evident that one is amazed at a man like Wohlenberg who here finds two resurrections, first that of the saints, secondly that of the wicked after a lapse of 1,000 years. Is it possible that the chiliastic delusion can so unbalance an exegete’s mind? This delusion goes so far as to quote John 5:28-29 in support of two resurrections, whereas this passage is a standard *dictum probans* for one resurrection. Nay, ye chiliasts! This is the last trumpet (1 Cor. 15:52), and this is “the Last day” (John 6:39-40:44:54; 11:24), when time shall be no more (Rev. 10:6). The old Jewish dream, (Augsburg Confession) even in its latest Christian dress, is no more scriptural than when the Jews first dreamed it.

“The dead shall arise” means that their bodies shall arise. Some speak of the resurrection of the souls, but this is nonsense. The bodily resurrection is constantly denied, but the denial gives the lie to all Scripture. The resurrection is called a late Jewish doctrine, imported from Persia after the time of Solomon. There may be newer critical opinions, — one gets out of breath keeping up with the latest critic. Does Jesus then also belong to late Judaism? But enough. “The Word they shall let stand, and not a thanks have for it.” Luther.

[17] Now regarding the living that are left (the same terms as in v. 15): “together with them (associative σύν: with the risen dead) they shall be snatched in clouds (the Lord’s chariots, on which he himself shall come in glory, Matt. 24:30; Mark 13:26; Rev. 1:7) for meeting the Lord, into the air.” The main point is the union of the dead with the living believers, all of these being one joint host, lifted in a divine *raptus* to meet their heavenly Lord as he descends. The dead shall be glorified in body and in soul. The living shall be changed in an instant, without dying, 1 Cor. 15:51-52. We take this *raptus* to mean that all these saints shall thus go to meet their Lord in welcome, and shall descend to earth with him and all his angels for the last great judgment. “Snatched into the air” does not mean into heaven. The judgment shall not be held in the air, for Jesus shall descend to earth (Job 19:25; Acts 1:11). The Lord does not return to heaven or take all these his saints to heaven after the Parousia. God’s heaven and the glorified earth shall then be one, Rev. 21:1-2, shall together constitute the Eternal Holy City described in Rev. 21:10 etc. Εἰς ἅπαντησιν is an idiom, found also in

the papyri and always in this form. It is like a compound preposition with the genitive.

“And thus shall we be evermore with the Lord.” Comp. Phil. 1:23, Paul’s desire. This is our Christian hope. Here is a paragraph that is of inestimable value for the Church of all ages.

[18] So the writers close: **Wherefore comfort one another with these words.** Ὡστε, “and so,” is inferential. Παρακαλῶ may mean to urge, to admonish, to cheer, or to comfort, and here the context requires the latter. “One another” means that if anyone of the Thessalonians is slow to absorb this instruction for his comfort, the others are to come to his aid. The Christian faith is the one faith which has true comfort. It removes the crepe from every Christian’s door and lets the star of hope shine upon it. Here dry your tears. In this hope face death, die or rather fall asleep in Jesus.

## Homiletical Aid

In the text for last Sunday we looked at the past and at the present and saw the blessed inheritance in which we are. The present text draws the veil from the future, and the prospect is overwhelmingly glorious. Indeed, it is a great thing to be a true Christian! Consider that the greatest and the most wondrous experiences still await you. Earth has nothing comparable. What shall it be like when death as your humble servant throws open the portals and your soul enters the glories of heaven? But that is only the beginning. Your relatives will bury your poor body, and it will turn to dust. But now see what awaits you! This text opens for you

### A Comforting Look Beyond.

- I. We see the sight.
  1. The true inwardness of the Christian’s death “in Jesus.” “Asleep,” waiting, resting, until the lam! day comes. The body in the grave asleep, not the soul, which waits in joy in heaven.
  2. The true relation between the dead and the living Christians at the end. The dead lose nothing. The earth so often a loss. Both equal at the last, day.

3. The glorious descent of the Lord. His voice calling the dead from their graves. The archangel, the trumpet of God.
4. The resurrection of the dead saints, the trans — formation of the living saints. Their union. The glorious host meeting the Lord to welcome him for the judgment.
5. With the Lord evermore in the new heaven and the new earth, in the Eternal City.

II. We see even the certainty of the sight.

1. As certain as the Word of God and Christ, which have never failed.
2. As sure as the work Christ has already done by his death and resurrection, which is to be completed and crowned at the last day. The sight we see is the final part of that work.
3. As sure as the power displayed in Christ's resurrection and ascension.
4. We have this certainty now by faith, which shall soon be turned into sight. All will occur whether you believe or not, but blessed is he who believes! Comfort now, eternal joy hereafter.

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Theme and parts can be made more dramatic, for instance:

**Christian, Look Beyond!**

I. See the sight! II. See also its certainty.

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All the vain hopes of men in religion and in irreligion. All the hopelessness in fact, and also in actual realization. Irene's letter of condolence.

**Christianity the One Religion of Hope.**

I. Our Lord died and rose again for our advantage.

- II. Our Lord returns again at the last day.
  - III. Our Lord raises us from the grave.
  - IV. Our Lord receives us all together.
  - V. Our Lord comforts us with sure and certain hope, both in the hour of bereavement and in the hour of death.
- 

Many talk ignorantly about Gabriel's trumpet. Not so the Bible. It speaks of the last trumpet, and of the trump of God. When this trumpet blows, the almighty power of God and of Christ will fulfill all their final promises.

### **"The Trump of God."**

- I. We wait in the sure hope of its tremendous blast.
  - II. We know that it signals the Lord's return in glory.
  - III. We are sure that it announces the completion-of the Lord's saving work.
  - IV. We rejoice that it heralds the resurrection of the saints.
  - V. We are comforted at the grave and at the deathbed by the hope it sets before us.
- 

We sing at funerals: "Asleep in Jesus." Sometimes we sit among the graves of Christ's saints in the cemetery — the word means "sleeping-place" — and absorb all that is meant by the simple words,

### **"Asleep in Jesus."**

- I. Jesus died that you and I may lie down in the grave and sleep in peace (Ps. 4:8).
- II. Jesus arose that you and I may arise from sleep in glory.

III. Jesus, our Lord, will return that you and I may be with him evermore in the new heaven and earth.

# The Twenty-sixth Sunday After Trinity. 2 Pet. 3:3-14

## “We Look for New Heavens and a New Earth”

The gospel and the epistle agree so well that they need no discussion. Matt. 25:31-46 presents the Son of man in his glory holding the final judgment. Our text presents “the Day of the Lord,” and us Christians “*Looking for New Heavens and a New Earth*” that are to come on that great Day. We may also make the subject, “the scoffers that shall come in the last day,” or “the Lord is not slack concerning his promise,” or “the thief in the night,” or “the burning up of the earth.” Themes a plenty invite the preacher’s use.

This letter was written before First Peter. When the order of the letters in our Bible was arranged, the longer letters were placed first. Peter warns his readers regarding the false teachers who shall come. In chapter two he warns against their libertinism; in chapter three he answers their denial of Christ’s Parousia. Peter reminds his readers of the words spoken long before by the holy prophets and of the commandment of their apostles from the Lord Jesus (v. 2). He states what they know from these divine sources: **knowing this first, that there shall come at the days’ ends mockers in mockery, proceeding according to their own lusts, [6] and saying: “Where is the promise of his Parousia? for since the fathers fell asleep all things remain on in this manner, from creation’s beginning.”**

The nominative participle is so obviously and so simply construed *ad sensum* that we need say no more. Yes, from both the prophets in the Old Testament and from the apostles in the New Testament, including the Lord himself, Peter’s readers know with knowledge that affects them (γινώσκω) that “mockers shall come in mockery.” The phrase emphasizes the thought of mockery: “mockers in mockery.” They shall be mockers indeed. In 1 Pet. 1:20 Peter has the singular: “at the times’ end,” and now the plural: “at the

days' ends," showing how flexibly he expresses himself. The expression does not mean: "shortly before the end of the world," for the days' ends began after Pentecost. We are living in them now. After Pentecost began the last time, for after Pentecost we have nothing save the Parousia to look forward to.

These mockers shall proceed according to their own lusts. By this Peter indicates that they are the same false prophets whom he has described in chapter two. In what they assert and what they deny they are not governed by God's Word, by the prophets and by the Lord's apostles (v. 2) but by their own "lusts," i.e. desires of an evil kind. They want no Parousia and all that the Parousia means for us Christians in our daily lives, and so they simply deny the Parousia, — there will be no such thing. Then they advance their specious arguments.

[4] Peter is prophesying, and the revelation which he utters is detailed, thus arming his readers in advance. These heretics will ask what they consider a decisive question: "Where is the promise of his Parousia?" They mean: "Where is its fulfillment?" They find the promise which Jesus made nothing but empty air. Catch the sneer in the question. But catch also the folly, for any fool can ask thus; but when the Parousia comes suddenly and overwhelmingly, all such sneers will die in the mocking throats. The Parousia is the return of Christ for the judgment. The word is not pagan, for we meet it already in Matt. 24:3, in Palestine, in Jesus' time.

These heretics offer what they imagine to be a crushing argument. Since the days that the fathers died to the very present everything remains exactly οὕτως, "thus," as we see it now, and everything has been "thus" ever since creation's beginning. Ergo: Stop talking about the Parousia! This argument is like a hollow drum, it makes nothing but a booming, hollow sound. Like so many other fallacies, it bases its conclusion on some facts, and is thus false *in toto*. To be sure, the world has been going on "thus," as we see it, for a long, long time, — no one denies that. But is that the whole story? Are there no other facts to consider?

Does it follow that because things have gone on as they have they will do so for ever? This sneer ignores and means to cancel the deity of Jesus, for his Parousia depends on his deity. This sneer simply sets aside the promise of the Son of God, as if it were as false as the claims of these

heretics themselves. Prophets and apostles and Scripture revelation are as nothing to them. Yes, if you leave out everything that is decisive you can prove anything you please. The fathers who fell asleep are not Old Testament saints or dignitaries, but Christians who have died since Jesus' time. The thought is: these fathers got to see no Parousia, they are dead and gone, — so will it be with us, yea so it has been since the world was created.

[5] Peter points out a few of the many things ignored by this specious, mocking reasoning. **For it escapes them in making this claim, that there were heavens of old and an earth existing out of water and between water by the Word of God, [6] by means of which things (those presented in this entire situation) the then world by being flooded perished; [7] on the other hand (it escapes them, that) the present heavens and the earth by the same Word have been treasured up for fire, being kept for a day of judging and of perdition for the ungodly men.**

Peter speaks mildly when he says “it escapes them in making this claim”; he could have used much stronger language. Peter points to two great facts which explode the heretics' argument. The one lies in the past, the Flood; the other lies in the future, the world-conflagration. The Word of God is decisive in regard to both. For the Word of God, which called the world into being, formed it in such a way that all living things which existed on its surface could perish and did perish by water. Just ponder that fact for a while. Now that same Word of God is keeping the present heavens and earth “for fire” to send ungodly men to perdition, these mockers among them. Prophets, apostles and the Lord have given us this Word.

Construe τοὔτο θέλοντας, *bei dieser Behauptung*, “wanting this,” having it in their mind. This blinds them to the great facts. There were heavens of old and an earth “existing out of water and between water by the Word of God.” The dry land arose out of the water and existed “between water,” that above in clouds and that beneath in the fountains of the deep. Thus Gen. 7:11: “The same day were all the fountains of the deep broken up, and the windows (literally flood-gates) of heaven were opened.” Διά == “between,” δι' ὕδατος == “between water.” How did the old heavens and the earth come to be in such a situation? “By the Word of God,” dative of means. God created the situation by means of his Word, his fiat.



[6] Δι' ὧν == “by means of which things,” the things just narrated by Peter. By means of them the entire ancient world perished in water. Peter writes the word “water” three times, for he is telling about the Flood. Have all things always been as we see them now and as the scoffers claim? Indeed not. The Flood has left an indelible record on the earth’s surface and in the traditions of the nations. Well, the Word so arranged it that this Flood could occur.

[7] That nothing comparable has happened since that event is no assurance that something will not yet happen. Better look at the Word, and not talk according to your own lusts and desires. Twice the heavens are mentioned, in v. 5 because they rained, in v. 7 because Christ will descend. Δέ may be rendered “on the other hand.” “By means of the same Word” and in the same advanced way, the present heavens and the present earth have been treasured up “for fire.” Just read the Word yourself. Once water, but, eventually fire. The periphrastic perfect tense “have been treasured up” emphasizes the past duration which still continues. Do not quibble about this fire, for God has all the fire he needs, even unquenchable hell fire.

Peter adds pointedly: “being kept for a day of judging (κρίσις, act of judging) and of perdition for the ungodly men” (generic article). Everything is being kept as it is for that great day, which will be dreadful for all the ungodly, in particular for all scoffers. One who reads the Word will not talk ignorantly about the unvaried continuance of the present world, and draw false conclusions. He will see how ominous this continuance is. Noah’s wicked generation would not believe the Flood possible and mocked him for building a boat on dry land. They typify the present mockers, some of whom laugh even at the fire.

[8] Entirely too much escapes the mockers. **Now let not this one thing escape you, beloved, that one day (is) with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.** Here is a point that may escape even us Christians. Therefore Peter wants us to note well: The Lord’s relation to time is not the same as our relation to time. To us a day seems very short, and a thousand years very long. But with the Lord there is no time. To him a thousand years amount to no more than one short day. but also the reverse is true, to him one day is as much as a thousand years. Time, short or long, is not decisive for what he wills to do. It fetters him neither by its brevity nor by its length. The point here to be noted is that to

us the Lord's Parousia seems to be delayed for an incredibly long time, and the time seems longer to us than it did to the Christians living at Peter's time. But if what Peter here says does not escape us, we shall not at all be disturbed, nor will we let scoffers disturb us.

Peter is adapting the thought expressed in Ps. 90:4. Peter's word is abused when it is made to refer to the word "day" used in Gen. 1, and is employed in support of the evolutionary hypothesis which would have us believe that the six "days" are vast periods consisting of millions of years. Another abuse is that of the chiliasts who combined it with the thousand years of Rev. 20. Chiliasts catch at every straw.

[9] Peter himself tells us What he means: **Not slack (or delaying) is the Lord with his promise, as some consider slackness (or delay); but he is longsuffering in regard to you, not intending that some perish, but that all have room for repentance.** We must not look at time with our dim earthly eyes and charge the Lord with "holding back" from the promise," from fulfilling it (thus literally, with a genitive of separation). This charge we could make only when the fact referred to in v. 8' escapes us. God does not deal with time as we are compelled to do. We must hurry or we shall be late. God is governed only by his gracious purposes. Look at these purposes and you will not think of delay on God's part, of dilatoriness, of an empty promise. Then you will see his longsuffering towards you, his blessed intention (βουλόμενος) that none are to perish, but that all are to have room, i.e. time and opportunity, for repentance, μετάνοια, the change of heart which signifies conversion by contrition and faith.

This explanation is not intended for the scoffers who want no Parousia in which only repentance saves; it is intended for the Christians, lest some of them become uneasy in regard to the length of time until the Parousia comes to pass. It is God's longsuffering that uses whatever amount of time he needs. If he uses more time than we expected, this is because his longsuffering is far greater than we have thought. As far as the certainty of the fulfillment of his promise is concerned, instead of letting this diminish in our hearts, this very longsuffering, being so full of concern for the salvation of as many people as possible, ought to increase our assurance.

[10] Peter has settled the question about delay on the Lord's part. It may take very long before his longsuffering is exhausted. But after it is

exhausted, it will not take long to bring the day of judging and the Parousia. Then the Lord will need no time at all. **But there will come the Lord's day as a thief, in which the heavens with a crackling crash shall pass away; moreover, elements being heated shall be dissolved, and earth and the works in it shall be burned up.**

Purposely Peter describes what shall occur on that. day of the Lord. He does so a second time in v. 12. It would appear that the scoffers did not care to discuss these details. A sudden conflagration of the universe shall occur. Ἦξει is emphatically forward: "there shall indeed come." The description is the main thing. Once the heavens rained torrents of water, at that time they shall pass away ῥουζηδόν, with a sudden crackling, sizzling, sputtering roar, *mit sawsendem Geraeus, mit Gezisch, unter Geprassel, mit rauschender Schnelligkeit*. Suddenly this shall occur, as a thief suddenly steals into a home at night.

The heated elements of the earth shall melt and be dissolved. Practically every time we meet στοιχεῖα in the New Testament we have a dispute. Why should the word mean "stars" when Peter knows the good Greek word that does mean "stars"? To say that Peter believed that there were four elements: fire, water, air, earth, is wrong; it is likewise wrong to ascribe to Peter the modern scientific conceptions of elements. The elements are the constituents of our material world. The earth and all the works in it that men have constructed shall be burned up.

[11] With this world-catastrophe impending, What about us? **All these things thus being dissolved, what kind of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, [12] expecting and eager for the Parousia of the day of God, on account of which heavens set on fire shall be dissolved and elements being heated shall be melted!** The present tense in the genitive absolute has no special reference to time, and we should not say that the dissolving is as certain as if it were taking place right now. Since ποταπούς is not used in indirect questions we must regard it as exclamatory: "What kind of persons ought you to be!" and δεῖ speaks of the necessity that these coming events place upon us. Peter has a number of abstract nouns in the plural. It is awkward to reproduce these in English. Thus here: "in holy conducts and godlinesses," meaning that each one of the many Christians has his individual holy conduct and godliness in the station which God has assigned to him.

[12] The two participles are necessary, for one may expect an event without being eager for it, one may even dread it. The Christians certainly expect “the Parousia of the day of God,” “God” here referring to Christ in his deity; and indeed they are eager for it. The R.V. is right when it translates *σπεύδοντας*: “earnestly desiring.” The A.V. and its margin translate as though we could hasten the arrival of the last day with our godly conduct. Yet Peter has explained that its arrival depends on God’s longsuffering. If anything hastens the day of judgment, it is the growing wickedness of the world, the decline of faith and godliness in the churches.

That day shall wind up the course of the entire universe and thus shall be the cause (*δι’ ἧν*, “on account of which,” or “because of which”) for the conflagration.

Three times Peter uses *λύω*, “to dissolve,” yet he uses no word that denotes to annihilate. He repeats a part of v. 10. “Heavens set on fire shall be dissolved,” though they are heavens (qualitative, no article). “Set on fire” explains “with a crackling crash” in v. 10. Is. 51:6: “like smoke.” Again we read that the elements shall be heated, but now in place of “shall be dissolved” we have “shall be melted.” We thus see what is meant by the statement found in v. 7: “the present heavens and the earth treasured up for fire.”

**[13] But new heavens and an earth new according to his promise we are expecting, in which righteousness dwells.** The two “new” are placed chiasmically, bringing “heaven and earth” together. *Καινός* is new as compared with something old. In place of the old heaven and the old earth we shall have them entirely new. The old universe was spoiled by Adam’s fall. Sin and death entered it and caused woeful ruin. Sun, moon, and stars, the firmament, all nature was affected. This damage is constantly before us and we ourselves are made to weep and to groan under it. See Rom. 8:18-23, Fourth Sunday after Trinity. All of this shall change in a day. In fact, it will not even be a day in time, for time shall be no more. “Promise” is a term expressing result and here means: according to “what the promise contains,” the thing promised. That promised thing shall come indeed.

“In which righteousness dwells,” nothing but that which bears the stamp of the Lord’s judicial approval, describes the essential spiritual character of the new world. All sin and all the unrighteous shall be in hell.

When the question is discussed as to whether the world shall be annihilated and then a new heaven and a new earth shall be created *ex nihilo*, we shall be misled if we do not compare all the pertinent passages. Most of them are undecisive, and our text belongs to this class. Rom. 8:19-22 is decisive, so are 1 Cor. 7:31 and Rev. 21:1-5. The universe, heaven and earth, shall be restored, renovated, renewed, made perfect. There shall be no further separation between earth and the abode of God, — they shall be one at last. Here read besides Rev. 21:1-5 the whole of Rev. 21:10-27, and close with Heb. 11:10.

**[14] Wherefore, beloved, expecting these things, be diligent to be found by him as spotless and unblemished, in peace.** The loving address wants to win the readers' hearts. The dative αὐτῷ with the passive "to be found" indicates the agent. "Be found by him" denotes the judicial finding at the last judgment. In 2:13 Peter calls the libertinists and mockers "spots and blemishes"; we Christians are to be the opposite: "spotless and unblemished." Both adjectives are predicates and thus need not be the accusative, despite the infinitive. We are not spotless and without blemish in our daily life. We sin often. But all stain is removed by the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:7). This cleansing we must not forfeit by disobedience and willfulness. "In peace" is placed at the end and thus has weight. This is the peace established by Christ and bestowed upon us in justification (Rom 5:1); it is the condition when all is well between God and us. In Matt. 25:34-40 we see those who are found "in peace" at the last judgment.

## Homiletical Aid

St. Peter foretold the coming of the scoffers who would deny the deity of our Lord and his return to judgment. Many pulpits of today show how truly St. Peter prophesied. Jesus is made a mere example, a man and no more than a man, and, of course, to think of his coming in glory to judge the whole universe is preposterous. This world has always been and always will be moving on in an endless evolution. It needs no new heavens and no new earth and no judgment day. Against all this flagrant denial we stand with

**The Christian Hope: The New Heavens and the New Earth.**

This our hope rests on

I. The promise.

1. Self-made hopes, which rest on human notions and are without fulfillment.
2. Our hope rests on Christ's promise. The Son of God can fulfill his promise, our Savior will fulfill it.
3. This divine promise sets a glorious goal for every true believer.

But here is this long wait,

II. The delay.

1. The notion that the world will stand for ever (v. 4), held by so many today.
2. St. Peter explodes this folly by pointing to two facts (v. 5 — 6, and v. 7). See the exegesis.
3. The true explanation of the delay which is really no delay at all (v. 8-9).
4. When we see God's longsuffering all doubt vanishes and we are more assured in hope than ever.

For we are certain of

III. The fulfillment.

1. In one day the old heavens and the old earth shall be purified and utterly cleansed by fire.
2. In one day we shall enter new heavens and a new earth, heaven and earth for ever joined in one.
3. The stupendousness of our hope.

All this is of extreme value for

IV. The effect on our conduct.

1. Many scoff at the otherworldliness of us Christians and want everything for benefit in this life.
  2. Our hope rules our entire present conduct; so also 1 John 3:2-3. “All holy conversation and godliness,” v. 11; “without spot and blameless, in peace,” v. 14.
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The opinion that at some time a comet or some other heavenly body will strike our globe and destroy it in fire. Such opinions too narrow, for the end foretold includes sun, moon, and all the stars, the entire universe. Such opinions too narrow in another way, — only destructive. The true story of

### **The World on Fire.**

- I. Despite all scoffers.  
Who are sure the Lord will not return.  
Who are answered by the Flood, and the same Word regarding the end of the world by fire.
- II. At Christ’s second coming.  
Which is delayed by God’s longsuffering,  
But as certain as his word and promise,  
And as glorious as his deity.
- III. Purifying the heavens and the earth.  
Now spoiled by sin, wickedness, and death.  
To be cleansed and made new in righteousness.  
No more separation of God and earth.
- IV. Hope now purifying our hearts.  
That we may be ready for the great day and the last judgment.  
Our readiness is being “without spot and blameless, in peace” by constant justification, never losing this verdict by ever living in a holy

and godly way.

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Facts that must not escape us Christians. St. Peter names several that escape men who scoff at Christ's second coming. One fact may escape us in this connection, the one contained in

### **The One Day and the Thousand Years.**

God is not hampered by time, either by its brevity or its length. This troubles only us.

- I. The Longsuffering of God to save as many as possible makes him wait long. The coming of the Flood was postponed for 120 years. Scoffers forget the Flood and the Word of God that set the land between water, that same Word reserving the present heavens and the earth for fire. Considering the longsuffering no mockery shakes our faith and our hope.
- II. The Coming of the Lord, like that of a thief, suddenly. So God will take only a day to end the universe. It shall be by a purging fire, producing new heavens and an earth new. to enter which our great concern now is to make ourselves ready.



# The Twenty-seventh Sunday After Trinity. 1 Thess. 5:1-11

**“You Are Not in Darkness that that Day Should Overtake You as a Thief”**

The burden of the parable concerning the Foolish and the Wise Virgins, Matt. 25:1-13, which forms the gospel for the day, is the call to be ready for the Lord’s Parousia. This is the burden also of the epistle. The epistle is the companion piece to the text for the Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity. In fact, the two form a unit in the letter to the Thessalonians. Paul would not speak only of the comfort of the Parousia, he would add a word on the readiness of his hearers for that event. So we see that 4:18 ends: “Comfort one another!” and v. 11 likewise: “Comfort yourselves together!” The theme is *Our Readiness for the Parousia*.

**[1] Now concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need to be written to; [2] for you yourselves know accurately that the Lord’s day so comes as a thief at night.** We know Why there is no need to write about “the times and the seasons.” The expression is repeated from Acts 1:7, where Jesus tells the apostles that God has placed the times and the seasons into his own authority. He determines how they shall succeed each other, and when they shall reach their end. The writers had told this to the Thessalonians, and there is really no more to say. “Times” are just straight courses of time; “seasons” are periods marked by what transpires in each of them.

[2] Yet one point is essentially singled out for emphasis, namely that the readers know from their previous instruction that the day of the Lord, which is so named because of the Lord’s return, comes (present tense in a general statement), when it does come, “as a thief at night.” This comparison also goes back to Jesus who uses it in Matt. 24:43 and Luke 12:39; it is also used

by Peter (2 Pet. 3:10); comp. Rev. 3:3; 16:15. The word of Jesus shows most plainly what the point of the comparison is: a thief tries to break into the house when no one expects him, when no one is ready to drive him away. So that day will come when the world does not expect anything of the kind. This comparison does not mean to include the Christians, for they are to be in constant expectation and in complete readiness.

[3] This is said in so many words: **When they are saying: “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction cOMes upon them, just as the travail upon the woman with child, and they shall in no wise escape. [4] But you, brethren, you are not in darkness, so that that day (article of previous reference) will catch you as a thief; [5] for all you are sons of light and sons of day; we do not belong to night nor to darkness.**

The indefinite subject of λέγωσιν, “when they are saying,” becomes clear from the contrast with “you” in v. 4. These are the people of the world. Plenty of signs announce the end, but they are sure that they need not be disturbed. Their preachers hush all uneasiness by crying: “Peace and safety!” Their scientists chime in: “No cause for worry!” and being scientists, they are fools enough to think that they know. As we saw last Sunday, 2 Pet. 3:3-10 adds that there shall even be scoffers who mock at the very idea of the Lord’s Parousia.

But when they are most certain that nothing can happen, “then sudden destruction comes upon them.” The blow strikes them like a bolt of lightning. I wish we could repeat the emphasis found in the Greek. By separating the adjective “sudden” from its noun and by giving this adjective the first place in the sentence, it is given powerful emphasis, as if one is made to ask “sudden — sudden”? sudden what? The noun, given the last place in the sentence, also has emphasis: “Yes, sudden, sudden! — sudden destruction!” wreck and ruin.

This is made vivid by the illustration of the woman who suddenly comes down with birth-pains and is rendered utterly helpless. This illustration is used in the Old Testament (Ex. 15:14; Is. 13:8; Jer. 13:21; Hos. 13:13), by Jesus, and in Is. 26:17-18 in special ways, but in our text it is employed in the common way: sudden pain rendering one utterly helpless. We have the elucidating addition: “they shall in no wise escape.” How can they? A silent question meets us: “Do we want to belong to these people?”

[4] Now the sharp contrast: “You, however, brethren, you” etc. You are not in the same class with these people. They are “in darkness,” for they reject the light of the Word which tells in advance about the end of the world. Not so we. We are ready and prepared, have been the entire time. Here Eva is so plainly consecutive that no grammar shall induce us to regard it otherwise: not in darkness “so that day will catch us as a thief.” How happy we should be to be counted in this class. Thank God for the light!

[5] The writers set the positive fact beside the negative. “All you (without exception, as believers of the Word) are sons of light, and sons of day,” — the double predication emphasizing the great fact. The readers are to be fully conscious of what they really are, for everything depends on this fact that they are sons of light and of day.

To be “in darkness” is to be surrounded by darkness, and thus to be rendered as helpless as a blind man. The counterpart is not merely to be “in light” (anarthrous, qualitative: in what is light), but to be “the sons of light, the sons of day,” i.e. to have light and day in our very nature. “Sons” is even more than “children” (Eph. v. 8), for children connotes birth, while “sons” connotes maturity and conscious standing in the right of sons. We never read “sons of the darkness” or “children of the darkness,” for the darkness brings forth no children and no sons, — its power is only destructive. We have only “sons of the disobedience” and “children of wrath.”

To obtain still further emphasis there is added: “we do not belong to night nor to darkness,” — forms of *efvat* with the genitive, idiomatic: “to be of,” i.e. to belong to. Night and darkness are the same, two words to impress the idea the more. A tone of triumph rings out in the statement. With exultation the writers here include themselves. Read the words aloud with this tone of exultation and feel how they strengthen and stiffen you. So the Thessalonians first heard this letter *read aloud* to them in their assembly. The writers know of no twilight zone or condition.

[6] But the facts in regard to what we are and what we are not involve the obligation that we remain what we are. **According then** (drawing this deduction) **let us not be sleeping, like the rest, but let us be watching and be sober!** This deduction is so obvious and so simple. “Night” in v. 5

suggest sleeping, lying unconscious without light, with no faculty aroused and on guard, in supposed safety. That is one picture of the way in which “the rest,” those outside, spend their lives.

“But let us be watching and be sober” again has two allied terms. To be watching is to be wide awake in the light of the Word, with all our wits about us. To be sober (a frequent admonition) is the opposite of drunken drowsiness and sleep, with senses dulled; it is more than even alertness, for it implies sound and sober judgment duly exercised. The hortative subjunctives are the present tense and denote that we keep on as we have been doing.

[7] “For” explains: **For those sleeping sleep at night** (genitive of time within), **and those drunken are drunken at night**. Everybody knows this. Therefore, however, some suppose that nothing is meant beyond this natural action, i.e. nothing spiritual. Every word refers to spiritual action. Yes, sleepers do sleep at night, — so all these spiritual sleepers sleep during their spiritual night with nothing to arouse them, for they have spurned the light of the Word. This sleeping denotes spiritual insensibility. More is added, viz., their utter soddenness. For they are drunk with their folly and their godless life. They sleep no quiet, normal sleep, but the sodden sleep of drunkenness. They are full of the intoxication of their lying notions. What a horrid picture!

[8] How spiritual v. 7 is, the contrast in v. 8 shows. **But let us, because we belong to daytime, continue to be sober, as having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as helmet hope of salvation**. The Greek “being of day” == belonging to daytime. The sense is causal: since we belong to day and not to night, let us continue to be sober (durative present tense). The following participle makes plain what this soberness signifies: it protects heart and head, the one with a thorax, the other with a helmet. We must not press these figures too far. While they are taken from soldiers, no fight, no battle is here implied, only the idea of strongest personal protection. Certainly these ever sober ones are not to fight the drunken sleepers.

Here the breastplate == faith and love. Eph. 6:14 is different. Love is the result of faith, and faith always embraces Christ. To keep ever soberly in faith and love is to be safe. To faith and love there is added hope, and this is

likened to a helmet. The unmodified word “hope” is not enough, it is made “hope of salvation,” of eternal blessedness. The genitives “of faith and love” are appositional and state what the breastplate is; but “hope” is the accusative predicative of “helmet.” The breastplate guards the chest, where beats the heart. Hope fits the idea of the helmet on the head, — the head held high in glorious expectation.

[9] Why such soberness and self-protection? **Because God did not appoint us unto wrath, but unto possession of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, [10] him who died in our behalf, so that, whether we are watching or sleeping, we shall live together with him.** Our own faith, love, and hope should ever keep us sober as people belonging to the day, and this because of the gracious act of God who set or appointed us not for wrath, but for everlasting life. Some refer God’s act back to eternity, yet the verb is only ἔθετο and has no πρό. Moreover, this meaning would be Calvinistic, for then some are from all eternity appointed to wrath. True, all God’s acts and purposes are eternal, yet the Scriptures do not always present them in this way. Thus here the historical aorist “God set or appointed” refers to the conversion of the Thessalonians, to their effective and successful call. The *voluntas consequens* is enough. Those who reject grace are appointed to wrath, — nothing else is left for them.

But when we were brought to faith, we were set “unto possession of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Περιποίησις == “possession.” Because “hope of salvation” refers to salvation in heaven, our versions translate: “to obtain” and “unto obtaining” salvation, i.e. in heaven and at the Parousia. But this is unnecessary. This future salvation is already ours (1 John 3:2). Our salvation as now possessed and as yet to be possessed has come about entirely through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ (διά), naming him with the full confessional designation.

10] Τοῦ ἀποθανόντος is an apposition: “the One who died for us.” That this is to be taken in the sense of “in our stead,” we have previously explained in the exegesis of the texts considered in this volume, where we repeatedly meet this ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν. The matter is settled save for the uninformed and the perverted. Christ’s great sacrifice was made “so that we shall live together with him.” All too many think that ἵνα must always indicate purpose. Well, here it denotes result, — the result that God had in mind when he appointed us to salvation. We now live together with Christ

by faith, and we shall see him as he is after we die. To live together with him who died in our stead involves his resurrection and eternal enthronement. The expression to live together with the One Who died for us is a striking paradox. His efficacious death enables us to live with him. Rev. 1:18.

Paul inserts: “whether we are watching or sleeping.” Our versions make this easy by translating: “whether we wake or sleep,” are alive or dead. But the first verb is the same as that found in v. 16: γρηγορῶμεν, “whether we watch.” Also the second verb “sleep” is the same verb that was used in v. 7, there used with regard to the pagan, drunken sleepers; it is not the verb used in 4:13 with reference to the sleeping of the saints in their graves. These matters should be taken into account. “Whether we are watching” means in this life, being ever on our guard, and “whether we are sleeping” means done with this watching and in our graves. By using the word for “to sleep” which referred to the spiritual sleep of the ungodly the point is brought out that there are two kinds of sleep. Our sleep comes when our watching is done, when our goal is attained.

How does εἰ in εἴτε... εἴτε come to have the subjunctive and not the indicative? This is a nut that the grammarians need to crack. There are other examples of this usage in the classics, in the later Koine, and in the New Testament, so this sample in our text is not startling. I take it that the subjunctive is less the point to be considered than the use of εἰ in place of εἰάν, and that the reason for εἰ is the advance from mere expectancy to an expectancy that amounts to reality.

[11] So once more, as in 4:18: **Therefore, comfort one another, and build up one the one, even also as you are doing.** Here again παρακαλῶ == to comfort (see on 4:18), not to “exhort.” When Paul repeats he usually adds something. So here: “and build up one the one.” This is biblical edification, building up by an increase of knowledge, assurance, spiritual strength and alertness. The more of this edification, the more of true comfort. The idiom εἰς τὸν ἕνα has been termed a Hebraism, as though this dismissed the matter. An example occurs in the classics. The correct explanation is that the reciprocal ἀλλήλους of the first statement is explained by the distributive εἰς τὸν ἕνα. One individual is to edify another individual, — this is what “one another” means.

“Even also as you are doing” is commendation. What a fine thing to do and what a fine thing to be thus commended! Do we deserve the same commendation?

## Homiletical Aid

Forewarned, forearmed. Nothing is worse than to be caught unprepared, when we might so easily have been prepared.

### Prepared.

- I. Sons of light and of day. Not in darkness and in night.
- II. Watching and sober.  
Not asleep and insensible to what is coming; not drunken and sodden in sin and ungodliness.
- III. Well protected.  
By the breastplate and the helmet.
- IV. Eager for the salvation bought for us by Christ.

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The people who like the Russellites try to figure out the date of the Lord’s return. The chiliasts and millennialists who imagine a 1,000 years of glorious Christianity before the end of the world. But Christ’s return will mean the end of the world and the final judgment, and its date no man can figure out, nor can we know it 1,000 years in advance. That day of the Lord comes

### “As a Thief in the Night.”

This means:

- I. With the world entirely unprepared.  
Suddenly, unexpectedly, while they are asleep in delusion, and drunken in all their sin. Bringing destruction and wrath, and eternal

doom.

II. With the Christians ready and prepared.

As sons of light and day (Scripture light), faith, love, and hope protecting them from the folly of the world, ever expecting Christ who died for them for their salvation.

Conclusion: We may be surprised when the day arrives “as a thief in the night,” but we shall not be caught when it is too late to prepare.

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The last day will find you as you are when you close your eyes in death. Your time of grace is now.

**The Great Warnings about the Coming of the Day of the Lord.**

Hear and heed the great warnings in

- I. The thief at night. He warns you: Be prepared;
- II. The woman in travail. She warns you: Be not caught in helplessness!
- III. The drunken sleepers. They are all around you and they all warn you: Be watchful and sober!
- IV. The breastplate and the helmet. They warn you: Never be without faith, love, and hope!
- V. Our own blessed appointment. This warns you: Salvation is yours, bought for you by Christ’s death, do not lose it!



# The Festival Of The Reformation Rev. 14:6-7

## “The Eternal Gospel”

The writers of homiletical works on the epistles have usually completed their task before they reach this text. To be sure, the ancient comes knew not this festival nor the text for it. This text was supplied by the Lutherans after the Reformation. Another epistle for this festival, 2 Thess. 2:3-12, forms the antithesis, for it deals with the great antichrist, the papacy, while this epistle deals with the *Messenger of the Eternal Gospel*. It would be well to hear about both on Reformation Day.

Rev. 14 deals with the related visions of Zion, Babylon, the Sickles, which complete the beast-visions of chapters 12 and 13. Despite all the antichristian power in the world (the first beast) and all the antichristian propaganda in the world, the Lamb triumphs on Mount Zion (14:1-5) with the 144,000. He triumphs by means of “the eternal Gospel” (our text), and Babylon, the antichristian empire in the world, “fell, fell” (v. 8-13). Then comes the Vision of the Two Sickles (v. 14-20) which depicts the final judgment. Our interest lies in the part that deals with the Gospel.

**And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having an eternal Gospel to proclaim as Gospel upon those sitting on the earth and upon every nation and tribe and tongue and people, [7] saying with a great voice: “Fear God, and give to him glory, because there did come the hour of his judging, and do obeisance to the One who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and fountains of waters.”**

It is asked why “another angel,” when none other is mentioned in the preceding. Various mistaken answers are offered. This first angel is called “another” in distinction from the next two who are thus termed “a second

angel” and “another, a third.” Each is another to this group of three. When we hear the word “angel” we think of a bodiless spirit, which the Greek would term a πνεῦμα. The Greek word ἄγγελος really means “messenger” and is thus peculiarly fitting here. This *aggelos* acted as a messenger when bringing the eternal Gospel and when calling to all people to glorify the Creator. He is described as flying in mid-heaven, which pictures him as a supernatural being, as an angel according to our conception.

The second beast mentioned in 13:11 is described as coming up “out of the earth.” This beast symbolizes all the antichristian deceit, propaganda and tyranny, which aids the first beast (13:1), namely all the antichristian power in the world. Both are from beneath, but this angel “flying in mid-heaven” is far above the earth and comes from heaven as a messenger of God. Since he flies in mid-heaven, the two beasts cannot reach this angel, cannot stop his gospeling, as they would love to do. In other words, all the brutal, beastly, murderous antichristian power in the world with all its horrid blasphemies (13:1-10), and all the deceitful, tyrannous propaganda among the dwellers of the earth (13:11-18) during the entire New Testament era cannot stop the course of the Gospel as pictured by this flying angel. The antichristian power and propaganda, symbolized by the two brute beasts, includes the papacy. But these visions are far grander than many commentators suppose. They narrow them down to single phenomena like the papacy, Mohammedanism, single historical kings and kingdoms, whereas the visions contain far, far more.

“Flying in mid-heaven” is in contrast with “those sitting on the earth.” The Gospel comes to us, not we to the Gospel. “Go!” is the Lord’s command and what a going there has ever been! We should note that the expression is not “those dwelling on the earth,” as in 13:8, 12:14, for in Revelation this is the standard designation for those who love only the earth, care nothing for heaven, and thus bow to the beasts. “Sitting” sometimes == ruling, as when one sits on his throne, but this would not apply here, where the appositional phrase explains: “upon every nation and tribe and tongue and people.” Four terms are used to express minor completeness; ten, when major completeness is desired. The sense is very plain: the Gospel is to be brought to all men in the world. In spite of all that the dragon’s (12:3) two beasts are able to do, “this Gospel of the Kingdom

(of the rule of Christ in grace and glory) shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations,” Matt. 24:14.

The angel is pictured as having an εὐαγγέλιον αἰώνιον εὐαγγελίσαι, “a Gospel eternal to gospel.” The infinitive repeats and emphasizes the noun. The infinitive is an aorist to indicate that the gospeling is to be carried out successfully, effectively, completely. The infinitive expresses the angel’s commission. Gospel is good news; the Catechism contains a very good definition, which may here be used: “the glad tidings that Jesus has saved us from our sins and through faith makes us for ever blessed.” This Gospel is eternal, which really means timeless. Note 13:8, “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” The Gospel is superior to time. It is not effected by time. It is not one thing in John’s day and another thing in our day. The Gospel is composed of great facts, and thus of statements of these facts (doctrines). The facts remain unchanged, and every true statement of the facts also does not change, no matter whether the statement be brief or long. Do not say that if Jesus had lived today instead of centuries ago, he would not have said and have done this or that. Do not make such a statement regarding Paul. There is nothing progressive about the Gospel; it is stationary, fixed, for all time. Many want progressiveness. The only place where they may find it is with the second beast, the pseudo-prophet, as he is called (19:20). He trades in lies, and these change constantly and thus progress.

Our Lutheran fathers saw in this angel a prophecy regarding Luther and the Gospel that he restored and sent flying over the earth. Therefore they selected Rev. 14:6-7 as the epistle text for the festival of the Reformation. Yet some thought that Luther was prefigured by the third angel (v. 9). The second and the third angel have been taken to signify Wyclif and Huss. When commentators haughtily reject the reference of the fathers to Luther they are wrong. This text is well chosen as a lesson for the festival of the Reformation, for the fathers did not select it because this angel with the Gospel signifies only Luther and no one else. That would be too narrow a view, very similar to the view that one of the two beasts symbolizes only the papacy. No; this angel is the Gospel messenger for the entire New Testament era, and thus most certainly includes the great Reformer Luther, one of whose chief merits it is that he furnished the popular translation of the Bible which soon disseminated the Bible to every nation, tribe, tongue,

and people. All the ragings of the beasts have not stopped Luther's blessed work. Yet, great as Luther is, he is only one of a blessed class, and all of those who truly bring the Gospel, even the humblest rural preacher, is symbolized by this angel.

We propose to use this text as our Lutheran fathers intended that it should be used. If anyone of them thought of Luther *alone*, his interpretation was too narrow, — just as to this day the commentators take too narrow a view when reading the symbolism of many of John's visions. One false opinion should be mentioned, namely that this angel "has nothing to do with the preaching of the Gospel during this present time." The opposite is the truth. Closely allied to this wrong notion is the other that all three angels that are mentioned in the first verses of this chapter should be placed at the very end of time.

[7] The angel's voice is called great because all the people on earth are to hear it. The message he proclaims is: "Fear God, and give to him glory, because there did come the hour of his judging, and do obeisance to the One" etc. This formulation of the message intends to make it the direct opposite of the propaganda of the second beast, which calls on those dwelling on the earth to bow down and to do obeisance to the image of the first beast. The Gospel is the direct opposite of the deceptions of the antichristian propaganda. Never can the two be harmonized. Every compromise is fatal to the Gospel. We may also note that here we practically have a quotation from Deut. 6:13; 10:20, which was used by Jesus when answering Satan, Matt. 4:10: "Thou shalt do obeisance to the Lord thy God (the same verb as the one used here) and him only shalt thou serve!"

The fear here referred to is true reverence. It ever goes with faith and love. It shrinks from doing anything against God. "Give to him glory" means to praise and to magnify God for his greatness, his glorious attributes, and for all his saving deeds in our behalf.

"Because there did come the hour of his judging" is the special cause for giving to God glory. Note the aorist, which is historical. When did this hour for judging come? When the Woman's Son was enthroned (12:5), when the incarnate Son sat down at God's right hand. Note that κρίσις is a word that indicates action, not "judgment" but "judging." It is a mistake to think only

of the judging that shall occur at the last day. Somewhere Zahn makes the point that the Scriptures present two views: one which takes a comprehensive view of the judging so as to include all its judgments, thousands of them, culminating in the judgment at the last day; the other which considers only the last day. We are to glorify God for all the past and even for the present acts of judging, realizing that these shall culminate at the last day. Since redemption has been completed, judging alone remains.

Note well that the angel's words contain no symbols; all of his language is literal. To do obeisance is to worship. The orientals prostrated themselves and bowed the head to the earth, hence the word. The angel's commands are not Pelagian or synergistic, as though men could by their own natural powers or with only some divine assistance do what is here bidden. Every Gospel call contains the grace of the Holy Spirit, which intends to work in men what it calls for.

All are to bow in worship "to the One who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and the mountains of waters." This describes God as the Creator. The language goes back to the Old Testament, Neh. 9:6; Ps. 33:5-9, and we may compare Acts 14:15-17 and 17:24-31. Arians, Mohammedans, Jews, modernists, and other Unitarians reject the Son and the Spirit. Although only one person is here referred to, it is the one mentioned in the first article of the Apostolic Creed. It is the One who revealed himself through the Son and the Spirit. But the Triune God is the Creator of heaven and earth, etc. As the Creator he is the One judging. That the judging, which shall take place at the last day, is in the hands of the Son, our Redeemer, all Christians know.

Revelation never quotes from the Old Testament. It uses allusion, but always in an independent way. So here we have the addition "and fountains of waters." God created the great salty ocean and also the many sweet springs of water on the land.

If it be asked whether this angel's proclamation be really Gospel, we may answer that it surely is. The Creator is the first person in the Gospel. His judging implies all that precedes the judging, the redemption of Christ, the Gospel call to repentance. This vision is not an independent one, but a link in the entire chain of visions; hence "having the Gospel to gospel" is very plain.

This vision does not present a last effort to bring the Gospel to every nation. The entire course of the Gospel, as it runs through the entire period of the New Testament, is here compressed into the act of this one angel flying in mid-heaven. Prophetic visions often compress in this manner. The Gospel which this angel brings cannot be reduced to the announcement of the final judgment, and of this judgment only the acquittal of the righteous. How anyone can allegorize “the sea” so as to mean the *Voelkerwelt* and the “water springs” to mean the springs of salvation, while “the heaven and the earth” are considered literal language, passes ordinary human understanding. We refer to these allegories because they offer a glimpse into what the commentators have done with Revelation so as to make it a forbidding book.

## Homiletical Aid

We glorify God and his eternal Gospel when we celebrate Reformation day. We praise him for the treasures of the Reformation, pray to him to preserve them to us and to our children and children’s children. The prophetic vision which pictures to us the work of the great Lutheran Reformation. Behold

### **The Great Reformation Angel.**

- I. He proclaims the Gospel.
  1. The Gospel of the redemption and justification by faith.
  2. Leaving nothing but the judging: “for the hour of his judging has come,” when God sent forth this angel or heavenly messenger.
- II. He began with the apostles.
  1. The grand apostolic Gospel message in the New Testament.
  2. It was carried throughout the Roman empire to all nations, etc. The two beasts were not able to hinder the spread of this message. Therefore this angel is pictured as flying in mid-heaven.
- III. He continued mightily with Luther and with the Lutheran Reformation.

1. The antichrist, the papal power, failed to silence Luther. Again it was as if an angel flew in mid-heaven where no savage beast could reach him.
2. Luther restored the apostolic Gospel. *Sola Scriptura, sola fide, sola persona* (i.e. the right of private judgment).
3. The Gospel is here defined so as to contrast with the beast's propaganda, false miracles (Rome has so many), image worship (13:14-15), the number of the beast (666, pretended number of God, namely the 777 which it never attains). It is Satanic to worship anything but God (Matt. 4:10).

IV. Is this angel not to continue through us, the children of the Reformation?

Develop this part yourself.

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This day I am proud to confess: "I am a Lutheran!" What is a Lutheran? An evangelical Christian who believes and confesses the Word of God, the whole of that Word, and nothing but that Word. He is a follower of the great angel whom St. John saw flying in mid-heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to bring as Gospel to all those sitting on the earth, and to every nation and kindred and tongue and people.

### **The Voice of Luther Still Sounds Forth in-the Everlasting Gospel.**

- I. Luther is pictured by this angel.
  1. Not Luther alone. First of all the ancient apostles of Christ. The everlasting Gospel they sounded forth.
  2. Then eminently Luther who repeated this Gospel to a world that sorely needed it.
  3. The apostolic doctrines and Luther's are the same. They are above time, everlasting, change — less. The apostles wrote the New Testament and sent it out to all the world. Luther translated the Bible into German and by means of his German translation

started the world-wide movement of translating the Bible into every human language, also in this way proclaiming the everlasting Gospel to all men.

4. The messenger flies in mid-heaven, neither the beast of the whole world's antichristian power, nor the beast of the whole world's antichristian propaganda, is able to silence his voice. The apostles still speak, Luther still repeats what they speak, and no power can silence them.

## II. Blessed are they who hear this angel's voice!

1. I want no transient gospel, turned out brand new every few years by the beast's deceit (13:14). I want this Gospel from mid-heaven, sent by God, far above those who sit on earth.
2. I want to worship the true God, and no images and no fake symbols of holiness, the number 666 (13:18). He who is the great Creator and thus the Judge. He who judges whether I believe his everlasting Gospel, Jesus Christ his Son, etc. Through his Son he finished the redemption, and thus only the judging is left.
3. I want to keep absolutely clear of the first beast, the whole antichristian power in the world. It may threaten to swallow me, but I "fear God" and worship him alone, Matt. 4:10. I want to keep far, far away from the whole antichristian propaganda in the world, all its deceit, religious, scientific, social, educational, political (Russia, the dictators, etc.). Be it ever so alluring, it is filled with poison; God judges and damns it all (19:20-21).
4. I know what God's verdicts are. I bow now to them in complete obeisance and obedience of faith.

Conclusion: The blessings of the everlasting Gospel and of the Reformation must remain mine.

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G. S. in *Magazin fuer Ev.-luth Homiletik* 5th vol.:

**Luther's Reformation a Wondrous Work of God.**



- I. God prepared him.
- II. God granted him his victorious career.
- III. God enabled him to renew the Church.

I have abbreviated the German in my translation, since the English is rather intolerant of long wordings. I also would not allegorize “mid-heaven” into “midway through the heaven of the Church.”

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G. in vol. 8 offers:

### **What is it That Fills Us with such Great Joy Today?**

I quote this not because of the theme, since G. could use this theme for any festive day, even for jubilee celebrations and anniversaries; but rather because of the parts:

- I. That Luther was a messenger of God (“angel”).
  - II. That Luther had the everlasting Gospel of God.
  - III. That Luther flew unhindered through the heaven of the Church with the everlasting Gospel. Here we have the same allegory.
- 

When I preach on the ancient epistles I would not discard this grand text from Revelation. Study it well in its entire connection and produce a far better sermon than these few outlines suggest.

# The Mission Festival. Rom. 10:13-17

## “Faith Cometh by Hearing”

Like the texts for the Reformation Festival, this one for the Mission Festival came to be chosen quite recently, after the celebration of an annual mission festival called for such a text. Often the minister chooses a free text. Most congregations invite a special speaker for the occasion. I might have omitted this text; yet, after all, it deserves its place in this volume.

Romans ten sets forth one of the great reasons why the Jews failed, While the Gentiles were brought to salvation: God’s Righteousness, *Coming through the Gospel Word*, the Jews by Unbelief Failed to Obtain, the Gentiles by Faith Obtained. The Gospel Word is the key. It comes to kindle faith, and where it succeeds, justification and salvation is certain; where obdurate unbelief meets the Gospel Word, all is lost. Faith is produced only by one means, the Gospel Word. Our text is thus admirably adapted for a Mission Festival. It is far better than many of the scrap texts which preachers, following sectarian models, often choose, even descending to texts that must be allegorized in order to produce the thought of missions.

Verse 11 reports the great Scriptural assurance that no believer will be put to shame with his faith, but by his faith will be saved. Nor is there the slightest difference among men in this regard. It is one and the same Lord who is rich in grace toward all men alike and will save every person that calls upon him in faith. **“For everyone whoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved.”** A quotation from Joel 2:32. Πᾶς ὅς ἔσται ἔσται == “everyone whoever” == universality. “To call upon” signifies faith plus its confession. The two always go together. Here is more than just the pronoun: “shall call upon him”; here is “the Name of the Lord,” more even than just

“the Lord.” Κύριος is the Word for *Yahveh*, with whom Paul here identifies Jesus Christ, *Yahveh*’s greatest self-revelation. In this and in many similar connections ὄνομα signifies “the Name” as the revelation by which the Lord draws near to us to awaken faith in us, and by which we can apprehend him and believe and trust in him. We have this “Name,” or revelation, completely in the Gospel Word.

In this Name alone is salvation. He who calls on this Name, believing in Jesus Christ and confessing him, “shall be saved.” The future tense is regular in a condition of expectancy. This future is not to be dated at the end of the world, but it begins the moment that faith enters and turns the heart to the Lord. The verb “to save” and the noun “salvation” denote rescue from mortal danger plus the condition of safety that follows the rescue and endures for ever. Our entire mission is to bring the Name (revelation, Gospel Word) to men and to let that Name enter their hearts and move them to call upon this Name in faith and in confession.

[14] Paul now unfolds all that lies in the act of calling on the Name of the Lord. Here is his famous chain, really a sorites or chain-syllogism. **How then shall they call on him in whom they did not believe? and how shall they believe in him whom they did not hear? And how shall they hear without one preaching? [15] and how shall they preach unless they be commissioned? As it has been written** (perfect tense: and is still on record), **“How beautiful the feet of those telling as glad news good things!”** There will be no difficulty in following Paul’s thought when we remember that this chapter deals with the Gospel Word, the one and only means by which God’s saving righteousness is bestowed. Paul’s entire logical chain lies in this one means of grace.

To call on the Lord means to trust in him.

To trust in him means to have heard him.

To hear him means a preacher.

To preach means a commission.

Only when all these requirements are met may we have men calling upon the Name of the Lord. And when thus contemplating the Word as a means of grace the apostle jubilates: “How beautiful the feet ’of those telling as glad tidings good things!”

All the propositions are general and thus use the indefinite plural. They are true even aside from religion. No one acknowledges and confesses the greatness and the beneficence of another by calling on him for help, if he does not trust (believe) in him. So confession necessitates faith or trust.

To have this faith you must have heard the person you are to trust. In the Greek the aorist is enough. You must know the person whom you are to trust, and knowledge is one part of faith. 01') is the relative, the genitive of the person heard speaking, not the adverb. How can you trust a person whom you have never met and whom you never heard speaking?

There are two ways of hearing a person: when he himself speaks with his own mouth, and when he commissions a herald to utter his message, as Jesus sent his apostles as heralds. Since this second way is used by the Lord, this passage deals with κηρύσσειν, the heralding. The word is generally translated "to preach," but "to herald" is more exact. The herald was given a message which he was obliged to announce word for word, without change, addition or subtraction. All he does is to lend his voice to the message. Read how often the prophets say: "Thus saith the Lord!" "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that rejecteth you, rejecteth me; and he that rejecteth me, rejecteth him that sent me," Luke 10:16.

[15] One further link: a herald must be commissioned. A self-sent herald is a self-contradiction. The Commissioner is the Lord, for him men must hear, and all of the heralds testify of him (Acts 1:8). Yet the Lord now acts through his Church by calling missionaries and by sending them out to herald his saving Name. When thus we come to the commissioning of the heralds we are at the end. More cannot be done than to have their voices ring out with the Gospel Word. Where men turn deaf ears to that, they are hopelessly lost. Here then is the entire program for all our mission work: fill the world with Gospel heralds!

At contemplation of this work Paul exclaims in the words of Is. 52:7: "How beautiful" etc. Paul corrects the inexact LXX by means of the Hebrew. The prophet voices the jubilation of the Israelites, still faithful in the Babylonian captivity, at sight of the herald-runners speeding over the mountains to make the great announcement to them that now they are free to return to Jerusalem. Read ὥς as exclamatory; ὥραϊος ==, on the hour, and then, referring to the time of youth and bloom, lovely, beautiful.

Although weary and covered with dust, the feet of those heralds were so beautiful because of the happy message they brought. The Israelites were ready to embrace those feet.

“Go!” said Jesus to his heralds. “Disciple all the nations!” As true heralds “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you!” What a going there has been ever since! Who will count all the miles traversed? This too is a characteristic of the Gospel Word. It does not ask foreign nations to learn our language. No, it goes and goes and learns the languages of the nations, to tell them the good things of the Gospel. Note that Isaiah used the Hebrew equivalent for εὐαγγελίζομαι, the word which later came to mean “to preach the Gospel.” Here it is still used in the general sense “telling glad news,” and it is transitive and has the object “good things.” Thousands of missionaries are blessed by those whom they have brought to Christ, as the faithful Israelites blessed these heralds who brought them the announcement of liberty. We too want some of that blessing as people who have helped to make it possible for the missionaries to go and to do their work.

[16] Ah, if Paul could only have stopped with this jubilant note! But as Israel refused the Promise and the Mercy (chapter 9), so it refused the Word. Israel would not have the Faith these came to work. So the tragic note must be sounded. **But (alas!) not all hearkened to the glad news. For Isaiah declares, “Lord, who believed what they heard from us?” [17] Accordingly the faith — of Which Isaiah speaks — (originates) from something that is heard, and that which is heard (comes) through Christ’s utterance.** ἄλλά has the force of “but alas,” “not all hearkened” is a litotes: only a few in the Jewish nation hearkened. To hearken and to heed == “to obey” (A.V.), yet “hearken” matches the heralding and the glad news of the message. Men with Calvinistic leanings speak of *das goettliche Verhaengnis*, but no divine decree compelled the Jews to be obdurate.

The explanation of Jewish unbelief which Paul is making in this chapter is the fact that the Jews refused the righteousness of God which came to them only by means of the Word, its reception thus being only by faith. To come only as poor, lost sinners, and only by hearing and believing to be declared righteous by God, Gentiles being declared righteous in the same way, aroused the most Violent antagonism in the Jewish world. Paul’s point in quoting from Isaiah (53:1) is not prophetic proof for what the Jews were

doing in Paul's day, but biblical evidence that this wicked unbelief on the part of the Jews was by no means a new thing, — 800 years before it was as we see it in Paul's time. Read Stephen's denunciation, Acts 7:51. Τῆ ἀκοῆ ἡμῶν == what they heard from us. Cremer- Koegel: passive sense: "what they were made to hear from us," not active "our report" (our versions), i.e. what we reported. The Jews could not avoid hearing, what they avoided with violence and with obduracy was believing.

[17] Paul is not entering upon an excursion with ἄρα. The whole chapter turns on the Word, and thus on the ἀκοῆ, on what the Jews were made to hear. What is happening in Paul's day is made clearer by what Isaiah complained of 800 years earlier. The Jews refused this divine means of grace. They do so in our day. In his discourse regarding the end of the world Jesus prophesied: "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled," Matt. 24:34. "This generation" == the obdurate, hardened Jews like Caiaphas, Annas, the Sadducees and the Pharisees. They shall continue as a standing miracle till the day of judgment, a tremendous warning for the whole world, a miraculous warning of judgment. Millennialists believe the opposite, that God has great plans for these Jews who now after almost 2,000 years are as obdurate as ever, plans to elevate them to the highest position in the coming millennium.

Ever and ever, for Jews and Gentiles alike, the way to God's verdict of righteousness, the way to salvation, is one. It is by faith alone and by no works of ours. This faith (ἡ πίστις) originates ἐξ ἀκοῆς, not out of "hearing," i.e. the act of hearing, but passive "from what is heard." It is the divine substance that kindles faith. That we must hear it (active) is understood. In these two closely connected verses ἀκοῆ cannot have two different meanings.

"And that which is heard" reaches us "through Christ's utterance." The word ῥῆμα is used in v. 8 and is now repeated. It is an unusual word in this connection, but it is employed to bring out the fact that the Gospel Word was originally uttered by Jesus in order to make men hear it. "He that heareth you, heareth me," etc., i.e. as if I myself uttered the Word to them with my lips. The A.V. has the incorrect reading "of God."

The Jewish tragedy finds its repetitions among the other nations. Here too multitudes despise the ἀκοῆ, the ῥῆμα, the Gospel message of the

Savior's heralds. While this saddens us it does not discourage, for multitudes are constantly brought to faith, to the glory of our Lord who purchased and won us by his blood.

## **Homiletical Aid**

All that our Lord Jesus Christ has done for our redemption would be in vain if its blessedness could not be brought to men and could not be made their own. Think what you and I would be, if we had not through the Church obtained the riches of salvation prepared for us by Christ. As we have received, so we now give. We call this our Mission Work. The apostle St. Paul speaks of it in our mission text. He presents

### **The Golden Steps by which the Lord Leads Men to Heaven.**

- I. The Lord himself has designed them.
  1. He commissions his heralds.
  2. His heralds proclaim his Gospel message.
  3. This message men are made to bear.
  4. What they hear brings Christ to them.
  5. Christ moves their hearts to faith.
  6. Faith impels them to call upon Christ and thus to confess him.

Thus are men brought up the golden steps to justification and salvation.
- II. The Lord's Church constantly uses them.
  1. The Lord uses the Church to prepare and to send out his heralds (missionaries) today.
  2. The Church has organized the work of missions in harmony with the Lord's design. Describe our organization, fields of labor, success, etc.
  3. Every member of the Church ought to have his full share in this blessed work: prayers, gifts, support by personal interest,

devotion, and wherever possible, personal work.

4. Some refuse (the Jews for instance in Isaiah's time, in Paul's time, to this day), yet this blessed work of leading men up the Lord's golden steps to heaven always has its great successes and is and remains the greatest work in the world.
- 

How were you saved? Christ was brought to you. How are the unsaved to be saved? Only in the same way. St. Paul puts this truth into challenging questions. We are made to face

### **The Mission Challenge to the Church.**

- I. How shall men be saved without the Gospel? Here treat Paul's questions either in the order in which he asks them, or in the reverse order. Bring out the challenge that runs through them and becomes cumulative.
  - II. How shall men be saved without your helping to send them the Gospel? Many are content to have the Gospel and salvation for themselves, but are indifferent to sending it to others. Are others alone to do this? Is there no challenge for you? Do you care so little for the Gospel and for salvation as to move no hand toward mission work? Can you hope to be saved when you have a callous, unresponsive heart?
- 

A work with eternal results. You to have as large a share in it as you are willing to secure. Young men may become missionaries, and young women missionary workers.

### **The Most Attractive Work in the World.**

- I. To send Gospel missionaries out into the world, the way Jesus sent his apostles;



- II. To fill men's hearts with saving faith and to rescue them from sin, superstition, and death;
- III. To bring men to call upon Christ's name, thus confessing and glorifying his name, —

Can you think of any other work, in which you might have part, that you would rather do, that would give you more satisfaction and joy? In Christ's name do all that you can in this most attractive work in the world.

**Soli Deo Gloria**

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# How Can You Find Peace With God?

The most important thing to grasp is that no one is made right with God by the good things he or she might do. Justification is by faith only, and that faith resting on what Jesus Christ did. It is by believing and trusting in His one-time *substitutionary* death for your sins.

Read your Bible steadily. God works His power in human beings through His Word. Where the Word is, God the Holy Spirit is always present.

Suggested Reading: [New Testament Conversions](#) by Pastor George Gerberding

## Benediction

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

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Him that they might have life. They reject Him, and therefore stand rejected. But those who come to Him, poor and needy and helpless, but trusting in His mercy, He will receive, to comfort and to save.”

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“I want you to understand that I have never preached opinions from this pulpit; it is not a question of opinion; I have absolutely no right to stand here and give you my opinion, for it is not worth any more than yours; we do not come to church to get opinions; I claim that I can back up every sermon I have preached, with the Word of God, and it is not my opinion nor yours, it is the eternal Word of God, and you will find it so on the Judgment day. I have nothing to take back, and I never will; God does not want me to.”

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“There are many of us who believe; we are convinced; but our souls do not take fire at contact with the truth. Happy he who not only believes, but believes with fire... This energy of belief, this ardor of conviction, made the commonplaces of the Gospel, the old, old story, seem in his [Stork’s] utterance something fresh and irresistibly attractive. Men listened to old truths from his lips as though they were a new revelation. They were new, for they came out of a heart that new coined them and stamped its own impress of vitality upon them as they passed through its experience...” – From the Introduction

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