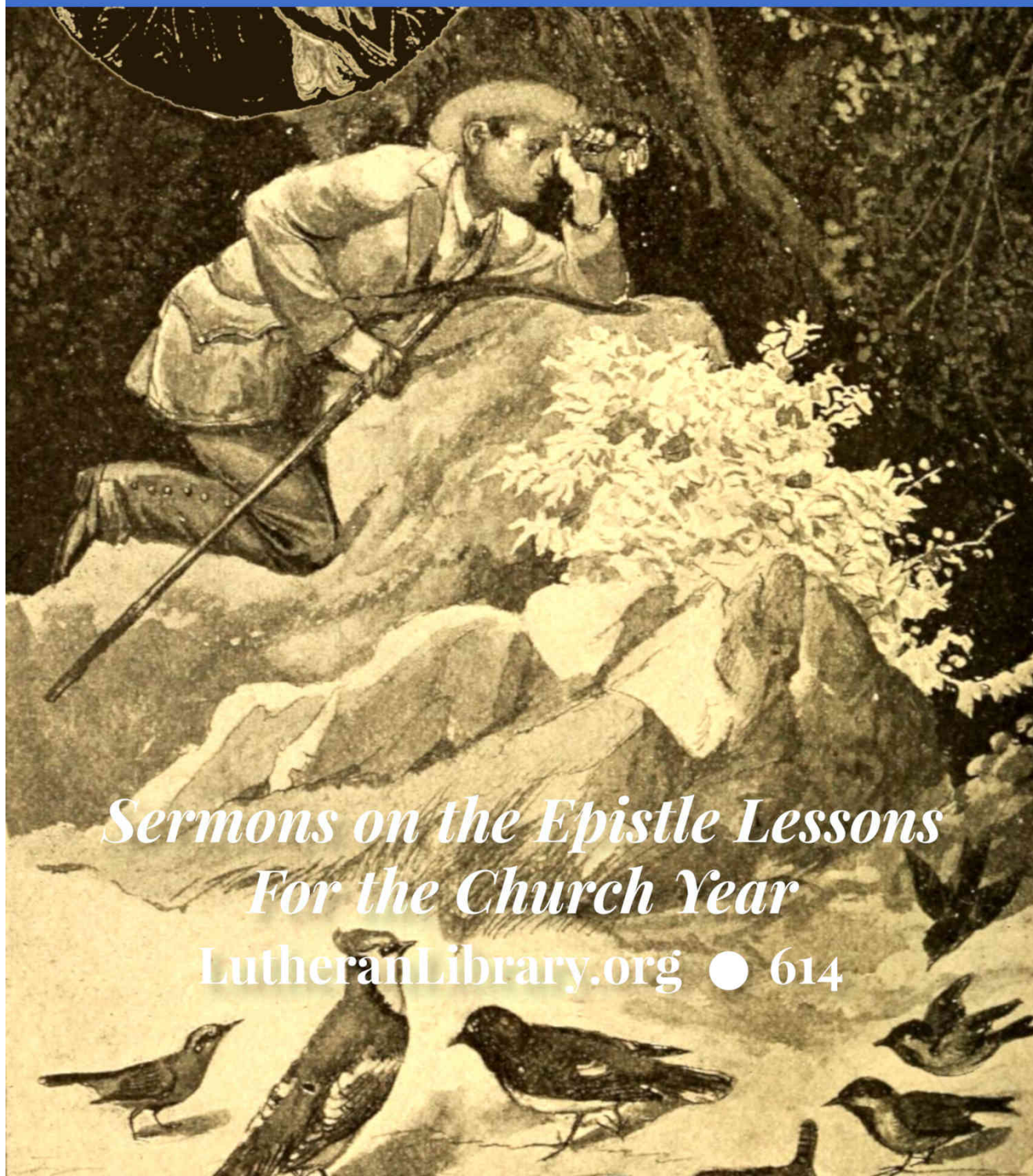


# Leander Keyser

## In The Apostles' Footsteps



*Sermons on the Epistle Lessons  
For the Church Year*

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# In The Apostles' Footsteps

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In The Apostles' Footsteps  
*Sermons on the Epistle Lessons  
for the Church Year*

By Leander S. Keyser, D.D.

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# Contents

About The Lutheran Library

Contents

Preface by Lutheran Librarian

A Brief Explanation by Rev. Leander Keyser

A Brief Foreword [To the Second Part of This Volume]

1. The People Of The Advent. Rom 13:11-14. The First Sunday In Advent.
2. The Advent Spirit Of Unity. Rom. 15:4-13. The Second Sunday In Advent.
3. The Advent Rule Of Judgment. 1 Cor. 4:1-5. The Third Sunday In Advent.
4. An Advent Quartet Of Graces. Phil. 4:4-7. The Fourth Sunday In Advent.
5. The Real Christmas Message: The Grace That Truly Saves. Tit. 2:11-14. Christmas Day.
6. The After-Christmas Message: Sons Of God. Gal. 4:1-7. The First Sunday After Christmas.
7. New Year's Greeting: May You Have The Joy Of True Faith! Gal. 3:23-29. The Circumcision Of Christ — New Year.
8. Warning And Comfort For Our Trials. 1 Pet. 4:12-19. Sunday After New Year
9. A Stirring Call To The Church. Isa. 60:1-6. The Epiphany Of Our Lord.
10. Golden Rules For Christian Living. Rom. 12:1-5. The First Sunday After The Epiphany
11. Divers Gifts And Graces And Their Proper Use. Rom. 12:6-16. The Second Sunday After The Epiphany.
12. Adding Virtue To Virtue. Rom. 12:16-21. The Third Sunday After The Epiphany.

13. The Greatest Grace Of All. Rom. 13:8-10. The Fourth Sunday After The Epiphany.
14. God's Elect: What Kind Of People They Should Be. Col. 3:12-17. The Fifth Sunday After The Epiphany.
15. The Verity Of The Holy Scriptures. 2 Pet. 1:16-21. The Transfiguration Of Our Lord.
16. The Christian Race Course. 1 Cor. 9:24-10:5. Septuagesima Sunday.
17. Should A Man Defend Himself? 2 Cor. 11:19 — 12:9. Sexagesima Sunday.
18. The Primacy Of Christian Love. 1 Cor. 13:1-13. Quinquagesima Sunday.
19. A Prophet's Directions For Keeping Lent. Joel 2:12-19. Ash Wednesday — The First Day In Lent
20. Winning Approval For The Pure Doctrine. 2 Cor. 6:1-10. The First Sunday In Lent.
21. The Pure Ethics Of The Christian Life. 1 Thess. 4:1-7. The Second Sunday In Lent.
22. The Divine Pattern. Eph. 5:1-9. The Third Sunday In Lent.
23. Which Do You Prefer? Freedom Or Bondage? Gal. 4:21-31. The Fourth Sunday In Lent.
24. Great Blessings Through The Great High Priest. Heb. 9:11-15. Passion Sunday.
25. The Humble Mind Of Christ. Phil. 2:5-11. Palmarum: The Sixth Sunday In Lent.
26. The Sacramental Feast. 1 Cor. 11:23-32. Thursday In Holy Week.
27. The Atoning Savior In Prophecy. Isa. 52:13-53:12. Good Friday.
28. How To Keep The Easter Festival. 1 Cor. 5:6-8. Easter Day. The Resurrection Of Our Lord.
29. The Victorious Life. 1 John 5:4-12. The First Sunday After Easter.
30. Christ's Example In Suffering. 1 Peter 2:21-25. The Second Sunday After Easter.
31. More Practical Directions For Christian Living. 1 Pet. 2:11 — 20. The Third Sunday After Easter.
32. Whence Come All Good Things? James 1:16-21. The Fourth Sunday After Easter.
33. Hearing And Doing. James 1:22-27. The Fifth Sunday After Easter.

34. By The Right Hand Of God Exalted. Acts 1:1-11. The Ascension Of Our Lord.
35. Stewards Of The Manifold Grace Of God. 1 Pet. 4:7-11. The Sunday After The Ascension.
36. The Baptism Of Spiritual Power. Acts 2:1-13. The Festival Of Pentecost. Whitsunday.
37. Depths That Cannot Be Fathomed. Rom. 11:33-36. The Festival Of The Holy Trinity.
38. Divine And Human Love. 1 John 4:16-21. The First Sunday After Trinity.
39. The Contrast Between Love And Hate. 1 John 3:13-18. The Second Sunday After Trinity.
40. Graces That Are Enhanced By Grace. 1 Pet. 5:6-11. The Third Sunday After Trinity.
41. Redemption For Nature And For Man. Rom. 8:18-23. The Fourth Sunday After Trinity.
42. Zealous For The Good. 1 Pet. 3:8-15. The Fifth Sunday After Trinity.
43. A Paradox: Christian People Are Both Dead And Alive. Rom. 6:3-11. The Sixth Sunday After Trinity.
44. Contrasts Between The Old Life And The New. Rom. 6:19-23. The Seventh Sunday After Trinity.
45. The Blessings Of Adoption. Rom. 8:12-17. The Eighth Sunday After Trinity.
46. How To Use Old Testament History. 1 Cor. 10:6-13 The Ninth Sunday After Trinity.
47. Unity In Diversity. 1 Cor. 12:1-11. The Tenth Sunday After Trinity.
48. The Essence Of The Gospel. 1 Cor. 15:1-10. The Eleventh Sunday After Trinity.
49. The Difference Between The Letter And The Spirit. 2 Cor. 3:4-11. The Twelfth Sunday After Trinity.
50. The Sure Covenant Of Grace. Gal. 3:15-22. The Thirteenth Sunday After Trinity.
51. Two Kinds Of Fruit — Carnal And Spiritual. Gal. 5:16-24. The Fourteenth Sunday After Trinity.
52. The Spirit-Directed Life. Gal. 5:25-6:1-10. The Fifteenth Sunday After Trinity.



53. A Great Cause And Its Great Results. Eph. 3:13-21. The Sixteenth Sunday After Trinity.
54. The Greatest Vocation In The World. Eph. 4:1-6. The Seventeenth Sunday After Trinity.
55. An Apostle's Reasons For Gratitude. 1 Cor. 1:4-9. The Eighteenth Sunday After Trinity.
56. A Change Of Spiritual Raiment. Eph. 4:22-28. The Nineteenth Sunday After Trinity.
57. How To Walk Circumspectly. Eph. 5:15-21. The Twentieth Sunday After Trinity.
58. The Christian Soldier And His Panoply. Eph. 6:10-17. The Twenty-First Sunday After Trinity.
59. Joyful Thanksgiving And Prayer. Phil. 1:3-11. The Twenty-Second Sunday After Trinity.
60. The Earthly And The Heavenly Mind. Phil. 3:17-21. The Twenty-third Sunday After Trinity.
61. A Prayer That Was A True Prayer. Col. 1:9-14. The Twenty-fourth Sunday After Trinity.
62. The Resurrection Hope. 1 Thess. 4:13-18. The Twenty-Fifth Sunday After Trinity.
63. The Scoffer's Creed Versus The Believer's Creed. 2 Pet. 3:3-14. The Twenty-sixth Sunday After Trinity.
64. The Lord's Second Coming — An Impending Crisis. 1 Thess. 5:1-11. The Twenty-Seventh Sunday After Trinity.
65. The Festival Of The Reformation. The Central Principle And Its Results. Gal. 2:15-21.
66. Luther A Chosen Vessel Unto The Lord. Acts 9:15. Luther's Birthday.
67. Bountiful Receiving, Bountiful Giving, Bountiful Living. 2 Cor. 9:6-11. The Festival Of Harvest.
68. Good Reasons For National Gratitude. 1 Tim. 2:1-8. A Day Of General Or Special Thanksgiving.
69. Our Lord's Missionary Program. Acts 1:8. The Festival Of Missions.
70. The Cure For All Our Trouble. St. John 14:1. In Memory Of The Dead.

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How Can You Find Peace With God?

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

Please have patience with us when you come across typos. 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.

# A Brief Explanation by Rev. Leander Keyser

IT IS MORE THAN GRATIFYING to know that the first two volumes of this series, those on the Gospel Lessons for the Christian Year, have met with a cordial reception on the part of so many people; indeed, for the author it is an occasion for real gratitude to God. The reason for this feeling may be concisely stated. Those sermons were preeminently Biblical, strictly evangelical in doctrine, centering about Christ and His atoning work, and putting the emphasis on spiritual verities and experiences. In this age of doubt and uncertainty in many quarters and of proud rationalism in others, the fact that sermons of so pronounced a Scriptural character should be in demand is cheering and comforting news to one who loves the Bible devotedly, and has had moments of anxiety lest its authority might be undermined.

While the second volume of sermons on the Gospels<sup>1</sup> was going through the press, the Superintendent of The Lutheran Literary Board informed the author that many requests were coming to him for a similar homiletic treatment of the Epistles. Our friend's appeal was so urgent that, not without a good deal of sacrifice of personal feeling, we laid aside all our plans for another kind of a vacation, and sat down once more before our desk and typewriter to prepare "copy" for the printer.

But, thanks be to God! the Holy Bible lay open before us, with its bright and inexhaustible treasures of divine truth. That saved us from despondency; we were not left to our own poor resources. So we gave ourself up to the work of interpreting its sacred truths and putting them into sermonic form. It has been an engrossing, sometimes even a thrilling, pleasure to follow the apostles as they followed their Master. How wonderfully and fundamentally they interpreted His teachings as the Holy Spirit guided them into all needed truth! Thus inspired by the Spirit of the exalted Christ, their doctrines, like those of the Gospels, are His doctrines. In following "In the Apostles' Footsteps," we are still following "In the Redeemer's Footsteps."

Although this volume follows somewhat closely on the publication of Volume II on the Gospels, these last sermons have not been hastily prepared. They are, in fact, the result of a lifetime of study, reflection and experience. Only the literary form is of recent preparation. During many years in the pastorate the author preached again and again around the golden circle of the Christian Year on both the Gospels and Epistles.

As in the previous volumes, the author has aimed to make these sermons expository. With the original text and a number of translations constantly before him, he has ever sought to search out the real meaning of the Holy Spirit in the Word. However, exegesis has not been his only purpose. He has also aimed at application, and that, too, of the most practical kind. He sincerely believes that the Bible is a very practical book, its religion a very practical religion. It fits into every need and condition of life. Its principles, if honestly tried and practiced, would solve all the perplexing problems of this age and every other age. The Bible is not an antiquated book of myths and legends and folklore; it inculcates the universal and final religion, preparing men and women for the noblest life in this world and for the highest destiny in the world to come.

Once more the author desires to pay tribute to the inexhaustible richness of the Bible. If any preacher feels that he is approaching the area of mental and spiritual drought, let him go to the Bible, and give himself to expository sermonizing, and he will soon find that he has entered an irrigated region of perennial fertility, which will afford no less joy and profit to his people than to himself.

May these studies in the Word prove an uplift to the reader as they have to the writer!

L. S. K.

Springfield, Ohio, September 29, 1919.

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1. *In the Redeemer's Footsteps* was originally published in two volumes.  
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# A Brief Foreword [To the Second Part of This Volume]

THE AUTHOR IS THANKFUL that his life and health have been spared to enable him to complete this volume, which is the fourth and last of his series of sermons on the Gospels and Epistles of the Christian Year. Both publisher and author are gratified with the reception accorded these evangelical sermons. Although, in connection with other duties, the labor of preparing the manuscript has been by no means light, the author counts it as nothing compared with the joy that has come from this renewed study and interpretation of God's Holy Word.

Perhaps a few words of explanation may be in place. In the preparation of these sermons three principal objects have been kept in view: first, to make them truly expository, and hence thoroughly Biblical; second, to put the material in homiletical form; third, to apply the doctrines of Holy Writ to practical life in these times and in all times; It must be left to the reader to judge whether the author has succeeded in making these discourses of as much spiritual value as they should be.

Although the material has been put in homiletic form, the author would not presume to hold up these discourses as models to be preached just as they appear on the printed pages. They would be too skeleton-like, too much broken up into compartments. In the delivery of sermons the preacher should insert such sentences and phrases as will make graceful and logical transitions from one division to the next. At the same time he should not hide the outline altogether, but should cause the main points to stand out clearly to aid the memory of the bearer in retaining them. Some one once said — perhaps it was Spurgeon — that the divisions of a sermon are books on which the main thoughts are hung so as to be ready for use. In these volumes the author could not, as a rule, spare the space to make a smooth transition from division to division. The additional sentences thus required would have carried the discourses beyond the prescribed limits.

Again, if the author were preaching these sermons, he would occasionally introduce an illustration — an apt story, or a parable, or a historical or literary reference. The brevity demanded in these sermons admitted of very little illustrative matter.

The author believes that every text should be studied critically by the preacher before he prepares his sermon. The Greek and Hebrew Scriptures should constantly be used, not for the display of erudition (God forbid!), but for the sake of securing the true exegesis of the Word of God. In this way the real mind of the Spirit will be discovered, and the pure truth will do its effective work.

True, these sermons are intensely practical, but, back of them all and in them all, redeeming grace has been the central theme. If men are saved by grace, they will also serve by grace, and then no pride and self-righteousness will mar their service.

L. S. KEYSER.

*Hamma Divinity School,  
Springfield, Ohio,  
March 25, 1920.*

# 1. The People Of The Advent.

## Rom 13:11-14. The First Sunday In Advent.

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof. (Romans 13:11-14)

THE REVOLVING YEAR has brought us once more to the season of Advent. Again we are looking forward to the anniversary of the birth of our Lord, and are beginning to prepare for the celebration of that happy event. At this time it is pertinent and proper for us to ask the question, What kind of people ought the people of the Advent to be? The Epistle for the day answers that question.

Last year we considered together the Gospel Lessons for the Church Year. We found that all of them circled around the redemptive work of Christ, Without which the doctrines would have had no true basis and the practical applications would have lacked motive and power. In Christ we have all of Christian theology; in His enabling strength we can do all things. With Him duty becomes delight; without Him duty is the most burdensome word in the language.

If we found this true last year in the Gospel Pericopes, we shall find the same basal truth this year in the Epistles. The doctrine and practice of both parts of the New Testament agree. They are not discordant, because the same Holy Spirit, who inspired the writers of the Gospels, also guided the writers of the Epistles, according to the promise of the Saviour. It is only a perverting rationalism that finds any contradiction between the teachings of Christ and the teachings of the apostles. So this year our central theme

again shall be redeeming grace. When we follow “In the Apostles’ Footsteps,” as we shall this year, we are still following “In the Redeemer’s Footsteps,” as we did last year; for let it be borne in mind, always, that the inspired apostles followed Christ.

Let us now give heed to the admonitions of the Epistle for the day. The language of the apostle rushes along like a powerful stream, sometimes bounding quite roughly over the rocks, omitting some of the copulative words, as if the writer were in too much hurry and earnest to put them down. Hence we must exercise our thought — which is often a good discipline — to get the proper interpretation. You will observe that, in our English translations, the first sentence is not complete. This arises from the fact that the apostle wrote the sentence in that way, knowing that his readers could supply the missing words. Let me give as literal a translation of the apostle’s language as I can: “And this, knowing the time, that already the hour we should be aroused out of sleep.” What is the meaning of such rugged, direct and fervid language? If we go back to what the apostle had previously said, we shall discover its sense. He had been giving the Romans many important instructions — to be diligent, to be united, to forgive their enemies, to be good and law-abiding citizens, to fulfill the law of love. Then, with a bound, he comes to the supreme motive for all this high and holy conduct, and cannot take time to put in all the connecting particles. Let us supply them: “And remember this above all (knowing the time, the great age in which you live), that the hour is already at hand when we should be aroused out of our sleep.” The words we have introduced complete the sentence, and at the same time give its interpretation. This leads us to the first division of our subject:

## **I. The Time Referred To In The Text.**

Some commentators think Paul here refers to the second coming of Christ, which he perhaps expected soon to take place, and therefore on that basis he made his stirring appeal to the Roman Christians to be awake, so that the great day would not break upon them in their sleep. That *may* be the sense, but we are disposed to doubt it. The time in which Paul and his fellow-disciples lived was epochal enough to warrant a rousing appeal. It was the season of the First Advent. Remember that Christ had only a few years before



become incarnate, had lived His marvelous life, had died to make atonement for the sins of the world, had risen again and ascended to the right hand Of God, had poured His Spirit upon His followers; and now all this good news was being proclaimed in its fullness for the first time to the people of the world. Was it not an epochal time, a crucial time? Was it not an hour to awake out of sleep, to be alert for the opportunities of the breaking day? Therefore the apostle could well say: “For now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed;” that is, the new revelations were coming so thick and fast through the inspiration afforded to the apostles that the salvation of believers was becoming more and more complete and precious. Yes, “the night is far spent; the day is at hand;” therefore awake out of your sleep. Knowing what a time of revelation and privilege this is, everybody ought to cast aside his dull sloth and be wide awake. It is “an age on ages telling.”

It was not necessary for Paul here to arouse the Roman Christians on the ground of the Second Advent; the First Advent was pregnant enough to spur faith and action. This interpretation agrees with one of Paul’s greatest and most potent statements (1 Cor. 2:9, 10): “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” Do not stop there; read on: “But God hath revealed them unto us by His spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” If Paul and his Roman congregation lived in such a dispensation, was it not a great epoch? Would anybody want to be asleep at such a time, and miss all the heightened joy and the inestimable privilege?

So the apostle was referring to the time of the First Advent, which furnished a powerful enough motive for faith and activity. If the people lived up to its requirements and opportunities, they needed no additional incentive from the immediate prospect of Christ’s second coming. Thus our text is relevant to our need today, in this Advent season, with Christ already come to redeem us and to shed His glory upon us. If in Paul’s time the day was just at hand, what is our happy lot, with the meridian sun of a full New Testament revelation shining on our way! We are the children of the day, not of the night; we are the people of the Advent in its radiant luster. Thus we are led to consider the practical teaching of our text:

## **II. How The People Of The Advent Should Deport Themselves.**

### **1. The Things They Should Do.**

#### **a. They should be awake.**

The text says, “The hour is already here to be aroused out of sleep;” “The night is far advanced, and the day has drawn near.”

We never could see how people could be spiritually asleep in such a time as this, when Christ has come and has shed the full light of His revelation upon them. The sun is shining in the mid-heavens, the birds are singing, the grain and fruit are growing, and yet there are people who are sleeping away the precious time, regardless of the opportunity to secure salvation and to bring the world to Christ. We feel like shouting with Paul: “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give thee light.” For anyone to be sleeping in sin, when Christ has come to bring salvation, is surely sad and culpable enough; but to be slumbering when the Macedonian call comes from a thousand lands to know about Christ, the world’s Redeemer and only hope, that is, if possible, a greater sin, an almost unpardonable offense. Knowing the crisis at hand, we should be awake to the opportunity.

#### **b. Cast off the works of darkness**

The people of the Advent should “cast off the works of darkness,” and “put on the armor of light.”

There are many wicked things that people do under the cover of night that they would be ashamed to do in the open light of day. That is the reason we should come out into the light of the gospel, so that we may not be tempted to do the works of darkness. Christ said at one place: “And this the judgment, that light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his deeds should be re-proved. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest that they have been wrought in God.” That is the secret of

all sin: “Men love darkness rather than light.” The light exposes their evil deeds; hence they skulk about in the darkness.

Not so should the people of the Advent deport themselves. They should behave in such a way as to be able to bear inspection in the radiant light of day. They should “put on the armor of light.” The thief wears the old black garments that correspond to the darkness in which he perpetrates his crimes; but the honest man wears clothes and carries tools that need no darkness to hide them. He walks openly and honestly. He is square with God and with his fellowmen. There is nothing sly and skulking about his conduct, and his garments carry no shams and disguises. His motto is that of the apostle, who loved the light of day: “Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”

### **c. Walk honestly**

The people of the Advent should “walk honestly, as in the day.”

An old proverb says, “An honest man is the noblest work of God.” Who does not admire and respect a man who is genuine — pure gold through and through, with no veneer, no sham, no pretense; just simply upright all the day and night long; the man you can trust out of your sight just as well as in your sight; whose word is as good as his note; who is always truthful; who never equivocates or prevaricates; who says to your face just what he says behind your back. He is a man of God, a man who belongs by the new birth to the Advent Season, and walks in its radiance.

The word “honestly” is also translated “becomingly.” Perhaps that is the nearest we can come to the original word that the inspired apostle used. How we like people who act becomingly! Whatever they do corresponds with the noblest principles. They act worthy of people who trust and serve God and have accepted the grace of the Saviour. Whether they are old or young, their conduct is always becoming. They never misbehave. Never do they laugh and whisper and engage in other levity in God’s house. In society they can have much genuine joy, but their actions are always such as are becoming to Christian men and women and young people. They walk “worthy of their vocation.” Paul is rather fond of this word “becoming.” He says

(Phil. 1:27): “Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ.” “As becometh saints,” he says in another place. And still again, “which becometh women professing godliness.” The aged women are to be “in behavior as becometh holiness.” In his great chapter on Christian love he says that love “doth not behave itself unseemly,” which is the opposite of becoming conduct. Of well-behaved boys and girls we say “they act so becomingly.”

The Psalmist joins in the same eulogy of this beautiful virtue, for he says, “Holiness becometh Thy house,” and also, “Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright.”

Yes, Christian people always act in a becoming way; they have “good morals and gentle manners;” they are polite and courteous. All the sweet Christian graces are included in that word “becoming,” and even the more sturdy and heroic virtues are “becoming” to the children of God.

#### **d. “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.”**

The people of God are also exhorted in our text to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ.”

What is meant by that figure of speech? It means that we should put on His righteousness, which we may have as a free gift of His grace through faith, and which is the ground of our salvation. It also means that we should put on the true ethical life which He will impart to us by His Spirit in regeneration. When we do this, we will also heed the last injunction of the text, namely, to “take no forethought for the lusts of the flesh.” People who are thus clad both outwardly and inwardly will live purely. And such people ought we, the children of the Advent, to be.

But our text enjoins not only the things that God’s people should do, but also —

## **2. The Things They Should Not Do.**

### **a. “Not in rioting and drunkenness.”**

How unbecoming to Christians are excesses of eating and drinking! For a person to make a glutton of himself is most ruinous and disgusting. The man who is given to too much appetite would better, as Solomon says, put

the knife to his throat, for he ruins his digestive organs, and unfits himself for the work in life to which God calls him. He becomes stupid and drowsy. He cannot work well with his mind nor with his hands. There is intemperance in eating as well as in drinking, and both should be avoided by Christian people.

Then, when excessive drinking is joined with excessive eating, rioting is apt to be the result. God pity the people who go off on drunken revels, and spend their money and that of their families for that which is worse than naught! The safe thing for young people, and for older ones, too, is to leave intoxicating liquor alone; then there will be no danger of their going down to the reveller's disgrace and death. No young man who began to tipple ever intended to become an inebriate. No; he thought he had a strong will and "could leave liquor alone when he wanted to." The only trouble with that policy is, by and by the alcohol, which is a poison, undermines the foundation of the will, and then the man is a victim and a slave to the drink habit. Respecting the use of intoxicating liquor as a beverage, the safest motto is, "Better not." Not only for one's own safety should one abstain from such indulgence, but also for the sake of others, taking Paul's charitable concession as our guiding principle: "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." Surely this passage will apply to the drinking customs, habits and dangers of America, if it ever had a pertinent application.

However, evil as excess in drinking is, it not all that is meant in our text. Rightly does Dr. Henry Eyster Jacobs apply the passage in the Lutheran Commentary: "All eating and drinking that prevents the energetic discharge of the duties of our callings, that shortens life or impairs health, and, above all, that chills or dulls the spirit of devotion and interferes with prayer is meant."

#### **b. Christian people should also avoid "chambering and wantonness."**

What is meant by the unusual word "chambering?" It is an archaic English word which means licentiousness. The word wantonness also means sexual and other moral laxity. These two words include, as Dr. Jacobs says, "licentious deeds and impurity of speech and conduct." Then he quotes the trenchant words of Calvin: "If these be so disgraceful that even carnal men are

ashamed to commit them before the eyes of their fellowmen, we ought to refrain from them perpetually, as those who live in God's light, even when we are withdrawn from the sight of men." The virtue of chastity must characterize those who live in the light of the Advent of our holy Redeemer.

### **c. "Strive and jealousy."**

Two more things should be shunned by Christian people: "Strife and jealousy." If people who have accepted the Christ of love and humility cannot dwell together in peace, who will be able to do so? How often Christ exhorted His disciples to be one, and to love one another! Nothing seemed to trouble the apostle Paul more than the schisms among the people to whom he ministered. To his mind, strife among Christ's followers was unseemly, utterly inconsistent with the spirit of their profession.

Strife is often the result of envy. And nothing is more foolish or unnecessary than envy. "Thou shalt not covet," occurs in two of the commandments of the decalogue. If other people are more gifted than we, ought we not to rejoice rather than be jealous? With their gifts consecrated to God's cause, how much good they may do! If all persons had as meager talents as you and I have, I fear the world would not make much progress toward the kingdom of God. We ought to be so noble-minded that we would rejoice in every man's success, no matter how far he may outstrip us. Oh! let us put away all petty jealousy and strife. They are unworthy of the people of the Advent, whose minds should be set to higher music. "Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition," is an exhortation that ought to be heeded, especially when it means ambition for mere worldly honors and emoluments. "He that would be the greatest among you, let him be the servant of all." After worldly power and applause do the Gentiles seek. It should not be so among us Christians. "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Our text for this morning has a special historical value, for it caused the turning point in the life of the great Church father, St. Augustine, who had been living a wanton life. I quote his own words from his "Confessions," as they are given by Dr. Jacobs in the Lutheran Commentary:

"I heard from a neighboring house a voice, as of a boy or girl, I know not, chanting and oft repeating, 'Take up and read, take up and read.' Instantly my countenance altered. I began to think most intently whether chil-

dren were wont in any kind of play to sing such words; nor could I remember ever to have heard the like. So, checking the torrent of my tears, I arose, interpreting it to be no other than the command of God to open the book and read the first chapter I should find. Eagerly I returned to the place where Alypius was sitting, for there I had laid the volume of the apostle when I arose thence. I seized it, opened it, and in silence read the passage on which my eyes first fell: ‘Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envyings; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision to fulfill the lusts of the flesh.’ No further would I read; nor needed I: for instantly at the end of this sentence, by a light as it were of serenity infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away.” Thus the Word of God was made effective by the conversion of a great sinner into a great saint. So it will ever be, if men let it have its right of way. “My Word,” says the Lord, “shall not return unto me void.” So, O Lord, let Thy Word ever “run and be glorified,” in the conversion of sinners and the renovation of saints! Amen.

## **2. The Advent Spirit Of Unity. Rom. 15:4-13. The Second Sunday In Advent.**

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to 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.

Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God. Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. (Romans 15:4-13)

IN LAST SUNDAY'S SERVICE our text led us to speak for a time on strife and jealousy in the Church. In today's lesson the grace of unity is strongly emphasized. Nothing could be more apropos in the Advent Season than the subject of Christian unity and love, for in Christ we, His disciples, are all bound together in bonds that should never be severed. So our theme for today will be "The Advent Spirit of Unity." The key phrase of the text is found in the fifth verse: "according to Christ." That means that Jesus Christ Himself is the unifying bond for all Christians. Let us gather the whole les-



son around that central thought. At the very beginning the text suggests a very important consideration:

## **I. Christian Unity Regarding The Holy Scriptures.**

Note the very first verse of the text: “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, we might have hope.” The conjunction “for” connects our lesson with what goes before. Paul had just said that the strong should bear the infirmities of the weak; that each one should try to please his neighbor unto edification, for even Christ pleased not Himself. To prove this Paul quotes from Psalm 119:9 (which he applies to Christ): “The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell upon Me.” After this quotation, he adds the important thought that all Scripture was written for our instruction. Observe that he puts it “very definitely:” “For whatsoever things were written aforetime.”

Here he referred to the Old Testament, because his quotation was from it. He used the conjunction “for” logically. He asserts positively, therefore, that everything in the Old Testament was intended for our instruction. Paul is logically consistent with himself, for he says elsewhere (2 Tim. 3:16): “All Scripture is inspired of God” (God-breathed), and here again he refers to the Old Testament. Paul was not a hacking critic of the Holy Scriptures; he believed that every part of them had some value; some more than others, of course, but all were “profitable for instruction, for reproof, for correction, for discipline in righteousness, that the man of God might be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

“Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our instruction.” That was the rugged faith and theology of Paul. On that point all Christians should be united. We should stand for the whole Bible, for God’s full revelation, for its plenary inspiration. On this basis, if we Christians will all stand together firmly, we shall be fundamentally united. True, we may differ in some of our interpretations, as men always have done; but that is something far different from differing about whether this portion of the Bible is God’s Word and that portion is not. If we all agree to accept the Bible in its entirety, then the divergences among us will only be as to the

proper understanding of the text of Scripture; and as soon as one is convinced as to the real meaning of the Scripture, he will admit it, and thus much agreement can be reached, simply by being thoroughly honest in our interpretations.

But, my friends, when we take to picking and choosing, and hacking the Bible to pieces, we can never be united. That is rationalism, and people who depend merely on human reason, can never agree. Note how the human philosophies differ; how the philosophy of Plato undermines that of Democritus; how Plato criticizes Socrates, and Aristotle differs from both of his great predecessors; how Kant and Spinoza, the first a theist, the second a pantheist, destroy each other's foundations. In the world of human science how fundamentally men disagree! So there will be endless disputation in the Church if we shred the Bible to pieces and depend alone on the rationalizing intellect. But if we agree with Paul's conception of the Bible, namely, that "all Scripture is inspired of God," there will be harmony among us Christians to that extent, and then some hope of final agreement on everything that is essential to salvation and the evangelical faith may be cherished.

No; we do not need an "expurgated" Bible. The Holy Spirit has done all the revising of the Bible that is necessary. Nor do we need "The Shorter Bible," which Dr. Charles Foster Kent, a liberalistic critic, recently issued, in which he professes to include everything that is "of vital interest and practical value to the present age," and then omits some of the most fundamental and precious passages of the New Testament. What will this rationalist do for the Christian people of the world? He will simply introduce discord. Even now some people are criticizing him severely for his hacking up of the Word of God, while others, who claim to belong to the "scholarly" crowd, are giving him fulsome praise. Does this method make for unity in the Christian Church?

All parts of the Bible have their value. The genealogical tables, which seem to be so dull to many people, have their historical importance, showing how the human family developed along real lines, not along fanciful and mythological lines. The repetitions have their value, giving a different shade of meaning or adding some needed explication. Why, even the apparent discrepancies increase the worth of the good Book, for they make us study it all the more carefully, in order that we may discover the inner and higher harmony of its statements and teaching; and then, when we find, as

we so often do, that there is, after all, no contradiction, our faith in the Bible becomes more firmly rooted, and we have an added incentive to study it more thoroughly and profoundly. Why, my brethren, if the Bible were an easy book like a primer or a first reader, the world would have tossed it aside long ago in disgust and weariness. But, since it contains depths and difficulties, the profoundest scholars, as well as the rest of us, are still intensely interested in delving into its fathomless meaning. Thus it becomes a book of perennial interest and value. So instead of pulverizing it, let us study its precious contents all the more, and thus truly experience that “whatsoever things were written in the old times were written for our instruction.” And this will we do if we think “according to Christ Jesus,” who fully and undoubtingly accepted the Bible of His day, the Old Testament Scriptures, as God’s Holy Word.

Our text indicates another ground of Christian unity —

## **II. Unity In Glorifying God.**

“Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to 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.” Note that “according to Christ Jesus” is the unifying principle here, as it was in the previous section.

When people accept the Christ of the Advent and the Incarnation, they will all unite in ascribing true glory to God. Christ said to the Father, “I have glorified Thy name.” If the Spirit of Christ dwells within us, we will do what He did — glorify God. We will do so with both our hearts and our mouths. In our thoughts God will have the uppermost and foremost place, and we will seek to bring them into tune with His thoughts. Nor will we keep our light under a bushel or a bed; we will praise God with our lips in the sanctuary, letting our light shine before men that they may glorify His holy name. “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Yes, Jesus Christ unites us to God, and thus unites us with one another. “The tie that binds our hearts in Christian love” is the revelation of God’s goodness and grace in Jesus Christ. Do you ask how this occurs? It is very plainly set forth in the Bible, where Jesus said: “I am the way, and the truth,

and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.” Then He adds: “I and the Father are one;” “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father also.” Paul taught the same Christian theology: “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.” Yes, “the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath revealed Him.” Thus we can know God only through Jesus Christ. We cannot discover Him through Buddha, or Confucius, or Zoroaster, or Mohammed, or human philosophy, or natural science, or rationalistic processes. All these lead either into darkness or very dim light, and so dissever men, and make them controversial. But when they accept Jesus Christ, as He has been depicted in the Scriptures, they find God indeed and in truth and in a real experience, and that puts the same thought into their minds, the same feeling into their hearts, the same melody upon their lips. “With one mind and one mouth they glorify God.” Note, please, how John, the revelator puts it, when he describes the praises of the inhabitants of heaven; they always give their praise to “Him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever.” If the Church of our Lord would be united, all her members must praise and worship God “according to Christ Jesus,” the Redeemer of the Advent.

When people are saved through Christ and possess His mind, there will be unity among them of still another kind —

### **III. Unity Between The Jews And The Gentiles.**

This thesis is expressly taught in our text, and the argument is expanded: “Wherefore receive ye one another, even as Christ ’also received you, to the glory of God; for I say that Christ hath been made a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, that He might confirm the promises unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy.” Do you not see the point here? Christ came from the stock of the Jews that He might save them, and that through them He might save all the rest of the world. Abraham was chosen in order that in him all the nations of the earth might be blessed. As Jesus Himself said, “Salvation is of the Jews;” but it was not intended to be confined to the Jews, for He also said to His apostles, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation.”

In the morning's text Paul further elucidates this point by appealing to the promises of the Old Testament, proving, by the way, that he accepted it as God's infallible Word. First he quotes from Psalm 18:49: "Therefore will I confess Thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto Thy name." Practically the same is found in Sam. 22:50. Then he cites Deut. 32:43: "Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people." And again Ps. 117:1: "Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles, and let all the people praise Him." And most pointed of all Isa. 11:10: "There shall be the root of Jesse, and He that ariseth to rule over the Gentiles — on Him shall the Gentiles hope."

All these passages prove clearly that it was God's purpose to bring the Gentiles to Himself through His dispensation of grace in the Messiah. He had a "chosen people," the Jews, not merely for exclusive possession, not for His "clients," as one liberalistic critic puts it, but as His disciplined agents for bearing grace and salvation to the world through His incarnate Son. How otherwise God could have redeemed the world no rationalist or freethinker has ever been able to say. So when Christ, the universal Saviour, came into the world and made atonement for sin, "the middle wall of partition" between the Jews and the Gentiles was broken down, and by accepting Him as the Redeemer all were to be one. On this doctrine Paul insists (Gal. 5:6): "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision: but faith working through love." Col. 3:11: "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free; but Christ is all and in all."

Is it not true that, if the Jews had accepted Christ, and then the Gentiles through them had also accepted Him, there would have been a beautiful and indissoluble union between them? They would have all been one in Christ. There would have been no difference. All believers would have grown on the same olive-tree. How much trouble that would have saved the world! The Jews never would have persecuted the Christians, as they did in the apostolic days; and the terrible persecutions of the Jews by Gentiles would never have occurred. There would have been no pogroms. Then all might have said with the Psalmist: "Behold, how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

And even now, if the Jews will accept Christ by simple faith, and the Gentiles will likewise trust, honor and love Him, the two races will come together in the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. Why should it not be so? And, moreover, the union of Jews and Gentiles in Jesus Christ would

be but a prophecy of the time when all national and racial strife and jealousy would cease, and universal good would reign; the time which the prophet foretold and for which all Christians ardently hope: "And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go up and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

All that will surely come to pass when all people are united "according to Christ Jesus." Then all will be joined in the bonds of more than mere human love. Now the nations still learn war; even their education, their culture, their scientific discoveries are employed to render the conflict all the more destructive and murderous. What a perversion of God-given talents! What a profanation of ethical and spiritual life! How is the divine image in man broken down! The very things that are intended for man's progress in the arts of peace and civilization are diverted to the purpose of disintegration. It can no longer be so when men are united "according to Christ," who has taught us the doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man. Let the nations get the temper and mind of "the Prince of peace;" then the angels' Advent song will resound around the earth: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men."

"O God of love, O King of peace,  
Make wars throughout the world to cease;  
The wrath of sinful man restrain;  
Give peace, O God, give peace again.

"Remember, Lord, Thy works of old,  
The wonders that our fathers told;  
Remember not our sin's dark stain;  
Give peace, O God, give peace again.

"Whom shall we trust but Thee, O Lord?  
Where rest but on Thy faithful Word?  
None ever called on Thee in vain;  
Give peace, O God, give peace again.

"Where saints and angels dwell above,  
All hearts are knit in holy love:  
O bind us in that heavenly chain;  
Give peace, O God, give peace again."

## IV. Unity In Faith.

Observe the impressive and rhythmic flow of the closing words of our text: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the. Holy Ghost!"

"Joy and peace in believing!" Nothing infuses such pure joy and perfect peace into the heart as does faith in Jesus Christ. All history proves it. No one ever came to Christ in simple, childlike faith whose heart was not filled with joy and peace. What a change for the better faith in Christ made in Paul! Before his conversion, he was filled with bitterness and revenge. Surely then no peace and joy dwelt in his heart. Those virtues do not abide in the same heart with hatred. But after his conversion he wrote this beautiful text of triumph and comfort and composure. Do you suppose for one moment that Paul could have written this benediction, "The-God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing," while he was breathing out threatening on his way to Damascus to arrest the disciples of Christ, and bring them back in fetters to Jerusalem? But after his conversion, what a transformation! Then he writes: "Rejoice, and again I say, Rejoice;" "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Last Sunday we told you about the conversion of Augustine. If you should read his marvelous "Confessions," you would see that he never had real joy and peace until he accepted Christ by faith. While his trials did not end then, for he was afterward engaged in many a conflict for the truth, yet he could always say, "I have found joy and peace in believing." So you might call the long roll of the converted and believing, and all would bear the same testimony. That is precisely what Christ meant when He said: "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, and believe in Me." Yes, faith is the panacea.

And, mark you, doubt never brings joy and peace. For a time the great scientist, G. J. Romanes, fell into skepticism. How great was his distress during that time! All joy and peace had fled from his life. Afterward he was brought back to faith in the Bible and in Christ, and then his writings abound in expressions of the utmost joy and assurance. Professor Clifford affords a melancholy instance of a man who lost his faith. His wail of despondency, "The Great Companion is dead," has become almost classic in the literature of pessimism. He meant that for him God existed no more, and hence all exhilaration and rebound had been taken out of his life. No, no, the note of joy never runs through the literature of unbelief. Skepticism depletes the springs of life, and robs the heart of its joy.

Not only do joy and peace, but also hope results from believing. "That ye may abound in hope," says the apostle in our text. He says elsewhere: "And now abideth faith, hope and love." Those who have faith in Christ possess a hope that is sure and steadfast and that penetrateth to that which is "beyond the veil," even to the eternal throne of God. "Experience worketh patience, and patience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed." At one place the apostle says: "We are saved by hope." He does not mean that we are saved from our sins by hope, for from them we are saved only by grace through faith; but we are saved from gloom, discouragement and despair by hope. It is a wonderful grace with which to buoy up the soul. May the star of Christian hope ever shine undimmed and undimmable in our hearts! Doubt kills hope, but faith kindles its fires and makes it radiant.

And now all this comes, as the text says, "through the power of the Holy Ghost." When men are endued with spiritual power, they have faith, peace, joy and efficiency. All these elements make for concord in the Church. You cannot have it without them, while with them you can have nothing else. Where discord and ill-will prevail, whether in the Church or in the world, whether among individuals or among nations, there the mind of Christ does not abide; there the power of the Holy Ghost is not known. Thus our Advent text for today is the remedy, the sole remedy, for the dissonance of the world and the discontent of the human heart. May all of us know who is the Great Physician, and go to Him for healing. "Is there a balm in Gilead? Is there a physician there?" I reply: "There is! and that Physician is Jesus Christ; and that balm is His redeeming and regenerating grace."



"My gracious Master and my God,  
Assist me to proclaim;  
To spread through all the earth abroad  
The honors of Thy name.

"Jesus, the name that charms our fears,  
That bids our sorrows cease:  
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,  
'Tis life and health and peace.

"He breaks the power of canceled sin,  
He sets the prisoner free;  
His blood, can make the foulest clean,  
His blood avails for me.

"Look unto Him, ye nations; own  
Your God, ye fallen race;  
Look, and be saved through faith alone,  
Be justified by grace."

# 3. The Advent Rule Of Judgment. 1 Cor. 4:1-5. The Third Sunday In Advent.

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God. (1 Corinthians 4:1-5)

IT WOULD SEEM that our Epistle for today, the third Sunday in Advent, deals principally with ministers. The whole context is an argument showing that people should not quarrel about their preachers, nor compare them unfavorably with one another, nor pass too critical a judgment upon them. That is the reason Paul mentions Peter, Apollos and himself in the preceding chapter and in the latter part of this chapter. The Corinthians had been disputing about their ministers. One preferred Paul, another Apollos, and another Peter. But Paul rebukes this unseemly strife. He says: "Who is Paul? And who is Apollos? They are only ministers by whom ye believed on Christ. I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth; but God who giveth the increase." How true it is that, if people would think more about God and the gospel than about either the faults or the merits of their ministers, the Church would make much more progress!

Now while the lesson for the day primarily refers to ministers, and we shall have to deal with them first, yet it also has a general application, and gives us a good general rule on the subject of passing judgment. You will find that our judgment of everybody is to be a generous one. Let us deal with the several divisions of the text in their order.

## I. How We Are To View Ministers.

“Let a man so account of us as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.” That means that you are to regard us preachers as the servants and stewards of Christ. It is not the looks of the minister that ought to be the people’s chief concern, nor his dress, nor his voice, nor his gestures, nor his age, nor his family, whether it be large or small. These are matters of some moment, true enough, but they are not primary; at least, they should not be, though sometimes they seem to be made so.

But what is the matter of first importance in our estimate of ministers? It is this: they are the servants and stewards of Jesus Christ. They are primarily responsible to Him, and only secondarily to the members of the Church. He has called them to their vocation, and they are first of all responsible to Him. Suppose that all church people would look upon their ministers in this light, would there be so much bickering about small and unimportant things? The congregation should ask this question mainly and constantly: “Is our pastor faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ? Does he preach and act in such a way as to meet His approval? If he does, then we ought to be satisfied. If he does not, it is our duty to tell him of his fault.” What a difference that would make in people’s attitude toward their pastors?

And what is included in being a minister and steward of the Lord Jesus? Certainly it is to preach the Word of God with fidelity. There is Christ’s direct teaching in the gospels; how valuable it is! How necessary to salvation! Especially when He taught that He came to seek and to save the lost, to “give His life a ransom for the many,” to reveal God’s love to the human race; also that men are to be born again, to love all men, even their enemies, to walk in the narrow way, to pray and not faint, to watch against temptation, to wait patiently for His second coming — oh, how many important things Jesus taught and declared that the preacher should faithfully proclaim! He also told His apostles that He would send the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth. This promise was fulfilled in the Acts, the Epistles and the Revelation. So these portions of the New Testament are Christ’s teaching just as the gospels are, because they were inspired by Him through the Holy Ghost. Therefore the true minister is Christ’s servant and steward to proclaim the whole of the New Testament as God’s authoritative Word. He should not want to preach a “Shorter Bible,” but that “all Scripture is in-

spired of God.” Moreover, Christ always accepted and taught the Old Testament as the Word of God; He never criticized it, or eliminated any part of it; never so much as hinted that it was made up largely of myths, legends, folklore and traditions. The Holy Spirit, whom Christ poured upon His apostles, also led them to treat the Old Testament as a revelation of divine authority, and to declare that it was all divinely inspired (see 2 Tim. 3:16, 17 and 2 Pet. 1:19-21). Now, if we ministers are faithful servants and stewards of Christ, we will faithfully proclaim and defend His entire Word; and will especially hold Him up as the center and foundation of that Word. When the minister thus loyally preaches the Word, the people ought to commend him; nor should they ever find fault with him when the truth of the Bible rebukes their conduct. In such cases it would be far better to repent and amend than to become angry at the preacher.

There is one phrase in this first verse of the text that requires further elucidation: “Stewards of the mysteries of God.” What special duty does this impose upon the minister of the gospel? First, it means that he should guard those mysteries, the things in God’s Word that cannot be understood by the human intellect, and should teach people that they should not pry too curiously into them, and try to discover what God intends to keep in His own secret counsels until the proper time comes to make them plain. He should especially teach people not to reject the Bible because they cannot understand everything it says and requires. Jesus gave such injunction to Nicodemus when He said to him, “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.” That is, do not stumble over the mystery of the new birth. You cannot understand even the blowing of the wind; why should you demand a perfect understanding of the mysterious working of the Holy Spirit in the human heart? The minister should encourage the people who puzzle and fret over the unsolved problems of life and providence by telling them of Paul’s comforting assurance: “Now we see through a glass darkly, but then we shall see face to face; now we know in part, but then we shall know even also as we are known.” God gives us the gracious promise that the time will come when all our perplexing problems will be solved. This is one meaning of the phrase, “the mysteries of God.”

Another meaning is that the minister should study the Word of God profoundly, and should bring forth and make clear to the people all those wonderful things that God has revealed, but which require thought and education to decipher. He should bring treasures both new and old out of God’s

storehouse of revealed truth. His preaching should be instructive. People should go to the church service to learn; not to learn about science, politics, sociology, and other matters that are important, but that should be studied elsewhere than in the sanctuary; they should desire to learn more and more about God's will and ways and grace as they are made known in His Word. When people can truthfully say of their ministers: "He explains many things about the Bible and life's problems that we never understood before; he is a most instructive preacher, and his instruction is interesting and worth while" — when they can say that, it is one of the best tributes that can be paid him. People thus nourished on the Word of God will "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." They will be built up "in their most holy faith." They will know why and what they believe; they will be intelligent Christians. "Stewards of the divine mysteries" — what a sacred and important office is that! No wonder Paul, after he had used that suggestive phrase, thought of what it implied; and that is what is next taught in the text: "It is required of stewards that one be found faithful." That is —

## **II. How Ministers Should View Their Own Occupation.**

Having said that they are "stewards of the divine mysteries," Paul could not help applying the expression to himself and his fellow-ministers. What is a steward? He is an employee; he is working for some one else; his employer puts important trusts and responsibilities into his hands. His principal duty is to perform his work with care and fidelity. Paul keenly felt this responsibility. He exclaimed: "Necessity is laid upon me. Yea, woe is me if I preach not the gospel!" He was ready to "spend and be spent" in order to carry the good news to the world. Again and again he called himself "the bond-servant" of Jesus Christ. He said: "We are not own; we are bought with a price." His chief anxiety was to discharge his full obligation to his divine Employer.

This is wholesome exhortation for us ministers. Sometimes ministers are careless. They think more of their ease and comfort than of the kingdom and the Church. They neglect many duties in their parishes. They do only the easy things, and slight the more onerous work. They expect people to wait on them. They want to be ministered unto, rather than to minister.

They forget that the disciple is to be as his Master, who said, “I am among you as He that serveth.” Sometimes ministers are interested in too many side issues, which absorb too much of their thought and time. Now-a-days a man cannot be a successful minister and a farmer or a business man at the same time. If he takes care of the Church which has called and employed him, he will have enough to do; and he will see many things, besides, that lack of time and strength will prevent him from doing. A steward of the mysteries of God ought to be a man of one vocation and only one. If he has an avocation, it should not consume his time and attention, but should simply afford him needed recreation to enable him to return to his real work with recuperated powers and added zeal. Sometimes the minister’s mind must “lie fallow” for a brief time in order to gather strength for greater productivity. But, “this one thing I do,” should be his motto. “It is required of stewards that a man be found faithful.”

And now Paul gives a curious and unexpected turn to his thought. That is one thing, by the way, that makes his writings so interesting; you can never tell what he will say next. You may be sure, however, that it will be the thing that ought to be said, whether it agrees with your logical praxis or not. So, having declared that a steward must be faithful, he makes this reservation: “But with me it is a very small matter that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment” (literally, “by man’s day,” meaning man’s day of judgment): “yea, I judge not mine own self.” This leads us to our third main division:

### **III. How To View Human Judgments.**

This was plain speech on Paul’s part. The Corinthians had been quite critical about their ministers. One preferred Peter, another Apollos (he was “so eloquent”), others Paul, and still others declared that they cared nothing for the preachers; they were “of Christ.”

All this quibbling Paul tries to correct. He says in effect: “We are ministers of Christ and stewards of God’s mysteries, and though we are to be faithful, we do not stand before any human judgment bar, but only before God’s tribunal. We are directly responsible to Him, and He will be our Judge.” Thus Paul’s teaching correlates with that of His Lord and ours, who says, “Judge not that ye be not judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be

condemned; for with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” At another place Paul says: “But thou, why dost thou judge thy brother? or thou again, why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God... Let us not therefore judge one another any more; but judge ye this rather, that no man put a stumbling block in his brother’s way, nor an occasion of falling.”

Sound and wholesome admonition, surely! There are far too many people who want to usurp God’s judgment throne. They gossip about their neighbors, pronounce censorious judgment upon them, and thus keep the community in a constant turmoil. There are men today who seem to be only too ready to send some of their fellowmen to perdition. We have heard them make such declarations. As if any man, however wicked he may be, should be sent to everlasting punishment on a poor, fallible human judgment! The very fact that some people are so presumptuous and rash is proof positive that they have not the Spirit of the good and loving God, who declares that He is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Nay, let us not be too free to pronounce the verdict of condemnation upon any of our fellowmen, lest the judgment we give them will be meted out to us. We are not competent to judge; we know too little even to judge ourselves accurately, to say nothing of pronouncing judgment upon a fellow-creature, into whose heart we cannot penetrate.

But Paul goes even further. So far from being judged by others, he says: “Yea, I judge not mine own self.” He was glad that he did not need to pronounce a verdict even on himself. How could he determine his precise status before God? He knew not the depths of his heart and desire; he could not disentangle the skein of his own motives, nor can any man. While he says that just then he knew nothing against himself; “yet,” he adds, “I am not thereby justified.” He might be mistaken; he might not be as innocent as he thought himself to be. So he says: “He that judgeth me is the Lord.” What a lesson in humility we have here! Paul does not feel competent to be even his own judge, but leaves all judgment in the Lord’s hands. To a man of such a frame of mind Christ’s beatitude would aptly apply: “Blessed are the modest in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (I have given Dr. Moffatt’s translation.)

We are thus brought to the key of the whole text, which teaches us most pertinently —

## IV. How To View The Divine Judgments.

Let us quote Paul: "But He that judgeth me is the Lord. Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart; and then each of us shall have his meed of praise from God."

Here the caution is repeated that men should "judge nothing before the time." That would be premature and presumptuous, for no one can understand all the issues involved in men's destiny until the great final assize. It would be unfortunate if any of us would have to submit at the last to limited and fallible human judgments. Even in the ordinary affairs of life how often we are mistaken in our judgments of one another and of ourselves! Sometimes we are too harsh, especially in judging others; sometimes we are too lenient, especially in judging ourselves. Our verdicts are apt to be colored by our subjective prejudices and feelings. When you analyze your own decisions closely, how hard it is to be perfectly judicial! Besides, it is impossible for us to go back into the motives of men unless they make them perfectly clear to us by their words or conduct, and so we can very seldom find the true basis of judgment, which, after all, is the intention on the part of the actor.

Still again, men ought not to desire to assume the responsibility of pronouncing final judgment on any human being. If we could avoid it, we should never want to decide another person's temporal welfare: how much less the eternal destiny of a human soul!

Let us now turn to our text to see who is competent to be our judge. "It bids us to "judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come;" then it proves His competency to be the judge: "Who will also bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the heart." How many things in human life belong to "the hidden things of darkness!" We cannot see them; we may not even suspect their existence. In your own city or community there are thousands of things hidden away in dark places of which you know nothing. That being so, how would you be competent to pronounce a correct verdict upon them and the people connected with them? But God can see in the darkness as well as the light. The things that occur in dark places, remote from human ken, He knows as well as the things that take place in the open light of day. No judgment would be just



and complete which did not include the deeds done in the darkness just as Well as those done in the light. So God is the only being who is capable of making a righteous adjudication in all cases. So at the great final assize He will bring these dark things out into the clear light; then all rational beings shall see that His judgment is all-inclusive, and therefore just.

The same principle holds in the next phrase of the text, which says that God shall “make manifest the counsels of the heart.” Let us remember that it is the motive, not the act, that decides the morality of the actor. The act may be right in itself, but if the actor performed it with a bad motive, he is still an immoral man. The act may be wrong in itself, yet if the actor performed it with a pure motive, he cannot be charged with guilt. So men need a judge who can go back to the secret “counsels of the heart.” God alone is able to do that. Hence God should be the final arbiter of men’s destinies. Let the hymn-writer enforce the lesson:

“Lo, the Book exactly worded,  
Wherein all hath been recorded;  
Thence shall judgment be awarded.  
When the Judge His seat attaineth,  
And each hidden deed arraigneth,  
Nothing unavenged remaineth.”

Are you not glad that there is to be a final adjustment of all the affairs of time? There are at present so many inequalities in the world, so many mis-judgments. Will it always be so? No; the Bible tells us plainly of the final judgment; the time when all wrongs will be made right; when even-handed justice shall be done; when the wicked and tyrannical shall receive their dues; when the righteous poor and oppressed shall come into their own; and when, as the Bible so beautifully puts it, “there shall be new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.” The time may seem to be delayed; more than one wronged person may have to exclaim, “How long, O Lord? how long?” But “the promises of God are not slack as some men count slackness;” they are yea and amen to him that believeth. For God’s people it will not be so terrible a day; indeed, it will be a welcome day.

"Lo, He comes, with clouds descending,  
Once for favored sinners slain!  
Thousand thousand saints attending,  
Swell the triumph of His train:  
Alleluiah! God appears on earth to reign.

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"Now redemption long expected,  
See in solemn pomp appear;  
All His saints, by men rejected,  
Now shall meet Him in the air;  
Alleluiah!  
See the day of God appear.

"Yea, Amen, let all adore Thee,  
High on Thine eternal throne!  
Saviour, take the power and glory,  
Claim the kingdom for Thine own.  
Alleluiah!  
On Thy head we place the crown."

# 4. An Advent Quartet Of Graces. Phil. 4:4-7. The Fourth Sunday In Advent.

Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:4-7)

SOME SUBJECTS are especially appropriate for the Advent season. In view of the approaching Christmas festivities, in which we celebrate the joyful event of Christ's nativity, it would not be consistent to dwell on sorrowful themes. At this glad time we should not strike life's minor chords, but the major ones. Our Epistle for the day is a ringing one; it is meant to put joy and stimulus into our hearts. We shall gather up its chief conceptions under the theme, "An Advent Quartet of Graces." Let us dwell upon them in the simple order given in the text.

## I. Joy.

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, Rejoice," exclaimed Paul. That is certainly striking a jubilant note. In order to put as much verve into the injunction as possible, he repeats the command to rejoice. In the first verse of the third chapter he says the same thing, "Rejoice in the Lord."

The circumstances in which Paul was placed at the time of this writing are worth considering. Was he a free man? Was he in a comfortable physical condition — one that would naturally fill his soul with joy? No, he was in prison in Rome. For a time he thought he was forsaken by all his friends, even those to whom he had first brought the good news of salvation. Then

some gifts were sent to him through Epaphroditus from the Philippians, and their receipt was the occasion of his writing this affectionate epistle to them. This small token of their kindness filled him with joy and supplied his immediate need. Yet he was a prisoner in Rome, and knew not when he might be brought before his accusers and put to death as a martyr.

But the prospect did not daunt him. He would not give himself up to gloomy thoughts. He wrote to his friends at Philippi, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content." No weak repining on account of his hard lot came from his Roman dungeon. This does not mean that Paul was not sensitive to pain. There are indications in many places in his addresses and letters that he was a man of a refined and sensitive nature, and therefore it hurt him to be maltreated, and insulted, and compelled to live in the midst of coarse and unwholesome surroundings.

And yet, in spite of circumstances that would make most men gloomy and bitter, he preserved his poise of mind, and was filled with contentment and joy. In addition, he gave himself to cheering the Philippians in their affliction. What a brave soul he was! How full of courage and cheer! He affords an example to all of us. His contented spirit in the midst of affliction rebukes our despondency and impatience in the midst of our freedom and plenty.

But the secret of his joy — what was it? "Rejoice in the Lord." He did not say, "Rejoice in the World," for the world was against him, and he was in prison. Earthly pleasures were denied him. Had he depended on worldly good, as so many people do, his lot would have been gloomy indeed. But he had God to fall back upon. God had not forsaken him. God would be faithful to His promises, and would cause the apostle's afflictions "to work out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Paul had learned, even in his prison cell, to lean upon his Lord, and draw from His inexhaustible fullness the water of life and joy. If we only could and would find our joy in the Lord, we would never be discontented, no matter what might be our surroundings. The trouble with so many of us is we depend on finite things for our happiness, and they are so soon exhausted. But if we would learn to depend upon the Infinite One, our joy would always be complete. Let us not draw from the little urn of earthly pleasure for our satisfaction. Let us learn to go to Him who said, "If you drink of the water that I shall give you, you shall never thirst again; it will be like a well of water within you springing up unto eternal life."

"O, hope of every contrite heart!  
O, joy of all the meek!  
To those who fall, how kind Thou art!  
How good to those who seek!

"And those who find Thee find a bliss  
Nor tongue nor pen can show:  
The love of Jesus — what it is  
None but His loved ones know.

“Jesus, our only joy be Thou,  
As Thou our prize wilt be;  
Jesus, be Thou our glory now,  
And through eternity.”

The note of joy is one of the cardinal marks of the Christian religion. There is only one reason why worldly people think that Christianity is calculated to take all joy out of life, and that is, they know only worldly pleasures, therefore they think that if they give them up, they can have no joy whatever. What a sad mistake! While the Christian religion does require the abandonment of sinful pleasures, it more than compensates for their loss by supplying higher and more satisfying joys. Thus much more is gained than lost. It is the most blessed exchange that anyone can make. If only all the sons and daughters of men might know by experience that this is so!

The day's Epistle names another great Christian grace:

## **II. Forebearance.**

In the old version we read, “Let your moderation be known unto all men.” But the word “moderation” no longer expresses the real thought of the original. Some English words have undergone a change of meaning since King James' translation was made in 1611. The real meaning of the word that Paul used is forbearance or gentleness.

Forbearance means patience in dealing with our fellowmen; it signifies that we will not always hold them to the strict rule of justice, but will make allowance for their weaknesses. We will forbear to require of them an over-strict account. In other words, we will judge them charitably, treat them with clemency. Just as we desire to have due allowance made for our weak-

nesses, so we will treat others, if we possess this Christian grace of forbearance. Really it is almost the same as love, which is so highly extolled in the Scriptures. Now suppose people would practice only the two Advent virtues thus far considered, joy and forbearance, would it not change the face of the whole world? Would there be any oppression, any jealousy, any hatred, any class strife, any upheavals in the social and industrial spheres, any graft in business, any demagoguery in politics, any autocratic rule, and anarchistic violence, any conflicts and bloody wars among the nations? Impossible! impossible!

Another fundamental Christian virtue set forth in the text is —

### **III. Trust.**

We shall give Dr. James Moffatt's translation of this part of the text: "Never be anxious, but always make your requests known to God in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving." From that passage we learn the lesson of trust or faith.

At this time I want to emphasize the Christian grace of faith. It is needed in this age of doubt. Many people mar their whole lives by falling into skepticism. Just as soon as a person loses his faith, he loses his peace of mind and his stability of life. Nothing so depletes the soul of all joy and spiritual victory as does doubt. It cuts the nerve of moral earnestness and endeavor. It fills the soul with pessimism and complaint. It is always the doubters who think that the world is all wrong. Nothing can be truer than the words of Holy Writ (James 1:6, 7): "He that doubteth is like a surge of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed... A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." Yes, he is whipped about "by every wind of doctrine." You have never known a man obsessed with doubt who lived a stable, consistent and solidly useful life.

Moreover, how will doubt help us out of any difficulty, intellectual, moral or spiritual? For example, some people profess to have lost faith in God and Christianity on account of the great world war. Suppose they do give up their faith, will it help to solve their problems? Having surrendered faith in God and Jesus Christ, to whom will they go for help and comfort? If there is no God and no Saviour, then the world must be both cruel and irrational, and there is no hope that right will ever triumph, or that any of our

puzzling problems will ever be solved. So we do not see one iota of advantage in giving up to doubt. Besides, people who lose their faith in Christ because of the great earthly affliction that has come upon the world, prove, by that very token, that their affections are set on earthly goods, not on ethical, spiritual and eternal things. And what has been the cause of the war? The greed and ambition of nations for earthly advantages, commercial supremacy and worldly honor. The conflict was not begun nor waged for spiritual good, nor for fine and righteous ideals. Even the greed of some of the victorious nations has gone far to prove that the ulterior motive was not high ideals, but worldly emolument. That being so, it will help to solve no problems to lose faith in God and spiritual realities, and return to the very things that have been the cause of all our national and international troubles. On the other hand, if we keep faith in God and His goodness and power, His righteous and redeeming purposes, we may still believe that He will “bring good out of evil and make the wrath of man to praise Him;” then, too, we may know that our eternal and spiritual welfare is secure even though earthly joys and possessions are very uncertain. Indeed, God in His Holy Word does not promise very much in the way of mere earthly and temporal blessing, but always lays the emphasis on eternal bliss. Jesus expressly warns us against laying up treasures here on earth, but admonishes us to lay up treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt and Where thieves do not break through and steal. Let us heed our Lord’s injunction: “Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God and believe in Me.” Thus faith will be the solvent for all our troubles.

"O God of Jacob, by whose hand  
Thy people still are fed;  
Who through this weary pilgrimage  
Hast all our fathers led —

"To Thee our humble vows we raise,  
To Thee address our prayer;  
And in Thy kind and faithful breast  
Deposit all our care.

"Through each perplexing path of life  
Our wandering footsteps guide:  
Give us each day our daily bread,  
And raiment fit provide.

“Oh, spread Thy covering wings around,  
Till all our wanderings cease,  
And at our Father’s loved abode  
Our souls arrive in peace.”

One more member of this quartet of Christian graces is set forth in our text. We have considered joy, forbearance, and trust. The last one is —

## **IV. Peace.**

The text closes with the beautiful *votum* of our morning service: “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” You will observe that the connection is logical: if you trust God and pray to Him and thank Him for His goodness, His peace shall abide with you. The truth is, faith in God and Christ always brings peace: “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” No person ever experiences this divine peace in his soul until he accepts Jesus Christ as the only One who can reconcile the penitent sinner to God. Outside of Christ, God is a consuming fire. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.” Without Christ the divine justice must ever hang over us on account of our sins; but, thanks be to God, Christ made reparation for our sins, and thus satisfied the principle of justice; therefore, when we accept Him, our blessed Substitute, the divine mercy comes to us, and the Holy Spirit testifies within us that God is reconciled and our sins are forgiven. Do you see what an ethical transaction it is that, in and through faith in Jesus Christ, we have peace with God?

In this Advent time how pleasant it is to reflect on the great peace that we enjoy! Christ is called “the Prince of Peace.” The angels, who announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds of Bethlehem, sang, “Peace on earth, good will among men.”

Worth noting is it that this peace is called “the peace of God.” No doubt this means the peace which comes from God; from His act of pardon and restoration; from His Spirit, not only speaking peace to the soul, but actually composing its agitation, as Jesus calmed the winds and waves on the sea of Galilee. And nothing could be more blessed than such divinely given composure. However, “the peace of God” must also go back to His own be-



ing, to that divine composure which cannot be disturbed; which knows the end from the beginning; which knows that no divine decree can ever fail, and no divine purpose can be foiled; that divine composure which is as deep as eternity and as high as infinity. For if God did not Himself possess such peace, He never could impart it to His believing children. That is the reason the apostle declares that this divine peace “passeth all understanding.” Being divine peace, it must be infinite, and therefore our finite minds can not comprehend it. That is a precious truth. I am glad this peace is beyond our understanding; if we could understand it, it would be limited, and therefore imperfect. Only those who have experienced this peace in their souls through faith in the Saviour of the Advent can have any idea of its depth, sweetness and preciousness. To be able to look up toward God, and say, “I am at peace with Thee” — how blessed is that experience! Then, with it dwell peace and concord with one’s own conscience, with one’s environments in the natural world, with one’s fellow-beings. So it is an all-around peace.

Why need more be said? If we have joy, forbearance, faith and peace through Jesus, the incarnate Saviour, then we are rich indeed. We can truly celebrate the first Advent of our Lord, and be just as ready for His second Advent, let it come when it will! Amen.

# 5. The Real Christmas Message: The Grace That Truly Saves. Tit. 2:11-14. Christmas Day.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. (Titus 2:11-14)

THE HAPPY CHRISTMAS TIME contains one uppermost thought: Why Christ came into the world. No doubt He came to bring us cheer, good will, peace, and happiness. All these considerations help to make Christmas a glad festival, so that we can sing jubilantly:

“Joy to the world! the Lord is come;  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare Him room,  
And heaven and nature sing.”

But joy in itself does not go to the heart of Christ’s errand to the earth. Joy must have a right basis, or it will be a poor and quickly vanishing joy. What is the real foundation for the joyfulness of the Christmas time? It is this: “The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost;” “Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins;” “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Yes, that was our incarnate Saviour’s primary errand: to save men from sin; otherwise the joy of this day would be

of small value, and would soon give way to anguish and woe. But since our Lord came to deliver us from the cause of our sorrow, we may have the joy that abides because it is pure and holy.

Our text is a beautiful one; also profound in its import and all-inclusive in its scope. This is so because it involves the fundamental principles and doctrines of the whole plan of redemption. Let us divide our subject thus: 1. The grace that saves; 2. The character of the salvation wrought for us by divine grace.

## I. The Grace That Saves.

In two places the text proclaims that salvation comes to us only through divine grace. In the first sentence we read (Moffatt's translation): "For the grace of God has appeared to save all men," and in the latter part we have this phrase: "Our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself up for us to redeem us," etc. From the first expression we learn that it is divine grace alone that brings us salvation, and from the second that this divine grace comes to us through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer.

Thus again the modern idea, held by so many people, that they can be saved through their own good works, or penances, or social service, or character, or sacrifice, is denied in our Christmas text. Think about it for a moment: If men could save themselves by anything that they can do, then Christ's errand to the world would be in vain; it would be useless; or even if men could partly save themselves, Christ would not have come on a vitally necessary errand. In the first case all our rejoicing at Christmas would be improper and foolish; in the second case it would be greatly diminished.

But, on the other hand, if Christ became incarnate in order to do for men what they could in nowise do for themselves, then our praises today are all apropos, and our joy is full to overflowing. A lax humanly made theology always lessens or destroys the joy of our holy religion, whereas the true Biblical doctrine gives fullness of joy.

How cheering is the message of the text: "the grace of God that bringeth salvation!" Salvation is something that God *brings* to us; not something that we evolve out of ourselves. It is a revelation and a gift from the supernatural realm, not a development from the natural. It is a divine bestowment, not a human achievement. Not only is this revealed in the Holy Scriptures, but,

like all Biblical doctrines, it is based on reason and the nature of things. We are sinners against God. But a man cannot forgive his own sins. If you were to wrong your neighbor, who would have to forgive the wrong? Could you forgive it yourself, and let that suffice? So God, and He alone, can forgive our sins; therefore divine forgiveness, which must include all the constituents of salvation, must come from God alone. Take another viewpoint. When man sinned in the garden, he fell from God; it was an ethical and spiritual fall; therefore it made a wide separation between God and man. Now man could not lift himself up to God again by his own strength any more than you could lift yourself bodily into the air by taking hold of the tops of your shoes. The only way by which man could be lifted up to God again was for God to come down to him, and put His own strength and grace beneath him. That is what God did in the holy and rational plan of redemption through His Son Jesus Christ. He came down to man in his lowly and miserable estate, and lifted him up into ethical and spiritual fellowship with Himself.

Let us observe that the method by which this great salvation was brought to us was through redemption, as the text indicates: "Who gave Himself up for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity." "Redeem" means to purchase or *buy back*; to give an equivalent for. In ordinary transactions everybody knows what it means to redeem something — it is to pay for something that has been lost or forfeited. That is what Christ did for us: "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price." The saints in heaven are praising God continually, and also "the Lamb, who hath redeemed us and washed us in His own precious blood." And what was the price He paid for our ransom? It was His own innocent sufferings both in life and in death, which He endured under the penalty of the law of justice in our stead. He was our Substitute. He died that we might live. "He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed... All we like sheep have gone astray; we have gone everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Yes, it is the glorious doctrine of substitution, of vicarious atonement, of the spotless Lamb of God taking our place and bearing the penalty of our transgressions. This is our hope and our solace. Had He not come down to the earth, and taken upon Himself our nature, and so our moral task, and

made satisfaction to the eternal principle of justice, we poor miserable sinners would have had to pay the penalty of our sins. When we believe this doctrine with all our hearts, Christmas will not be a day of forced worship and joy, but of real worship and joy. Our hearts will overflow with thanksgiving and happiness. Minimize Christ's mission, and you minimize the Christmas joy; exalt that mission, and you heighten the joy of the Christmas festivities.

Many people cannot understand how the innocent could be made to suffer for the guilty. They forget that only an innocent person could atone for a guilty person. A guilty sinner could not make atonement for another guilty sinner; he could not even make atonement for his own sins. Therefore in the very nature of things the innocent Redeemer is the only one who can expiate the sins of the world; and it was right that He did so, when you remember that, having made expiation, He was released from death and suffering, and exalted to God's right hand, and now saves sinners from their sinful lives, and brings them back into holy fellowship with Himself. Better not find fault with the Biblical plan of salvation through substitution! Better accept it gladly, since you are the beneficiary!

Oh, this doctrine of salvation by grace — what a blessed doctrine it is! What security it gives to the soul! As long as you do not know whether you are saved or not, you can not work comfortably and joyfully for God and His cause. Why? Because the primary question, that of your own salvation, is still unsettled. So you are like a double-minded man, unstable in all your ways. But get that paramount question settled, as you can by accepting salvation from the gracious hand of God, and then you can work for Him without fear and anxiety.

Do you know what will be the refrain of the redeemed in heaven? It will be this, "Saved by grace! Saved by grace!" And there will be perfect concord there, for all the saints shall join with one heart and voice in that chorus.

## **II. The Character Of The Salvation That Divine Grace Brings Us.**

### **1. It Is Ethical.**

This matter is all-important. Some people have crude ideas of salvation. They think it simply consists in getting to heaven — getting into a happy place, where they shall enjoy an eternal picnic! They do not care about being purified from sin, about being good, about being morally and spiritual fit, about dwelling in fellowship with the good and holy God; all they think about is having “a good time.” That is an utterly erroneous conception of the Christian idea of salvation. You and I cannot get into heaven with our sins. We would not be happy there if we could; nay, it would not be heaven if we could enter there with our sins. It would be perdition; yes, if possible, worse than perdition. We must first get heaven into us before we can get into heaven. “The kingdom of God is within you;” “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.” Heaven is not simply a place; it is primarily a condition; and the condition is ethical and spiritual purity and godlikeness.

So this shallow and frivolous idea that salvation is an eternal roistering picnic has no support in the Holy Scriptures. Look at our text, see how truly ethical it is; and, being ethical, it is deep and structural. Note that the text says of Christ: “He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Do you not see how ethical that is? It does not say that He redeems us from hell, though that is implied; or from suffering, though that is included; but from the fundamental thing, the thing that is at the foundation of all our trouble, namely, from “all iniquity.” It is the same doctrine that the angel of the annunciation taught to Joseph, the foster father of Christ: “Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.” To be saved from sin is the first thing and the chief thing; then we shall be saved from all its consequences, from hell and condemnation, from sorrow and anguish of soul both for time and eternity. Our Collect for Christmas day goes to the root idea of salvation when it says: “Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that the new birth of Thine Only Begotten Son in the flesh may set us free who are held in the old bondage under the yoke of sin.” Let this, then, ever be held in remembrance, that salvation in the Christian sense means recovery and cleansing from sin.

Both the positive and the negative side of an ethical salvation is brought out clearly and fully in our text. Not only has Christ redeemed us “from all iniquity,” but He also “purifies unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Dr. Moffatt’s beautiful translation puts it in this way: “to se-

cure for Himself a clean people with a zest for good works.” The word “zest,” however, is not the best word; it should be the stronger word “zeal.” Yes, Christ’s own people are to be pure, and to have a zeal for good works. To be merely saved from sin would not be enough, even if it were possible; for the Christian must have not merely a negative, but also a positive good; he is not only to be forgiven, but also cleansed from sin’s defilement, and a new spirit of holiness is to be begotten within him. Thus salvation is all-comprehensive in its ethical quality.

The same principle is shown in the earlier part of the text. The salvation brought to us by divine grace induces us first to renounce “ungodliness and worldly lusts.” You cannot mix these sinful things with the Christian religion any more than you can mix oil and water. Salvation by divine grace is first a casting out process. It ejects from the human heart “the devil and all his works and ways.” A filthy house must first be cleansed before you will move into it. Would you expect the White Christ to move into a sinful human heart without a thorough house-cleaning? So that is the first thing in the order of salvation — to “renounce ungodliness and worldly lusts.”

Then comes the positive side of the ethically Christian life: that “we should live soberly and righteously and godly.” The word soberly connotes the idea of self-mastery. It means that through the power of divine grace we should have control over ourselves. That is a large part of the Christian life — self-control. In regeneration the Will is freed, and so has power to choose the right and reject the Wrong; and the disenthralled will should be used by its possessor. Christian people cannot merely let themselves go, and depend on divine grace to carry them along without any effort on their part. Let it be remembered that, though God affords help and strength for every time of need, He does not carry the believer to heaven on a palanquin with soft and downy cushions. While God “works in us to do His Will and His good pleasure,” yet we must “work out our own salvation.” Self-mastery — what a great virtue! It is one of the marks of a true Christian.

The word “righteously” explains itself. In the original it is one of the strongest ethical words that can be employed. It means manly and womanly uprightness, nobility, strength, rectitude — everything, in short, that is stalwart, brave and true in all circumstances. Oh! it requires virility to be a real Christian. It is no weakling life. It calls out the best in every person. “I say unto you, young men, be ‘strong;’” “Quit you like men.”

Another quality is named in the text: we should live “godly.” The original word means piously or religiously, its root being “to worship well.” It is a good, strong word. You may wonder why Paul, after using the words soberly and righteously, should add the word religiously. Is not that redundancy of speech? Not for so accurate a writer as Paul was. After he had used the first two words, there might be danger, if he stopped there, that some people would think that the ethical life of the Christian consisted of mere outward morality; but that would have been as superficial as some of the worldly ethicists and “ethical culture” people of the day, who think that men can have sufficient morality without religion. Paul in this text demolishes that false doctrine, by adding the word “godly” or “religiously,” as much as to say: Religion is necessary; indeed, it is at the basis of all true soberness and righteousness. In the Christian sense there can be no true ethics that is not based upon and that does not flow from a right relation to God. The idea of being able to be truly moral without recognizing God and performing your duty to Him, is utterly opposed to the whole conception of the ethically Christian life. And Paul was right; he was deep; his thinking was fundamental. Surely a man’s first duty is to the God who made him, who preserves him, and who has redeemed him through the sacrifice of His only begotten Son. Then how can he be a truly moral man if he ignores his first and primary duty? Remember this: Christian ethics is first of all religious, because it is based on the first and greatest commandment: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and mind and strength.”

We have now found that salvation is ethical. Our text also teaches that

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## **2. It Is A Present Salvation.**

Note: “We should live soberly and righteously and religiously in the present world;” or, as the word might be translated, “the present age.” That is beautiful and practical. Salvation is for this world as well as for the next; a religion of the present tense as well as of the future; a religion that is terrestrial as well as celestial, mundane as well as supra-mundane. Paul always agreed with himself, because he had mastered the whole system of Christianity; for he says elsewhere (1 Tim. 4:8): “Godliness (religion) is profitable unto all things, having promise the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”



It is a crude conception that religion is only for the future life, though some illy informed people seem to hold that idea. It is not an expedient or device to “get us into heaven somehow or other.” No; it is a real thing, fundamental, involved in the very structure of God’s organic plan for mankind. Salvation belongs to the here and now just as much as to the by and by. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life.” A salvation of the present tense. If you and I are not saved from sin in this life, there is no hope of salvation in the future life. If we do not get heaven into us here and now, we will never get into heaven. I repeat what I have said before, heaven is a condition as well as a locality. None can enter there unless they are fitted by grace for residence there. It is a prepared place, but for prepared people.

Thus we see that true Biblical religion is all-sphered and practical. It ramifies into all the departments of our present life — into the heart, the home, the social structure, the economic world, the work-day world, the business world, the professional sphere, the civic and political domain; and it makes better and happier people in all these places and callings. Until Christianity pervades and sanctifies all parts of human life, it has not won its intended victory nor accomplished its beneficent purpose in the World.

So much for a present-day salvation. But that is not all that is taught in our Christmas text. No; if the text were to stop here, it would be as narrow and one-sided as are the materialists and secularists of the day, who aver that men should confine their interests solely to the present life. Not so the teaching of God’s Book. It gives us a broader vision.

### **3. It Is A Future Salvation.**

“Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearance of the great God and of our Saviour Jesus Christ,” says the text. That is a religion as broad as the universe and as endless as eternity. There is nothing narrow about the Christian religion. Some people think it is narrow — some misinformed people. But what is to be said of their own view? They say that this life is all; that “it is-all of life to live and all of death to die;” that every life ends only in a winding-sheet and a grave; that when we die, we die like the brutes, and sink into eternal unconsciousness. Yes, there are people who hold that view — and they call it broad. I say it is the narrowest conception that ever entered into a contracted brain. Were it even true, I still would say

that it is utterly and disgustingly narrow. Do not imagine, Brother Materialist or Secularist, that you are a broad minded man and hold a broad-sphered philosophy. Your view is as contracted as is the little span of your earthly life. You have no vision, no outlook, no perspective; your picture of human life and destiny is only a flat surface, and all your thoughts run up and dash themselves to pieces against a blank wall. Christmas has no meaning or message for you.

How different is the real Christmas message of the Bible! “Be not afraid,” said the angel to the shepherds on Bethlehem’s plain; “for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day in the City of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord... Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will among men.” Does not that message lift you into a higher and purer atmosphere? Yes, on this fair Christmas day, while we think of the salvation that God brought us by the nativity of Christ, we are inspired by the assurance that it is a salvation for both the present and the future; so that we can say with a beloved American poet:

“Life is real, life is earnest,  
And the grave is not its goal;  
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,  
Was not spoken of the soul.”

Or we can exclaim with Paul: “Christ hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel;” and then we may add his rapt pean: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy Victory? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Let us read over again the Christmas message of our text, to see how uplifting, bracing and comforting it is: “For the grace of God has appeared to save all men, teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lust, and to live soberly, righteously and religiously in the present world, looking for the blessed hope and appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” May that message ring in our hearts through all time and eternity! Amen.

“The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.”

# **6. The After-Christmas Message: Sons Of God. Gal. 4:1-7. The First Sunday After Christmas.**

Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. (Galatians 4:1-7)

NOTHING IS OF GREATER VALUE to a man than to have good parents. In many cases parentage is the most decisive factor in a man's career, especially in his moral and religious making. That being so, how all-important it is that God promises to be our Father and make us his heirs! This is the pleasant theme before us for today, presented by the Epistle selected by the Church. It is not a gloomy theme any more than were our Christmas and pre-Christmas lessons.

By way of contrast our lesson for today sets forth two main ideas, which may be put in this form: 1. Man's pre-Christmas condition; 2. Man's post-Christmas condition. Let us reflect on these in the order named.

## **I. Man's Pre-Christmas Condition.**

We must understand the chief argument of the whole Galatian letter in order to know what man's condition was before Christ came into the world. That

argument is this: Men are not justified and saved by the works of the law, for the law was never intended to save us, but to convict us of our sin and show us our helplessness, and thus drive us to the only Source of pardon and help, the Lord Jesus Christ. For, though the law is good in that it gives the knowledge of sin, its function is very different from that of the gospel, which is to give the knowledge of salvation. So the argument of this epistle is the same as that of the letter to the Romans — that we are justified only through faith, and thus saved by grace alone. Indeed, this doctrine is expressly stated in the chapter preceding that containing our text (verse 23, 24): “But before faith came, we were kept in ward under the law, still looking for the faith which was to be revealed; so then the law is become our schoolmaster unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster; for we are all the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”

Now in our text Paul teaches the same doctrine, only he uses a different simile or comparison. This is the way he puts it: “But I say this, as long as an heir is under age, his condition differs little from that of a servant, even though he is potentially possessor of all the property; but he is put under guardians and trustees until his father regards him of the proper age to receive his inheritance.” This is a very apt parable. It often occurs that the son or heir does not even have as much freedom and privilege as a faithful servant, because during his nonage he must be placed under strict discipline, and his liberty must be more or less restrained. He would soon be spoiled if full freedom were granted him. He would not be trained in the way he should go. Sometimes he may chafe against his restrictions, but his father knows what is for his good.

So with us. “When we were children, we were held in bondage under the rudiments of the world.” We were heirs of the promise only potentially and prospectively, while in reality we were more like servants than like children. This was our father’s way of drilling us, of preparing us for the heritage that was to be ours when the fullness of time came.

We have often wondered what was the meaning of the phrase, “the rudiments of the world,” under which mankind was held in thralldom before the divine Deliverer came to the earth; but we believe that Luther, in his incisive way, gives the true explanation: “He calleth the law the elements of the world; that is to say, the outward laws and traditions written in a certain book. For, although the law does civilly bridle a man from evil, and con-

strain him to do well, yet, being kept after this sort, it doth not deliver him from sin; it justifieth him not; it prepareth not a way for him to heaven, but leaveth him in the world... These outward virtues and honest conversations be not the kingdom of Christ, not the heavenly righteousness, but the righteousness of the flesh and the world, which also the Gentiles had... This righteousness some do observe in order to avoid the punishment of the law; some to be praised of men, and esteemed righteous, constant and patient; and therefore it is rather to be called colored hypocrisy than righteousness.”

So the righteousness of the law is, after all, only the “rudiments of the world,” because it gives only a worldly civil righteousness, only the conventional goodness of society; it does not give that true inward ethical purity that God, who looks upon the heart, can regard with approval and pleasure. It is only when the law leads men to conviction of sin and therefore to the Saviour that it performs its heavenly function. As long as it produces only civil righteousness, it belongs to “the elements of the world,” and often produces moral pride and boasting, even while it restrains some men from vice and crime.

Another thought is also pertinent. I borrow it from Dr. Carl A. Swensson in the Lutheran Commentary. Mankind’s discipline under the law belonged only the “rudiments” of their religious training, only to the nonage of the race, both among the Jews and the Gentiles; only when the fullness of time comes, of which God must be the judge, does Christ come into the world to impart the higher knowledge of salvation through the gospel of redeeming grace. This is a worthy thought, and helps us all the better to understand God’s patient discipline of the nations, both Jews and Gentiles, during the preparatory period of the world’s history.

Thus, according to Paul’s deep and cogent argument, the righteousness of the law belongs to man’s spiritual nonage, to his infancy and childhood. It pertains only to the “rudiments” of a spiritual education. Not very complimentary is this to the modern spirit of legalism, by which some men think they will be saved by their good works, social service and fine character. They ought to see that such righteousness does not go deep enough; that it ministers to pride and self-laudation; that it is not humble and penitent, and therefore can neither make the world better, nor make men acceptable to God. He “requires that which is past.” He wants men to repent, and be forgiven through faith in the atoning sacrifice, justified in His sight, regenerated by His Spirit, and thus made truly righteous. Any other salvation is su-

perfidious and factitious; it does not go to the root of man's ailment, and hence does not effect a real cure. Nostrums will not heal the vital hurt of the world. A specific is needed, a real cure. The disease is organic; the remedy must be effective.

Thus we have considered man's pre-Christmas condition, which was that of bondage under the law. But let us remember that the first Christmas occurred over nineteen centuries ago; that Christ has come and made redemption for the race; that our condition is greatly changed; therefore we are ready now to consider our next proposition:

## **II. Man's Post-Christmas Condition.**

Ah! my Christian friends, it is far different from his pre-Christmas status. He is no longer in bondage. His condition is not that of a servant. Through faith in Christ he is now a son and heir of God. The doctrine of adoption is now our precious theme. Note how beautifully the apostle sets this forth in the text (we make the smoothest translation we can): "When we were under age we lived in the thralldom of worldly elements; but when the fullness of the time arrived God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might ransom those who were under the law, that we might receive sonship."

The logic here is perfect, based on fundamental principles. The law was like a chain upon us, holding us in subjection like slaves; but Christ, the Son of God came, yes, came in our very nature, so that He could take our place truly and organically, took our chains from us, and bound them on Himself, so that He might free us from their galling bondage, and make us the liberated and happy sons of God. This is that "glorious liberty of the children of God" of which Paul writes so eloquently in his epistle to the Romans. As soon as we are truly made the children of God, we can no longer be slaves to sin and the law. Observe the logic: Christ was "born of a woman." Why? So that He might be just like us, sin excepted, and therefore might truly take our place in suffering with us and for us. He was also "born under the law." And why was that? So that He could truly put Himself in the thrall of the law, bear its burdens, keep its requirements in our stead, and so deliver us from its condemnation. Could it have been done in any other way? No; for if the law had been set aside, justice would have been an-

nulled, would have become a “dead letter” on the statute-books of the universe, and the moral economy essential to God’s being would have been broken to pieces. God loved sinners, and wanted to show mercy to them; but mercy could come from a holy God only in an ethical way. Therefore God sent His Son into the world to reveal the divine love and uphold the divine justice, thus preserving ethical harmony in the divine nature and relations. It is the old Bible doctrine of substitution, of vicarious atonement. How beautifully Paul agrees with himself, proving that he had both a Christian experience and a consistent system of doctrine! For in Romans he writes: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath set me free from the law of sin and death: for what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, hath condemned sin in the flesh: that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Paul’s theology hangs together perfectly. He teaches everywhere the same doctrine, and is always robust, ethical and saving.

There is also a logical connection between the use of the words “Son” and “sons” in the text. God sent His own Son to make us sons. Because He is God’s Son, eternally begotten, therefore he can make us the sons of God. This is the highest blessing, the perfect liberty. “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

Let us consider, too, how fully God performs His work of redeeming grace. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself,” which was Paul’s way of teaching elsewhere just what he teaches in this text, namely, that through Christ we become the sons of God. But He does not merely make us His children in an objective way; He also lets us know what He has done for us. He does not keep the precious secret to Himself. What would we think of a father who would forgive his son a wrong, but keep it to himself, never telling his son that he was forgiven? God, our heavenly Father, does not treat us in that way, but, as Paul puts it in the text, “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba! Father!” Thus when God adopts us into His family, He lets us know by His Spirit that we have been adopted. This is what is meant by a Christian experience. “The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God.” Notice again: It is “the Spirit of His Son”

who bears this testimony within us; that is, the same person of the Holy Trinity who bears eternal witness to the Son that He is the Son of His Father, now comes into our hearts and testifies that we are the sons of the same Father. Thus our sonship, and the witness thereto by the Holy Spirit, have their roots back in eternity and in the very nature of the Godhead. How sacredly all the several parts of the plan of redemption hold together! There is nothing arbitrary, superficial or factitious in it. Indeed, it is too beautiful not to be true. Out of very gladness of heart for so rational, consistent and beneficent a plan we ought to accept it.

“To God I’m reconciled,  
His pardoning’ voice I hear;  
He owns me for His child,  
I can no longer fear;  
With confidence I now draw nigh,  
And, ‘Father, Abba, Father,’ cry.”

The text says further: “Wherefore thou art no longer a bondsman, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” This follows logically again, for a son is usually an heir of his father. In another place Paul expands on this doctrine: “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.”

How much is included in being the heirs of God! Then whatever is His will be ours. The earth will be ours when the whole creation is redeemed, for Christ said, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” But the whole creation means the whole physical universe; and so that shall be ours; perhaps it shall be our “Father’s house of many mansions.” It is all His, for He made it, and He preserves it. He has promised to give us a resurrected body with which we may have direct and vital connection with the glorified universe. But more is included in our heritage, much more. There is also the spiritual universe of truth, of grace, of joy, fellowship with the angels and archangels and the spirits of just men made perfect. The divine heirship also includes God Himself, the Triune God, who shall be ours in the fullest sense and degree. “Beloved,” exclaims the apostle John, “now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”



Thus the Christian is not poor; he is an heir to illimitable possessions. So Paul says: "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." We should not be ashamed of our name or our inheritance, since God is not ashamed to call us His children and make us heirs of His glory.

"Children of the heavenly King,  
As ye journey, sweetly sing;  
Sing your Saviour's worthy praise,  
Glorious in His works and ways.

"Ye are traveling home to God  
In the way the fathers trod;  
They are happy now, and ye  
Soon their happiness shall see.

"Shout, ye little flock, and blest;  
You on Jesus throne shall rest:  
There your seat is now prepared;  
There your kingdom and reward."

# **7. New Year's Greeting: May You Have The Joy Of True Faith! Gal. 3:23-29. The Circumcision Of Christ — New Year.**

But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:23-29)

JUST AS I wished you a joyous Christmas on the birthday of our Lord, so today I wish you a happy New Year. Your pastor can bring you no better greeting at the beginning of another year than to express the hope that during all its days and months you may possess the joy, rebound and inspiration of true Christian faith. You know that doubt is always enervating and depressing. It makes the soul anemic. It robs the heart of joy and courage and hope, and fills it with bitterness and pessimism. I can truly say that I have never known a skeptic who was a contented and happy man. Instead of going forth bravely to do good and make the world better and gladder, he always wanted to debate whether the Bible was true or not, and Whether God exists or does not exist. No wonder he has no exhilarating joy. As long as the great fundamental questions of human life and destiny remain unsettled for a man, he cannot rest content; he will ever be fretting and polemizing; but when a man gets those problems solved through the living experience and certitude of faith in Jesus Christ, he can live a solid and useful life. Suppose you were in debt, and were in sore uncertainty as to whether

you could ever relieve yourself of your obligations, you would not be a contented man. But suppose you succeeded in liquidating your indebtedness and lifting your mortgage, with What a zest you could work for yourself and your family, and how much more you would enjoy life! So it is with the person who has been able to settle the fundamental problem of religious truth. He can live solidly, joyfully, usefully.

Our text today points out the joy and blessing of true Christian faith. It makes the inspiration of faith all the more marked by way of contrast, just as the text for last Sunday did; it describes man's status before faith comes and after faith comes. So let us reflect on this contrast.

## **I. Before Faith Comes.**

This part of the text divides itself in a most suggestive way. Before faith comes, —

### **1. We are kept under the law.**

Note the precise wording of the text: "We are kept under the law." That word "under" is a capital word. Sometimes people sing, "Free from the law: oh, blessed condition!" The intention is right, of course, but the language is not accurate. No Christian is ever freed from the moral law; indeed, after he has been justified and regenerated, he loves God's law more than ever; he can say with the Psalmist, "Thy law is my delight;" he makes God's law, which in itself is holy, the guide of his conduct. But this is what the song referred to really means, "Freed from the condemnation of the law." Before we are justified, we are "under" the law; it hangs over us in a condemning way, just because it is holy and we are sinful. No criminal loves the law against crime, but hates it and is afraid of it; but the good, law-abiding citizen loves the law of his country, because he delights in obeying it and in seeing, it obeyed. So it is with the law of God. The sinner hates it and fears it, for he feels that it hangs over him like a Damocles sword; but when he has been justified and regenerated, he is lifted out from "under" the law, and brought up to its level, and sees how good it is, and so wants to obey it. Very important it is indeed to understand our proper relation to God's moral law, which has three offices — first, civil, to show men how to behave as

citizens and members of society; second, elenctical, to convict men of sin and thus bring them to Christ for salvation; third, didactic, to show them how to live acceptably to God after conversion.

So let us remember that important word “under.” Before faith comes we are “under” the law, and that is a distressful condition. How can anyone live a stabilized and joyful life “under the law,” knowing that divine justice is constantly suspended over him and may descend upon him at any time. To live in that way is not to have a happy New Year’s Day, or to be happy throughout the coming year. To be happy and truly useful we must be right with God, in tune with His holy laws, at one with the principle of justice. As long as “the terrors of the law” smite us, life can have no real rebound and exhilaration.

Before faith comes, we are also —

## **2. Kept in waiting and suspense.**

Of course primarily Paul was referring to the Jews, who “were kept under the restrictions of the law while waiting for the faith that was afterward to be revealed.” But it also has its application to us today. Before faith comes to deliver us, we are kept in waiting and suspense. Under the condemnation of the law, we catch glimpses of possible pardon and deliverance, for we always have some knowledge of the gospel even while we are in bondage under the law; but those glimpses are rather tantalizing than comforting. We fear that forgiveness is not for us. Now we almost believe, and anon we fall into doubt. Like Tantalus, we reach out for the fruit apparently within our grasp, only to see it receding in the distance. Thus we live between two fires, as it were — between doubt and faith, tossed hither and you by conflicting emotions. Uncertainty is one of the most harassing states of mind, especially uncertainty regarding things that are all-important.

Surely no one here this morning will want to live in that condition during the New Year. Let us not be like the Jews, who, before Christ came, could do nothing but wait anxiously for the faith that was to be revealed in the gospel; but, since the gospel has come with its full and clear revelation, let us step out upon Christian ground, where we may know that we are freed from the condemnation of the law.

Before true saving faith in Christ comes we are also —

### **3. Kept under a schoolmaster.**

The revised version says a “tutor,” but the Word “schoolmaster” is just as good a translation. The original word that Paul used is the word from which we derive our word “pedagogue,” and means a teacher of children; in the old times he was a slave employed to teach the children the rudiments of learning, and was not an instructor of a high grade. This, then, is Paul’s thought: while we are “under the law” we are subject to a primary teacher, who holds us in bondage against our will, but whose business it is to train us for the better and higher teachers who are to come later.

True, it is good for us to be under such a schoolmaster for a while, in order that we may learn our need of the teaching of the gospel; in order that we be able to graduate into the higher grade; but now that the gospel of Christ has been proclaimed, we ought not to remain under the dominance of the primary teacher longer than necessary, but ought to make rapid progress toward the better things. The trouble with many people is that spiritually they are willing to remain in the primary department after they have grown up. Many of them ought to have had their promotion long ago. The old schoolmaster tried his best to pass them on to Christ, the better Teacher, but they would not learn the lessons of repentance and faith, and so they continue in the kindergarten and primary grade. If there are any persons here this morning, who are still conning their hard lessons under the old schoolmaster of the law, I hope you will receive your passing grade into the higher department of the gospel long before the New Year has become the old year.

We have now considered the condition of the soul prior to the coming of faith. We have found it to be a state of duress — kept under the law, kept in waiting and uncertainty, kept under a slave schoolmaster. But we people of the New Year need not remain in this unhappy condition. God has provided something better for us who live in the light of the gospel (Heb. 11:40). This brings us to the next division of our theme: our happy estate —

## **II. After Faith Comes.**

### **1. We are justified by faith.**

Paul's logical mind connects the two parts of the text in this way: "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Paul adheres like a true reasoner to his thesis in this great epistle to the Galatians, namely, that men are not justified by the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.

Let us not be superficial here; let us try to get into the real reason for this cardinal Pauline doctrine. Surely the apostle did not merely gloss over matters in so great a consideration. Why could not men be justified by the law? Because that was not the natural function of the law in its relation to sinners. If men were perfect, and could keep the law, then, of course, they would be justified by the deeds of the law; but men are sinners, Violators of the law; hence the natural office of the law is to condemn and sentence them. In civil affairs no criminal can be pardoned on the ground that he has kept the law, for he has broken it. The law has nothing to do with him but to condemn him. So it is with the divine law, save that all men are sinners, and hence under its condemnation. Therefore if men are to be cleared of sin and pardoned — which means the same as to be justified — it must be done in some other way than through the law.

But how? In the most beautiful, gracious and rational way. The Son of God came into the world, assumed our hUmanity, and put His divine person "under the law," obeyed and upheld it in our stead by His active and passive work, and thus satisfied the "law's demands," which were the demands of the eternal principle of justice; and now, since He has done this for us, all we need to do is to accept it by simple faith, and then everything He did for us is credited in our behalf.

We might define justification as being reconciled to God for Christ's sake through faith. And why through faith? Because, while Christ lived and died to save us, God will not force salvation upon us, but wants us freely to accept it; and accepting it is what is meant by Christian or justifying faith. If anyone should want to press deeper into the nature of faith by saying that it is a spiritual act, and therefore the natural man cannot even believe on Christ savingly, we would reply that that is the truth; but we would also add that God comes to man in his natural state, awakens him, illumines him, and enables him to believe; then, When he exercises that ability, God pronounces him absolved from sin. Thus justification comes through faith, and faith itself is the gift of God. This doctrine excludes all human merit, all synergism, all pride. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of

yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:9); “Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace” (Rom. 4:16). Thus God chose the only right and ethical way of justification. Had He not required faith of us, He would have had to force salvation upon us, and that would not have been ethical. Had He bestowed salvation on us on any other condition than through faith, salvation would be a matter of human merit, and hence would lead to pride and boasting, and so we would not be saved from sin, after all. Depend upon it, my friends, God always justifies His own ways to men; He always does what is right. The question now is whether you and I will live through the New Year in the freedom and joy of justifying faith, or will remain in the old thralldom under sin and the law.

## **2. Faith frees us from the schoolmaster.**

I have already touched upon this thought. The “schoolmaster” of the text is a slave-pedagogue who has to keep us under hard tasks, such as conviction, guilt and condemnation, until we are willing to look unto Jesus by faith, and graduate into the school of freedom and joy. It is not that we should never be under that schoolmaster, for all of us must learn the lessons of contrition and humility under the law; but we should not remain there any longer than necessary; and especially we should not be Jews, thinking that we can receive our whole spiritual education in the primary department. The law never was given for our justification; it was given to be our pedagogue to lead us to Christ, the school of Christian faith and freedom.

## **3. Faith makes as God’s children.**

Our text says this in so many words: “For ye are all the children of God by faith.” Last Sunday we spoke at some length about the blessings of adoption, and what it implies — heirship with Christ “to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.” We simply raise the question here how it occurs that faith in Christ transforms us from the children of sin to the children of God. It is very simple and reasonable. Our sins alienate us from our heavenly Father, separate us from God; we wander away from Him like prodigal sons; we run off from the holy family of God. Then our Father sends His Son into the world to bring us back. When we permit Him to do this — which is the act of faith

— we are reinstated in our proper place among the children of God. We belong to the holy family. If we would stubbornly refuse to let Christ restore us, we could never become the real children of our heavenly Father. We would always be “strangers from the commonwealth of Israel.” Hence it that, according to the text, we are “all the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”

#### **4. By faith we are baptized into Christ.**

The way Paul puts it in the text is this: “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” This is figurative language, and means that by baptism we have become like Christ; He has breathed into us His disposition through the Holy Spirit; so that we are now en rapport with Him and all that is good. Again this blessing comes through faith, for when Christ "offers to us the pure garment of His righteousness, we must accept it. So we see that baptism is not to be merely an outward ceremony, but is to be accompanied by faith, in order that the real grace of the Holy Spirit may be imparted to us. Our Church rejects the Romish doctrine that the sacrament is an *opus operatum*, that it does a work within us by and of itself without faith on our part. No; there is no magic, no divination about the plan of saving grace; it is all vital, ethical, rational.

#### **5. Through faith we are all one in Christ.**

How aptly and wonderfully Paul phrases it: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” Oh, the blessed unity that Christian faith brings! Thus we can sing, “Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love.” Paul exhorts us to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace.” The Psalmist exclaims: “Behold, how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

Do you see why it is that faith brings this feeling of oneness? It is because faith binds us all to the one Christ, causes all our hearts to beat in unison with His heart. When we fall apart, and one goes this way and another that; when one has one idea and another another, difference and dissension are bound to arise; but when all of us travel one way and are animated by one mind, namely, the mind of Christ, then all discord will vanish, and we



will be one. Faith in Christ is the great unifier, the solvent for all our problems of dissension. Long ago would Jews and Greeks have been joined together in bonds of love had all accepted Christ by simple faith. If such faith prevailed, there would be no clash between bond and free; indeed, all class distinctions would fade away of their own accord.

## **6. Faith makes us truly Abraham's seed.**

This is another teaching of our New Year's text. Of course, Abraham was a historical personage, not mythical. He was chosen of God to be the father of his people according to the flesh. In this fact the Jews have the preeminence, and therefore ought to bear the greater responsibility. But when Christ came, He abolished all racial distinctions, "breaking down the middle wall of partition between them." He became the universal Saviour. "He tasted death for every man;" "He made propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." He had to come from a chosen race according to the flesh, but He was sent to be the Redeemer of the whole world.

How do we Gentiles become the true true seed of Abraham? By having the same faith as Abraham. Centuries before the law was given to the Israelites, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." So then, if we have faith in God's promises, we are "the children of faithful Abraham." In his degree and measure Abraham, the "father of the faithful," must have had faith in the promised Redeemer, for Christ, who must have been the true interpreter of Abraham's faith, made this pregnant declaration: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad." So those are the true descendants of Abraham who have the faith of Abraham. Says Paul (Rom. 2:28, 29): "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." Be not disheartened, then, on account of your Gentile birth according to the flesh. By faith in Abraham's promised Messiah, who has now come into the world, you are in the true Abrahamic succession.

## **7. Faith makes us heirs according to the promise.**

This truth puts us in the line of the real succession through Abraham, Moses, David, the apostles, and all the other heroes of faith. We need no apostolic succession through “the tips of the fingers,” or in any other artificial or mechanical way. If we have the same faith as the fathers through the Word of God and the regeneration of the Spirit, we belong ethically and spiritually, and therefore vitally, to the same stock; we trace our genealogy through them to the Father of us all. Thus we are heirs to the same promise as they were. In eternity we shall all be spiritual kin; the same faith now flows through our lives; the same grace will then pervade our destiny. We shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in our Father’s kingdom, and shall all rejoice together in the same faith, the same grace, the same redemption through the blood of the Lamb.

What a great unifier is faith in the atoning Saviour! Will you and I possess this inestimable treasure through the coming year and through all the future years? May not the eleventh chapter of Hebrews be enlarged, so that it will include our names among the heroes of faith, who wrought such mighty things for God and His kingdom? In closing, I quote Horatius Bonar’s simple hymn:

"Not what these hands have done  
Can save this guilty soul;  
Not what this toiling flesh has borne  
Can make this spirit whole.

"Not what I feel or do  
Can give me peace with God;  
Not all my prayers and sighs and tears  
Can bear my awful load.

"Thy work alone, O Christ,  
Can ease this weight of sin;  
Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God,  
Can give me peace within.

“Thy grace alone, O God,  
To me can pardon speak;  
Thy power alone, O Son of God,  
Can this sore bondage break.”

## 8. Warning And Comfort For Our Trials. 1 Pet. 4:12-19. Sunday After New Year

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator. (1 Peter 4:12-19)

AFTER HAVING SAID so much in the past few Sundays about the joy and victory of Christian faith, must we now speak about trials, and even "fiery trials," as the text puts it? Yes, such is the course of the Church's Epistles for the year, and such also is the course of human life. As you know full well, life in this world is checkered. It is not an even flow. And the Christian must bear his share of the trials of life, and sometimes must be subject to special afflictions.

It is natural for us to ask why trials must come upon us, and also what are our sources of comfort when they do come. Men have often attempted to point out the benefits that accrue to us from our difficulties. A good many years ago Horace Bushnell published a helpful book entitled "The Moral Use of Dark Things." Perhaps even more helpful to most people is the book of sermons by Dr. William M. Taylor under the title, "Contrary Winds," in which he shows, by using nautical figures of speech, that the Christian can so trim and set his sails as to make even the winds that blow

against him push him onward toward his haven. But long before these men lived and wrote, the inspired writers of the Bible dealt with the problems of trial, and gave them their best solution. Christ Himself spoke many comforting words to those who were “weary and heavy-laden,” and all His apostles had some consoling words to say on the question. Our text is one of these sweet and helpful messages, and gives us the theme of the morning: “Warning and Comfort for our Trials.” The text begins by saying: “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come to test you, as if some strange experience were befalling you.”

I have given here what I think to be the closest translation, which brings out the force of the original most clearly. Then the apostle, who is Peter in this case, proceeds to mingle admonitions and consolations in an impressive way. We will separate them for convenient discussion.

## **I. The Impressive Warnings.**

### **1. Christians are to avoid evil.**

Verse 15 gives this admonition: “Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a bad character, or a meddler in other people’s affairs.” The meaning of this passage is: if you have to suffer for evil doing, no benefit will come to you, for then you are simply enduring the just penalty of your crimes. It is only when you have to suffer innocently and for Christ’s sake that God will make “all things work together for good” in your behalf. Not only so, but by wrongdoing you bring disservice on the cause of Christ; you harm Him and His followers as well as yourself. Here is the advice that Peter gives elsewhere (2:15): “For this is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.” Ah, indeed! that is the best way to silence criticism — not by excuses and explanations and apologies, but “by well-doing.” That hushes more critical mouths than anything else. When people see you and me doing good and living nobly, they will know for a certainty that we “have been with Jesus and have learned of Him,” and that will be the best advertisement we can give to His religion.

It is not likely that any of us will have to suffer as murderers in the literal sense of the terms; yet it is well for Christian people to be warned that they should engage in no kind of business, give no advice, and set no example

that will lead others into habits and indulgences tending to destroy their health and shorten their lives. As for thieving, the employer who fails to give an honest living wage to his employees, and the workmen who fails to do an honest day's work for an honest wage, are both alike violators of the commandment which says, "Thou shalt not steal." On this matter Christians ought to take high ground, and should give no occasion of offense to the people of the world. The Bible condemns equally the rich who oppress and the laborers who are dishonest.

Dr. Moffatt translates the term "evil-doer" "a bad character." The former term is more literal, and perhaps the apostle meant to use a general term in the midst of the special terms, so that no kind of bad conduct could be charged to the followers of Christ. But then something else that was special came to his mind — the "meddler in other people's affairs." No doubt there were people among those to whom he was writing who professed to be Christians and yet were busybodies, going from house to house, gossiping about their neighbors, and keeping the community in a turmoil. He meant to say to them that they should stay at home and mind their own business. Perhaps if they attended to their own affairs properly, their time would be fully occupied. Oh! my friends, let us not be gossips, scandal-mongers, meddlers. Such an occupation is utterly contemptible and disgusting. For a time the busybody may do some one else a little harm, but in the end he will be exposed, and the whole neighborhood will turn against him. Besides, what reproach is brought upon the Church of Christ when some of its own members go about peddling slander!

In another part of our text there is also this admonition:

## **2. Look for judgment.**

This is solemn warning indeed: "For the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God." We take it that this refers to the Church. Yes; judgment must always begin at the highest point. The Church, which represents Christ's kingdom on the earth, must first be true and clean and upright. If the Church is corrupt, what can you expect of the world? That is the reason Christ became so stern when He drove the money-changers from the temple with a whip of small cords; for He knew that the profaning of the central place of worship implied the grossest corruption in the very head and heart of the nation. Judgment must begin with us, my Christian friends. It does

not stop there, but it begins there. God wants a Church that has no “spot or wrinkle or any such thing;” one that is “holy and without blemish.” While we may not be able to reach that high ideal, we surely should strive toward it.

However, Peter here inserts an important qualifying thought: Though judgment is to begin at the house of God, that is, at the Church, the people of the world must not think that it will end there. Had Peter not made this discrimination, worldly people might think that the divine judgment would be confined to the Church, and that they (the worldlings) would escape. Let no one delude himself with such carnal security. God will judge His Church by the right standard, true enough, but He will judge the people outside of the Church, too, and that by a rule that will be just. So Peter adds this pungent warning: “And if judgment begin with us, what shall be the end of those who disobey the gospel of God? And if the righteous is saved with difficulty (molis), where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?”

This solemn admonition does not mean that Christian people think themselves better than others. No, no; that would be Pharisaical. True Christians never compare themselves with others, as worldly people usually do, who declare, “Well, I am just as good as so and so!” We are not Pharisees, but Christians, who confess that we are saved by the mercy and grace of God. It is the people of a worldly spirit who are self-righteous, thinking they are good enough just as they are to stand before God’s judgment-bar. But this is the apostle’s argument: If those who accept Christ as their Redeemer are saved with difficulty, that is, only by the grace and sacrifice of God’s Son, and not by any merit of their own, what shall be the fate of those who willfully remain in their sins and reject the only way of salvation that God has provided? Let me repeat it: If those who trust Christ and try to serve Him are barely saved, what shall be the doom of the rejectors of God’s mercy?

So much, then, in regard to the searching admonitions of our text. Now let us look at the brighter side of its teaching:

## **II. The Sacred Comforts.**

### **1. Our trials are not strange.**

No doubt Peter was referring to some special trial that had come upon the Christians of his day. Some commentators think it was the beginning of the terrible persecutions under the tyrant Nero. However that may be, we may take all that he says in the text home to ourselves in our times of trial.

He begins affectionately by saying, “Beloved,” because he sympathized with his people in their severe ordeals. He was a true pastor; like Christ, the Good Shepherd, who was willing to lay down His life for the sheep. Then he exhorts them not to think it strange that they should be tried. They could scarcely expect anything else in this sinful world. Paul says (2 Tim. 3:12): “Yea, all who would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” Christ more than once forewarned His apostles that sore trials would come upon them. No, “this vile world is not a friend to grace.” Christian people should not expect to pass through the World without trial. If they served God only for pleasure, their motives would be selfish, and so they would not be real Christians, after all.

But why were these trials to come upon the Christians of Peter’s time? He says “to prove you.” If Christian people’s faith were never tested, it would be very poor faith; it would not be worth the having or even the naming. Indeed, faith thrives best in the soil of trial. That is the very thing that develops, disciplines and refines faith. And herein lies the indispensable use of the tests of trial: they give a chance for the development of the best and strongest Christian virtues. If there were no trials, there would be no strength of character; if there were no danger, there would be no chance to cultivate courage; if there were no mysteries, where would be the opportunity to exercise and discipline faith? So let us not complain about our trials. They will turn out for good, hard as they are to bear now; for Paul says: “Our light afflictions, which are only for the time, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Perhaps the time will come when we shall be able to thank God for every trial that came upon us and that we bore patiently.

There is something more in the text to comfort us in our ordeals. When we endure our fiery trials, we are in good company —

## **2. In company with Christ.**

“You are sharing what Christ suffered; so rejoice in it,” says the text. He had to “endure the contradiction of sinners.” He had to know persecution,

perfidy and betrayal. He had to drink the cup to its dregs in Gethsemane; He had to be spit upon and mocked, and crowned with thorns. And finally He had to go to the ignominious cross and die between two malefactors. Oh, what suffering and shame He endured for us! Yet He was the eternal Son of God, the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Now, when we must suffer trial, we are in fellowship with Him. We know He sympathizes with us, for He remembers His own anguish; indeed, through sympathy He suffers the same affliction we do. And because He feels with us, He is willing to succor and sustain us; and He is also able to deliver us, for He has all authority both in heaven and on earth. And, besides, because He suffered and endured without yielding and complaint, we are encouraged by His example. So, this is our lesson: When we meet with a fiery trial, let us remember that we are suffering as Christ suffered, and thus have sympathetic fellowship with Him.

But if we share Christ's suffering, we shall also be —

### **3. Sharers of His glory.**

See how the text puts it: "When His glory shall be revealed, ye shall rejoice also with exceeding joy." This is jubilant language. Christians who endure trial for Christ's sake shall have a wonderful source of joy in heaven: they shall share the glory and joy of their Lord. That must be a part of "the exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Let us not be impatient in our trials; they will simply enhance our joys in eternity. I sometimes imagine that, every time we Christians endure a trial and disappointment bravely, Christ, who has gone to prepare a place for us, adds a touch of beauty to our heavenly mansions. "What will it be to be there?"

Note again in our text: "If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." I do not know all that this means, but it plainly teaches that, if our sorrows and persecutions are patiently borne —

### **4. The Holy Spirit abides upon us.**

He is called "the Spirit of glory" in contrast with the humiliating reproaches that may come upon Christians for the sake of their confession. They may suffer shame now; but the Spirit of glory is with them through it all, and in



the end will crown them with so much greater glory. The crown of thorns will be exchanged for a crown of honor; the badge of ignominy for a mark of exaltation. The holy Spirit is also called “the Spirit of God,” because Peter means to teach that God is our defender. He agrees with Paul’s inspiring teaching: “If God be for us, who can be against us? ... Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?” God will see to it that the Spirit of glory will finally glorify His afflicted people. Hear Paul again (Rom. 8:18): “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward.” Then he adds that we shall share the glory of the whole redeemed and glorified creation.

"Oh, What, if we are Christ's,  
Is earthly shame or loss?  
Bright shall the glory be  
When we have borne the cross.

"Keen was the trial once,  
Bitter the cup of woe,  
When martyred saints, baptized in blood,  
Christ's suffering shared below.

"Bright is their glory now,  
Boundless their joy above,  
Where on the bosom of their God  
They rest in perfect love.

"Lord, may that grace be ours,  
Like them in faith to bear  
All that of sorrow, grief or pain  
May be our portion here.

“Enough if Thou at last  
The word of blessing give,  
And let us rest in Thine own home,  
Where saints and angels live.”

Again, if our sufferings are properly borne, we shall not only be glorified ourselves, but shall thereby —

## 5. Glorify God.

Perhaps that is the climax — the most important thought of all; for it will include all else. Whatever glorifies God will redound to the welfare of all His creation. He could not be glorified otherwise. Sin and suffering in themselves cannot give Him glory, but only sorrow. He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but desires that the wicked shall turn from his sins and live. When Paul said, “Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God,” the apostle knew that giving honor to God would include all possible blessings to ourselves. God’s glory is not contrary to our happiness, but inclusive of it. So, following our text, “if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this account.” If people see us praising God in the midst of our trials, as Paul and Silas did in the Philippian prison, they will believe that God is able to sustain His people, and so they, too, may be led to trust and obey Him. Many an unbeliever has been converted through the patient endurance of Christian acquaintances.

And now Peter makes the application of the text himself. He gathers all its teaching together in a cluster, as it were, with a great “wherefore:” “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to a faithful Creator.” That is the sweet logic of his argument. Whatever may befall us, whatever sufferings we are called to endure, even though our bodily life itself maybe destroyed, yet no power can annihilate the soul committed to God’s sovereign care. He is able to keep that which we have committed to Him. Men cannot destroy even an atom or an electron. How much less a rational soul made in God’s image? That is why the martyrs were willing to die at the stake and in the arena. They knew that the essential part of their being could not even be injured, to say nothing of being destroyed. Indeed, they knew that martyrdom was simply a quick route to immortal bliss and glory. They remembered Christ’s comforting words: “Be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.”

Ah, yes; the soul can never perish. You cannot bury the soul. Bury the body ever so deeply, heap upon it all the hills and mountains, yet the soul will slip through all the debris of material things, and rise on exultant wings to the glories of heaven. At best we are pilgrims and strangers here; heaven is our home.

"Oh, where shall rest be found,  
Rest for the weary soul?  
'Twere vain the ocean's depth to sound,  
Or pierce to either pole.

"The world can never give  
The bliss for which we sigh;  
'Tis not the whole of life to live,  
Nor all of death to die.

"Beyond this vale of tears  
There is a life above  
Unmeasured by the flight of years —  
And all that life is love."

## 9. A Stirring Call To The Church. Isa. 60:1-6. The Epiphany Of Our Lord.

Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD. (Isaiah 60:1-6)

AGAIN WE HAVE COME to the Epiphany season. In our sermon for Epiphany on the Gospel last year (see Vol. I of this series, pages 62, 63) we explained the meaning of the term. It means an appearance, and refers to any manifestation of Christ. The Gospel for the day recites the Epiphany of the infant Saviour to the wise men from the east.

Our Epistle for today, the festival of Epiphany, is selected from the Old Testament, from the prophecy of Isaiah. No doubt the object in the immediate view of the prophet was the restoration of Jerusalem — at least, that is the conception of most of the interpreters of the book (Delitzsch, Dummelow, and others). But the prophet, moved by the Holy Spirit, wrote words whose full meaning he himself did not comprehend, but which received part of their fulfillment in the First Advent of Christ, are receiving part of it now in the progress of the kingdom, and will receive their complete fulfillment at the Second Advent. The text was a stirring appeal to the Church, that is, Jerusalem and the people of God, in Isaiah's time, and may well be applied by way of accommodation to the Church of today, in view of the momentous character of our times. Many earnest people today are asking the ques-

tion, Will the Church of Jesus Christ rise to her opportunity? To our mind, that is not the best form in which to put the question; it would better be stated thus: Will the Church be true to her divinely appointed message and mission, and thereby be able to meet the strategic situation in these ominous times? The great danger is that the Church will modify and weaken her gospel message, and trim her sails to the popular breeze. If the Church fails to announce a clear message and bear a clear testimony, she may meet with some temporary success, but in the end “Ichabod” will be her sad wail.

A recent writer contends that Christianity has not yet become a universal religion in any and all of her forms of ecclesiastical organization, because she has not yet been able to reach all classes. The critic mistakes the true conception of Christianity. While it desires to reach all classes, it never can adapt its message to all classes, for its mission is not to save people in their sins, but from their sins; therefore it cannot suit those who are unwilling to repent of their sins and be saved from their defilement and dominion. Paul said he desired to “become all things to all men in order that he might thereby save some;” but he knew that the time would never come when all men would receive the message of salvation. So the Church’s mission is the same as that of Christianity — to save as many people from sin as she can by the power of the gospel.

This, then, we take it, is the high and holy commission of the Church of Christ: to bear clear, unequivocal testimony to the gospel, and carry it to the ends of the earth. If you say that she must trim, and adapt, and temporize, you weaken her real influence; you sidestep her real mission in the world. Our text sounds forth the clarion call: “Arise, shine; for thy light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon thee.”

The theme which we deduce from this text is, “The Stirring Call to the Church of Today.” The call is contained in the command, “Arise, shine;” the motive of the call is stated in the next sentence: “For thy light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” This will be the order of our treatment: first, the motives to the call; second, the call itself.

## **I. The Motives To The Call.**

### **1. The Church’s light has come.**

We should always study the logical sequence and order of Holy Writ. The prophet says: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come." That is the Holy Spirit's logic. Jerusalem could not shine till Jehovah's light had illumined her. Dr. Franz Delitzsch (see his Commentary on Isaiah) says: "Zion is to become light; it is to become light because it can. But it cannot of itself, for in itself it has no light, because it has so absolutely given itself up to sin; but there is a light which will communicate itself to her, viz., the light which radiates from the holy nature of God Himself. And this light is salvation, because the Holy One loves Zion: it is also glory, because it not only dispels the darkness, but sets itself, all glorious as it is, in the place of the darkness. Zarah (is risen) is the word commonly applied to the rising of the sun (Mal. 3:20). The sun of suns is Jehovah (Ps. 84:12), the God who is coming (ch. 59:20)." Thus Jerusalem could not shine until Jehovah gave her light.

That is the true doctrine for the Church today and for individuals of the Church. Men must be illumined from on high. But at this point we raise the question, Has our light come? That question was answered affirmatively in our Christmas message. Listen to the announcement of the angel to the shepherds of Bethlehem: "Be not afraid; behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour who is Christ the Lord." Then the heavenly choir sang the first Christmas anthem: "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will among men." The apostle John bore the same testimony: "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it... This is the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Matthew, quoting Isaiah, says: "The people that sat in darkness saw a great light, and to them that sat in the region and shadow of death, to them did light spring up." Yes, Jesus Christ, "the Sun of righteousness," has come "with healing in His wings," to irradiate the world. "The Dayspring from on high hath visited us." So our light has come, and we should "arise and shine."

This, then, is the divine order: first come to God to be illumined, and then shine. How well this comports with the teaching of Christ! He first said, "I am the light of the world;" then, having imparted the light to His disciples, He commanded, "Let your light shine before men." He said first, "Come unto Me;" then, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation." First He "opened His mouth, and taught them, saying;" then, "Ye are witnesses of these things." We cannot "arise and shine" until

Christ gives us the light. We are opaque bodies, in our sinful estate; black, hurtling stars flying out of our orbits and endangering ourselves and others. But, oh, Church of the living God! when the light of Christ illumines us, and converts our opaqueness into radiancy, then we will shine with a brilliance that will enlighten the world.

And this is the only hope of the Church in these trying times of the reconstruction of the world. We may not always be able to arrange a fixed program; for programs, important as they are, belong largely to the sphere of human judgment and wisdom; but we can come to the light, and receive divine power; then when, like the apostles on the day of Pentecost, we bear our testimony, it will be accompanied by the power of God. Do not think this vague and indefinite. When the Church is filled with the holy light of the gospel of Jesus Christ, never fear but that God will guide her in articulating the best program for carrying out her mission. Redeemed and regenerated men are earnest men, with both initiative and invention. They will always find a way to bring things to pass.

The hope of the Church, therefore, lies in the gospel of Christ, in supernatural endowment and grace. No substitute for the gospel will meet the need of the hour. Nostrums will not heal the hurt of the world; it must have a remedy, a specific, and that is found only in the Bible, and in the work of Christ both for us and in us. Our Christology must be true and our Soteriology sound. I despair of human wisdom being able to cope with the situation. Recently I have been reading two excellent books dealing with human systems of philosophy; and these studies have convinced me more than ever of the inadequacy of mere human thinking to amend and save the world. One of the books is Dr. Mullins' "Freedom and Authority in Religion," issued in 1913. In a brilliant chapter entitled, "The Intractable Residues of Science," the author shows how limited the scientific knowledge of the world is, and therefore how incapable of dealing with the deep moral and spiritual exigencies of the world. I do not disparage science; indeed, I love it, and improve every available opportunity to study it; but, let me ask, have you ever known a man to be saved from sin merely by science? Was Paul? Was Justin Martyr? Was Augustine? Was Luther? Was Bunyan? Was Jerry McAulley? No, no; not one, not one. But all these men were saved by the gospel of Christ. Let science do her needed work in the world; but let her keep her place. Let her not think she can become a substitute for the gospel. She may be a helpful handmaid to religion, but when she wants to be a reli-

gion herself, or wants to destroy religion, she is going far beyond her sphere.

Dr. Mullins' book contains another powerful chapter, "The Unstable Equilibrium of Philosophy." He examines various modern systems — Monism, Idealism, Personalism, Pluralism and Pragmatism, each of which has its learned advocates — but he finds them contradicting one another, while each of them is proved to be unstable and fluid; not one of them can be made the basis of an authoritative religion which will really conquer the world's rebellion and sin.

The other book to which I have been giving some attention is also a 1913 book: Dr. Aaron Schuyler's "A Critical History of Philosophical Theories." It is well to refresh one's memory by perusing a new and cogent presentation like this work. But the deepest impression left on our mind is this: how these human systems of speculation contradict and nullify one another; how limited they are in a knowledge of the ultimate nature of things; most of all, how utterly unable they are to save the soul from sin and give it peace with God. Some of these systems do not even pretend to touch upon the sore of humanity. Many of them do not even admit that there is such a sore. Let men think and speculate, but let them also remember that they cannot "by searching find out God," nor discover His sovereign remedy for sin. No; the Church must always fall back upon Christ and the gospel.

"But does the gospel always save?" the skeptic inquires. Let us answer calmly and frankly. No, it does not always save. And why? Because one of its fundamental principles is that it will not force the will. It is ethical, not mechanical. But we can truthfully make this assertion: the gospel always saves those who come to God in Christ's name; it always saves those who are willing to let it save them. It has proved its efficiency by saving millions of sinners in the world's history, and by saving many today. We may go still further: All that are and have been saved have been saved by the gospel, and in no other way. If that does not prove the adequacy of a religion that is ethical, not coercive and mechanical, then we despair of proving anything.

The next verse of the text teaches the same doctrine, but lays a somewhat different emphasis: "For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall rise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee." That is, while darkness will surround the heathen people, God's light will shine upon Zion. What will be the result? Another strong motive for her to "arise and shine!"



## **2. Many people will flock to Zion.**

With darkness all around, and Zion alone robed in brilliancy, no wonder the prophet could say: “And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about and see: they all gather themselves together; they come unto thee.”

Put into modern form, and fitted to the modern Church, the thought is this: When the Church shines with divine radiancy, the nations and their rulers around her will behold her light, and will come to her. Is it not true that, whenever the Church has turned to God, and has preached the full gospel of redemption, there have been large ingatherings? Every real reformation has been a return to God and His Word. Nothing else will be effective now. It always comes back to the Bible doctrine. Therefore the prophet Isaiah could not seal his lips; he had to speak out (chap. 62:1-3): “For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth. And the nations shall see thy righteousness and kings thy glory; and thou shalt be called by a new name which the mouth of Jehovah shall pronounce. Thou shalt also be a crown of beauty in the hand of Jehovah, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.”

## **3. Zion’s scattered people will return to her.**

That is a very modern truth; just as discernible today as it was in Isaiah’s time. O Church of the living God, as soon as the glory of Christ encircles thee and His power endues thee, “thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall be borne in thy arms.” Again and again we have seen this proved in individual churches. Sometimes a church sinks into a lethal spiritual state; it may be the result of mere spiritual apathy; it may be the result of wrangling and jealousy. Then many people lose heart and forsake the church. By and by the spirit of true religion is revived through the faithful preaching, teaching and living of the gospel; then you see the straying and disheartened ones coming back, for they want to be where the true light shines, where real spiritual food is dispensed, where their souls can be refreshed from the presence of the Lord. And this will be true of the Church as a whole, if she will shine with the glory of Jehovah.

## 4. The wealth of the world will be brought to Zion.

Observe the poetical phrasing of the text: “Then shalt thou see, and be radiant, and thy heart shall thrill and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned unto thee, and the wealth of the nations shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praises of Jehovah.”

Translated into plain modern prose, this poetical description means that, when the Church gets right with God and His righteousness shines upon her, she will have plenty of money; the coffers of the world will be open to her. When the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, people will not be niggardly; they will open their purses.

“Can we whose souls are lighted  
With wisdom from on high —  
Can we to men benighted  
The lamp of life deny?  
Salvation! O Salvation!  
The joyful sound proclaim,  
Till earth’s remotest nation  
Has learned Messiah’s name.”

This has been a fruitful subject. I have dwelt upon it at some length because I feel that the Church’s spiritual equipment is the cardinal and fundamental thing. It does not consist in trappings, or sensational programs, or discussions of civic and economic arrangements; it consists in spiritual efficiency through the Christ of the gospel. “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.” Thus far we have considered the great impelling motives of the Church’s call. We must now speak briefly of the call itself.

## II. The Church’s Call.

It is very simple. No labored theory is announced, no intricate program. It is only this: “Arise, shine!” Since thy light has come, and the glory of Jehovah has risen upon thee, rise and shine. We can see the picture that appeared to

the vision of the prophet when he wrote these stirring words. Jerusalem is represented by the symbol of a woman lying prone upon the ground in darkness, sin and despair. The prophet sees the dawning of a brighter day. The east grows radiant. God is visiting His people; the Sun of righteousness is springing up with healing in His wings. So the prophet goes to the prostrate women, and cries to her, “Arise! Let the beams of the morning irradiate thy face, and let it shine upon all around you.” Of course, cleansing and new attire are included, for the prophet had previously said (ch. 52:1) “Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem.” The message comes to the Church today:

## **1. Arise!**

Get upon thy feet, O Zion. Cast dull sloth away. The day has come, the sun is shining; awake from thy slumbers, and do the work before thee.

The Church today needs such a stentorian voice to arouse her from her lethargy. The trouble is, too many people in the Church are asleep. They are very alert for money, business and pleasure; but spiritually they have sunken into a lethal state. I think the most appalling and disheartening thing in both the Church and the world today is spiritual indifference. Like a pall is hangs over us; like a chain dangles about our necks. This spirit of apathy creeps into the hearts of those of us who would be in earnest. It is like creeping paralysis. We must cry aloud as Paul did: “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give thee light.” The first thing for the Church to do therefore, is to arise, to get upon her feet, and lay hold of the great work that is at hand. The fields are white unto the harvest.

You say, What is the work to be done? The very question betrays you, showing that you have been asleep, and do not see the fields waiting for the reapers. To drop all figures of speech, how many non-churched people are there in your community? You know there are thousands of them. There is your field, oh, people of the Church! To edify and encourage the saints is only a small part of the Church’s work. Indeed, all the saints should be bending their efforts to reach the unsaved multitudes out in the world. Evangelism of the sober but earnest kind ought to be the chief occupation of the Church. We ought so to energize as to realize the vision of the prophet when he exclaimed, “Who are these that fly as clouds and as doves to their windows?”

A faithful pastor said to us the other day, “The Lord has added one hundred and twenty persons to our church within six months.” “How was it done?” we asked. “Did you hold big meetings?” The answer was, “No, my people and I just went after the people in our community.” “And they came to Church?” “They did,” he replied. “And when they came, what did you give them?” we inquired anxiously. “Only the pure gospel; only the pure Word of God,” was his fervent reply.

“My brethren,” says the apostle, “if any among you err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he that converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death and shall cover a multitude of sins.” That ought to be sufficient incentive for any activity that Christian people may put forth. “They that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”

Not only should the Church arise from her sloth and be active, but she should also —

## **2. Shine!**

While her light is a divinely conferred light, it is not merely a reflected light like that of the moon, which simply reflects the light of the sun, while she herself is an opaque body. No; Christian people have a light within them that shines out through the surface. The Holy Spirit illumines the mind, and when that is lighted up, the face too will grow radiant. A mere external light is not enough; it must also be immanent. The point now is that the Church should let her inner light shine.

It may be thought that, if she has the inner light, she needs no command or exhortation to shine, but will shine spontaneously. However, that is only partly true. The Church may receive divine light, and then circumstances may arise to make it difficult to let her light shine; the temptation may come through cowardice, or lethargy, or policy to hide the light under a bushel, or to obscure it by compromise. So it is necessary always in the Church’s history to hear the exhortation to remove all obstacles that may dim, blur or obstruct the light that Christ has brought to her. After men are regenerated, there is still something to do. There are still temptations to be resisted and overcome. Their wills must now cooperate with the divine will, bringing about their progressive sanctification. So the command to the Church today

is: As the light of life in Christ has shone upon you, do not darken that light, or discolor it in any way, but let it shine forth in all the purity of its celestial radiancy. And this is to be done by bearing faithful testimony to the pure Word of God and by living circumspectly in the sight of God and men. I repeat it, and repeat it again, the Church can shine only by preserving pure doctrine and practicing pure living. The two must go together; they must be indissolubly joined. In this way the Church will “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.”

Here are two clarion calls to the Church of Christ today:

“So let our lips and lives express  
The holy gospel we profess —  
So let our works and virtues shine  
To prove the doctrine all divine.”

...

“To serve the present age,  
My calling to fulfil —  
Oh, may it all my powers engage  
To do my Master’s will!”

# 10. Golden Rules For Christian Living. Rom. 12:1-5. The First Sunday After The Epiphany

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. (Romans 12:1-5)

LAST SUNDAY we were urged to “arise and shine;” to be active in winning souls for Christ and extending the borders of His kingdom. Our motto might have been put in this quatrain:

“Let us then be up and doing,  
With a heart for any fate;  
Still achieving, still pursuing,  
Learn to labor and to wait.”

Today our lesson connects logically with the lesson of last Sunday. In order to act and shine effectively certain traits of Christian character are needed. These traits are vividly set forth in the Epistle for today. We, are now in the midst of the Epiphany season. Just as Christ in all His epiphanies before men exemplified the true principles and life, so we in our epiphanies should follow His example, and thus be His true and effectual representatives. We are sure that, if Christian people will follow the directions of our Epistle for today, they will not miss the mark. We gather together the several points of the text under this suggestive theme: “Golden Rules for Christian Living.”

# **Rule 1. Consecrate Your Bodies To Christ's Service.**

## **1. The Earnestness of Paul**

Paul is very much in earnest on this subject. He says: "I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God." He knew that the body and soul are so closely and organically united by their very creation that one could not be truly devoted to Christ without the other. The physical life must be pure or the soul cannot be pure. The body is not intended for lust; it is intended for the Lord; it is to be "the temple of the Holy Ghost." Therefore it should be kept wholesome and pure for its heavenly tenant. The Holy Spirit certainly will not dwell in a foul body.

## **2. Living Sacrifice**

Paul enjoins thus: "Present your bodies a living sacrifice." What does he mean by the word "living?" No doubt he refers to the Old Testament sacrifices, when an animal was slain and its dead body laid upon the altar. Of course, in the impressive symbolism of the Old Testament dispensation this was right, for it typified the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross "tasting death for every man." But, now that Christ has come and has fulfilled all the Old Testament types and shadows, the apostle wants Christ's followers to live, and to consecrate their living physical energies to the service of God. Perhaps he also thought of martyrdom. And of course he would have said, if it had to be, a Christian should be willing to die for his faith, as Paul himself did; but he also meant that a Christian should not wait to die for Christ; he should not court martyrdom as if it were a work of merit; he should live for Christ; it is just as great a thing to live for Him as to die for Him. What excellent counsel for us today! We are not called to die for our Lord, for the days of martyrdom are happily past. But we are exhorted to consecrate our living powers to Christ. After a man is dead, the world has the benefit of his influence, and that is worth much; but we need live men who will exert a direct influence over their fellowmen.

## **3. "Holy and Well-Pleasing"**

The apostle also declares that this living sacrifice of the body is “holy and well-pleasing to God.” That is an inspiring truth, to know that our physical activities, if properly directed, are pleasing to our heavenly Father. In and of itself the body is not sinful. Sin does not reside in matter. Sin is something that belongs primarily to the mind, especially the will. Adam and Eve did not first sin with the body by taking the forbidden fruit; they first sinned with their minds by making the evil choice; then through their bodies they put the mind’s choice into action. True, the sin of the mind, by virtue of the mind’s organic connection with the body, must affect the physical organism; but let no one think that sin had its origin or now has its root in the body, as Plato, the Gnostics, and the Manichaeans thought, and as some modern mystics hold. Physical substance by itself cannot be guilty of moral evil. It is only when the mind directs the body to do evil that the act becomes moral evil. If the body were forced against the will to do evil, it would not be a sinful act, would not be moral evil.

So let us remember that the human body in and of itself is not sinful. Originally it was created good and pure by the Almighty just as the soul was. The dust of the ground — Dr. Keil says, “the finest material of the soil of Eden” — was created in the beginning, and God pronounced it “good;” and therefore, when God took some of that material and molded it into a human body, it was good and pure just as it came from His creative hand. It was the sinful choice of the mind that introduced corruption into the body. But when the soul is regenerated, the body becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit, and when consecrated to His service, becomes holy and acceptable to Him.

#### **4. “Reasonable Service”**

Paul was always precise. He always used the right words. He adds that the consecration of the body as a living sacrifice is “our reasonable service.” I do not see why the American revised version and Dr. Moffatt translated the word *logikos* “Spiritual,” and made it “our spiritual service.” The word means “according to reason,” and is the Greek word from which we derive our word “logic.” True enough, the consecration of the body is a spiritual service, because it is in obedience to the mandates of the Holy Spirit. But Paul used the word “reasonable.” This agrees precisely with what has been said — that the body, as well as the soul, belongs to God. What is more rea-



sonable, seeing that God created both, and made them pure and good? In view of the fact, too, that Christ assumed human nature in both parts, physical as well as psychical, it is a reasonable doctrine. God created man a dual being. He wove together soul and body in indissoluble bonds. Therefore Christ came to redeem man in the entirety of his being, and thus will overcome and bring to naught “all the works of the devil.” This work will be completed at the resurrection. So we have every reason to “present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.”

“Take my hands, and let them move  
At the impulse of Thy love;  
Take my feet, and let them be  
Swift and beautiful for Thee; Take my voice, and let me sing  
Always only for my King. Take my lips, and let them be  
Filled with messages from Thee.”

## **Rule 2. Be Transformed, Not Conformed.**

### **1. Not Conformed**

Paul was very much afraid of conformity; he said: “And be not conformed to this world.” If we were to translate it literally, it would be: “And do not fashion yourselves according to this age.”

Now that is most important counsel. There are men today who counsel directly against this Pauline advice. They say we must conform our theology and our practice to this “modern age.” There must be a reconstruction of theology; the creeds must be put away or revised, and the Bible must be “expurgated” and made to suit the “modern trend.” What do they mean? They mean that we should make the Bible fit into “modern” science, philosophy and rationalism. Surely we would have a great time adapting our theology to “modern” science, which changes its face every few years, theories that were held a decade ago being called “antiquated” now. The same is true of philosophy. We have monism and pluralism, materialism and idealism, deism and pantheism, mysticism and pragmatism, and’ all of them are contradictory, so that if one of them is true, the rest are fundamentally erroneous; and yet we are asked to fashion our doctrine and revise the Bible ac-

according to “modern” philosophy! But we ask, Which is the accepted modern philosophy?

Suppose that Moses had fashioned his religion according to the age in which he lived! To suppose such a thing is to condemn it. Suppose that Elijah, Isaiah, Paul, John, Peter, and Christ had been obsessed with the mania for conformity; where would the world be today? It would still be groping in the darkness of paganism. The fact is, historically no great and good man ever was a conformist, but rather had to oppose the *Zeitgeist*, and transform it in accordance with the will of God. So we will continue to appeal to the Bible as the final authority, not to the modern tendency. Well enough, whatever is true in modern science and thought we shall be glad to adopt, but we cannot make it the rule of our life to fashion ourselves according to any age, modern, medieval or ancient. We stand with the orthodox Church which “receives and holds the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the only infallible rule of faith and practice.”

Then, regarding many of the fashions of the world, we need the warning not to be conformed to them: the fashion for material gain and display, for worldly pleasure, which is usually of a light and frivolous a character, for indecent dress and style, for profaning the Lord’s Day, for automobile driving when the services of God’s house are going on. In these, and a thousand other ways, it is wrong to be molded by the vain fashion and glory of the world.

## **2. “Be Ye Transformed”**

There is something better, far better, than conformity, and it is stated in the text: “But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

The Biblical motto is transformity, not conformity. And what does the text mean when it Says, “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind?” It is very simple; it means, do not go to the world or the age for your norm of life, but go to Christ, who will renew and regenerate you by the Holy Spirit through the Word, and then you will be “new creatures in Christ Jesus.” Then you will be able to stand uprightly and resist every evil tendency; you will not be tossed hither and you by every charge of worldly style, pleasure or thought. Instead of conforming to the age, you will help to

mold the age according to the Word and the will of God. That is our proper relation to the age — to transform it, not to be conformed to it.

Yes, my friends, we must get back to rock bottom; back to the old gospel; the gospel that saves men from sin, not merely from poverty and sorrow; the gospel that converts men, that gives them the new birth, that breaks the worldly mind and creates the heavenly mind. Be transformed by the Holy Spirit, and you will not be conformed to the age. Before us lies “The Shorter Bible,” edited by a liberalist, who says in the preface that his purpose is “simply to single out and set in logical, and as far as possible, chronological order those parts of the Bible which are of vital interest and practical value to the present age.” Then he omits many of the most vital and essential parts of the New Testament. Besides, he uses the very word that Paul used when he (Paul) warned us so solemnly against conforming ourselves to “this age.” We observe, by the way, that he translates the text in this way: “Do not adopt the practices of this world.” He avoids the word “age;” and in using the word “practices,” which is not in the original, he makes religion an external a thing, whereas Paul means that in spirit we are not to be “conformed to this age.” In giving this warning Paul follows Christ, who called his generation “a wicked and adulterous generation;” and also Peter, who cried out on the day of Pentecost, “Save yourselves from this. untoward generation.”

### **Rule 3. Get The Right Estimate Of Yourself.**

Here Paul speaks very plainly: “For I say, through the grace that was given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think soberly according as God has dealt to each man the measure of faith.” Two thoughts are embodied in that sentence:

#### **1. Do not over-estimate yourself.**

That is a serious fault of some people; they think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. They are egotists; “wise in their own conceit.” They aspire to positions which they are not fitted to occupy, and demand honors to which they are not entitled. Always thinking of themselves, they

are ready to take offense at every apparent slight. Naturally other people cannot always think of them as highly as they think of themselves; therefore they are hurt, declare that they are not appreciated, desert the Church, and forsake the work. All of which conduct proves that their motives are selfish and their spirit proud, that they think more of self than of Christ, and are more anxious about their own glory than about His.

Ah! that is the bane of the Church — so many people think more highly of themselves than they ought to think; hence they wrangle for honors; they seek the highest places; they get themselves in front of the cross, and hide it, arms and all, from the view of the people. There are very few church disturbances that do not have their root in human vanity and ambition. Instead of “in honor preferring one another,” many people have a decided preference for themselves and their own renown. Instead of trying to be “the servant of all,” they want all to be their servants.

However, Paul presented the other side of this question:

## **2. Have the right estimate of yourself.**

Do not let it be either too high or too low: “Let him think soberly, according as God hath given to each man the measure of faith.” That is to say, every man should try to get his correct measurement, and find out the place that God intended him to fill. That is a sane judgment of oneself. While some people place their appraisal of themselves too high, others do not have enough confidence in themselves; and that is wrong too. They declare that they have no talents or influence. They are excessively timid. That prevents them from being as useful as they should be. It is not the man who has a super-abundance of confidence in himself who is likely to do the most good for Christ’s cause, but rather the man who is humble and modest, and yet tries to do his duty and obey God’s call. Paul holds up the right standard. Speaking of his great calling as a preacher and an apostle he exclaims: “Who is sufficient for these things?” And then, as if catching himself, he adds: “Our sufficiency is of God.”

There are some people here who have an over-modest idea of themselves. We admire modesty; it is a most beautiful trait; but when it becomes timidity, it has too much of the element of the man-fearing spirit, and so may stand in the way of your usefulness. May I tell you a little incident to illustrate my idea? A man was once solicited to become a Christian, if for

no other reason, then for the sake of his influence. Having too low an estimate of himself, he replied, "I have no more influence than a farthing rushlight." "But wait," said the Christian worker; "a farthing rushlight may do a great deal of harm or a great deal of good. On the one hand, it may set some inflammable material on fire, and that may spread to other material, until by and by there is a great and destructive conflagration. On the other hand, a man may read the Bible or some other good book by the light of the little candle, and that may be the means of his conversion; and others may be brought to Christ through him, and thus the good influence may spread from soul to soul and from generation to generation and be never-ending." Too low a conception of yourself may do harm as well as too high a conception.

## **Rule 4. Find Your Proper Place In The Church.**

Each one has a place if he wants one. Paul says: "For even as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another."

In the Church there is room for great diversity of talent, just as there are many different organs in the body, each performing its special function. If one organ does not perform its office normally, or does not perform it at all, the other organs are affected. So in the Church. If you and I refuse to do our part, it will injure the efficiency of the whole Church. Surely we do not want others to do our work in the Church, or the community, or the state, while we become a dead weight on other people. Whatever our peculiar gift may be, let us use it. I cannot decide for each one of you precisely what you ought to do. You ought to think soberly of your capacities, and try to find just what kind of work you are best fitted to do; then do it gladly and zealously, thankful to God that He has made you a junior partner in the great enterprise of evangelizing the world. He wants a Church composed of people Who are "zealous of good works."

Let us note, too, that, though we are many members with a large diversity of gifts and functions, yet we "are one body in Christ." This means that we are first to be in union with Christ, then with one another. In this way all

of us will work for one object, the progress of Christ's kingdom. That will give concert to our efforts. That makes a united Church — all working for Christ; all thinking about Him and seeking His glory and approval. Thus we shall keep “the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace.”

But when people labor for themselves instead of for Christ, they will be sure to work at cross purposes, because then their diverse interests will come into conflict.

Now let us gather together in one strand our several lines of thought. It may seem at first glance that there is no unity in the four “Golden Rules for Christian Living” that have engaged our attention; but with a little further thought we shall find that they coalesce. First, present your bodies a living sacrifice to God; but the body does not control the mind, but the mind the body; therefore, second, it is necessary to be transformed by the renewing of the mind; this being done, third, each one ought to have a right estimate of himself, neither too high or too low; that, in the fourth place, will lead to each one's finding his proper place in the Church and working for the good of the entire congregation. So all the inspired Golden Rules are linked together in a living unity. We cannot cultivate one Christian virtue properly without bringing up the rest in their due proportion. For that reason a real Christian character is a symmetrical character. The Psalmist said: “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.” May our lives be such as to “prove the doctrine all divine.” Amen.

# **11. Divers Gifts And Graces And Their Proper Use. Rom. 12:6-16. The Second Sunday Af- ter The Epiphany.**

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. (Romans 12:6-16)

OUR LESSON TODAY is a string of pearls. Every pearl is a precious gift or grace belonging to the Christian life. One cannot be a good Christian without cultivating all sides of one's character in due proportion. The true Christian cannot be a narrow or one-sided man. If all the injunctions of last Sunday, today and next Sunday were heeded, the Church of Christ would surely be "Without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." These lessons are very practical. In the earlier part of this epistle to the Romans Paul discussed vital doctrines, such as sin, faith, justification, man's relation to the law, salvation by grace; in the latter part he unfolds the practice of these doctrines. That is the proper logical order: first, the true doctrine, or what we should believe; second, the right practice, or the carrying out of the doctrine into life. The modernists who reverse this order will have neither sound doctrine nor genuine practice.

A word about the Epiphany season. The Gospels deal with various appearances of our Lord — His appearance as an infant to the wise men from the east, His appearance as a youth in the temple, His appearance as a man at the wedding of Cana. What is the relation of these Epiphanies to our lessons from the Epistles? It is this: Christ proved by His manifestations that He was our Lord and Saviour; we are to prove by our true Christian lives that we have accepted Him as our Saviour and are trying to serve Him faithfully. So there is a vital connection between them. Let us now classify and examine the pearls on the golden thread of our Epistle for this Epiphany Sunday. The first part deals with our talents; the second with the graces we should cultivate.

## **I. Our Varied Gifts.**

### **1. The gift of prophecy.**

Let us put the apostle's injunction into plain English: "If you have the talent of prophecy, use it according to the proportion of faith." I do not believe that the word "proportion" gives quite a clear idea of Paul's thought. The original word is analogia, from which we get our English words, "analogy" and "analogue." The meaning therefore undoubtedly is that the gift of prophecy should be used in accordance with the "analogy of faith" — the faith or doctrine that the apostle had been teaching. The prophet is not to become a fanatic, an individualist, a wandering star, a false illuminist; he is to conform his prophecy to the faith once for all delivered to the saints. The revelation was given to Paul and his fellow-apostles, so that they could say, "Follow our teaching as we follow Christ, and do not seek for another gospel."

This is much needed advice today. Here lies a new book on our desk, giving numerous quotations from professed religious teachers of this country, who have written books which are intended to be used as texts in colleges and seminaries. It is really distressing to note how these would-be prophets mutilate the Bible. They completely disobey Paul's injunction that a prophet should use his gift "according to the analogy of faith" — in agreement with the true doctrine of the gospel. I cannot now take the time to show how wrong and illogical these men are; but I want to call your atten-



tion to one important thought. Many people today think that God has punished Germany because of her rationalism, her rejection of the Bible and of evangelical religion. Will He not also bring dire punishment on our own country for its many departures from the evangelical faith? I believe that Paul, were he living today, would put the advice of his text in this language: "If you have a talent for prophecy, use it according to the Bible, which is God's revealed Word."

## **2. The gift of ministry.**

This does not refer to preachers, though they would be included, but to service. It would appear that "service" is the popular word just now. It is a good word, but it may be abused. Some people place so much emphasis upon it as actually to think that they will merit salvation by their activities. So they put service up against faith and doctrine. That is a perversion of the true Biblical order, which is: first go to Christ by faith, and be saved by His power and grace; then serve Him and your fellowmen with fidelity and effectiveness. Our motto should be, "Saved to serve," not "Serve in order to be saved." Any doctrine that nullifies salvation by grace will render the Church anemic, because it disconnects men from the true and only source of spiritual power, which is Jesus Christ.

But when men are saved by grace, let them faithfully minister to others. Let them not merely talk about serving, but actually serve. Some men indulge in beautiful rhetoric about service, but do not put themselves to the least inconvenience to help their fellowmen. One trouble today is, we have too much rhetoric, too much oratory, and too little practice. Therefore the earnest exhortation of our text is greatly needed: Let him that has the gift of service, truly give himself to that service, and not merely talk about it.

## **3. The gift of teaching.**

No gift of God is finer than that of teaching. There are people who possess this talent in a marked degree. As Paul put it, they are "apt to teach." And they love their work. He who has this gift should devote himself to it; nor should he allow himself to be diverted from it by the offer of more money in some other but less useful employment. The true instructor does not do his work for money. God pity the teacher who makes that his chief object.

Once in our boyhood we asked a teacher whether he liked his work. He replied, "I like the money better!" No wonder his success was less than mediocre! It must be a sore ordeal to be a teacher when one does not really love the work, does not feel a real interest in imparting instruction. Of course, we do not mean that the teacher should not receive a sufficient livelihood to relieve him of worry, so that he can throw his whole soul into his work; but, with the real teacher, money is only a means, not an end. He does not want an exorbitant income; he does not want to roll in luxury and wealth, for that would be a diversion from his chosen calling in life. You will spoil both teachers and preachers by making them rich.

Not only should the teacher give himself wholly to his vocation, but he should, above all, be careful about the kind of instruction he imparts. He should never seek to destroy the faith of his pupils in those truths and doctrines that make for true character and good citizenship, that will be a stay and comfort to them in time of trouble, and will fortify them against temptation. Many teachers take their calling too lightly. They do not realize their responsibility in dealing with the human mind during its most impressionable and plastic period. Science, literature, history, the classic, vocational training — all are important; but teachers should remember that morality and religion are also vital to the highest welfare of individuals, of society and of State.

#### **4. The gift of public speech.**

This is perhaps a better translation than the word "exhortation," which is used in the authorized and revised versions. The original really means to call or summon earnestly, and hence indicates fervent public address. So the public speaker is to devote himself truly and zealously to his calling, according to the grace given to him. It is a special gift, this endowment of public speaking. Not all persons are qualified to speak edifyingly before audiences. It was never intended that all persons should be impressive public speakers, or God would have given to all this talent. More than that, where there is a speaker, there must also be auditors. If all aspired to be speakers, what confusion there would be! "To every man his work." Listening is a fine art, even as is good speaking. Just as there are poor speakers, so there are poor listeners — fidgety, inattentive, dull, unappreciative. Every public

speaker picks out the good listeners from the listless ones. Many a good address has been spoiled by poor auditors.

But real, earnest public speech is a valuable talent. You and I have heard sermons or addresses that turned the currents of our lives, directing them heavenward. The man who has a gift of this kind is in duty bound to use and develop it for the glory of God and the good of mankind. He should beware of perverting it to base uses. To employ “honeyed speech” for selfish purposes is the profanation of a God-given talent. Rightly pursued, no vocation is more important than that of the preacher, the lecturer, the lawyer, the statesman. But every public speaker should remember that mere rhetoric and oratory are not enough; he must also translate his silvery phrases into actual practice. To preach one thing and practice another is hypocrisy, and will forfeit the confidence of those who hear.

## **5. The gift of contributing.**

This refers to our gifts of money or other material gifts. The text says that giving should be done with simplicity; I prefer the word sincerity. We should never give for mere show; rather, we should not let our left hand know what our right hand is doing. To give ostentatiously is really to spoil the merit of generosity. Christ sternly rebuked the Pharisees for this fault, that of giving alms for mere display and worldly praise. On the other hand, the poor widow who gave all her living, though it was only a mite, received his commendation. Some people have the talent for accumulating wealth. How much good they may do if they will also be liberal toward good causes! And if they will give with singleness of mind, God will bless both gifts and givers.

## **6. The gift of leadership.**

Here is a fine talent. Some men, it is said, are “born leaders.” How is this power to be exercised? The text says “with diligence.” No doubt the word that Paul used included the motive, for if the leader will give himself devotedly to his proper task, he certainly will not try to exploit the people, and make them subserve his selfish interest. Nothing is more important than that the leader of men should have the spirit of Christ, and should regard himself rather as a servant of the people than in any other light. The trouble is, so

often an unholy ambition takes possession of the man who has been dowered with the gift of leadership, causing him to think more of the authority he possesses than of the welfare of his people. This is wrong, and often leads to the most injurious results. It is the cause of all the tyranny and oppression in the world. God will hold every leader to a strict account; for his fine talent was not entrusted to him for selfish, but for altruistic purposes.

## **7. The gift of service to the poor and sad.**

Some people are especially adapted to do good in this way. Whatever they do, the text bids them do it with cheerfulness. In that way they carry sunshine and good will wherever they go. A young college girl told us that she found genuine pleasure in going among the poor, white and colored, studying their condition and needs, and trying to help them. Blessed be our slum-workers, our college-settlement people, our inner mission workers, and all others who devote their lives to unselfish and beneficent work! Perhaps they do not think much about the reward they will sometime receive, but some day the Master will say to them: "Inasmuch as ye have done these things unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done them unto me. Enter into the joy of your Lord."

We have now considered the special gifts (charismata) mentioned in the text. Let us remember two things: first, they are gifts, enduements; therefore we should not be proud of them, but thankful for them; second, all of them should be used to promote the kingdom of God, and never used selfishly. Then, too, each person should appreciate the gifts and services of others. None should either despise or envy another's gifts. All are needed. Every niche should be filled. Some gifts may be more outstanding and conspicuous than others, but they may not be more necessary, and may not receive a greater reward. What a Church we should have, what a state, what a nation, what a world, if every one would use his talent faithfully in the fear of the Lord for the good of mankind! Then every position would be filled effectively, and no unseemly wrangling for honors would ever occur.

## **II. Our Needed Graces.**

### **1. Love is to be "without dissimulation."**

The revised version says “without hypocrisy.” That is the literal translation. One might say that love is to be unfeigned, sincere; “the real thing,” as Dr. Moffatt renders it. Love is too sacred a thing to be feigned. As Christians we must not love in word only, but in deed and in truth.

## **2. We are to “abhor the evil, and cleave to the good.”**

The Bible always gives sturdy ethical advice. It never blurs the distinction between good and evil, as pantheists, evolutionists, and others do today. Some people ever seek an excuse for sin; they cannot help it; their heredity, temperament or environment is to blame; or sin is only a necessary step in the evolution of the human family; or it is their fate to do wrong; or this, or that, or something else. Anything to afford them an excuse for their wrongdoing! But the Bible puts the responsibility where it belongs — with the individual. Christ said trenchantly to the Scribes and Pharisees, “Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life.” If they could not do right in their own strength, as they could not, He had come to help them, to put the spirit of rightness and righteousness into their natures, so that they could obey the injunction of the text: “Cleave to the good; shun the evil.” Let us remember that sin is the one thing that is obnoxious to God, while His delight is in them that do well. He rejected Cain because “sin was crouching at the door;” he accepted Abel because he came with sincere repentance and faith.

## **3. “A Real Brotherhood”**

What does Paul mean by the next sentence: “In brotherly love be tenderly affectioned one to another.” Put in that way, it is awkward writing; it is what we would call rhetorical redundancy. We do not believe that Paul would express himself so crudely. By going back to the original we will discover his beautiful meaning: “In the philadelphia be truly affectionate toward one another.” “Philadelphia” means the brotherhood. So this is Paul’s exhortation: “In the Church you have a professed brotherhood; let it be a real brotherhood, based on genuine affection, not merely a nominal one.” Just as he had previously said: “Let your love be without hypocrisy.” The apostle advises Christians to be genuine — pure gold through and through.

## **4. “In honor giving one another the preference.”**

Here is another pearl on the circlet of graces: “In honor giving one another the preference.” That is just the opposite of the way of the world, where there is a greedy scramble for emoluments and positions and honors, and this spirit of selfishness prevails among both individuals and nations. Egoism reigns, and altruism pines away. No wonder the hurt of the world is not healed!

## **5. “Be Fervent”**

I cannot believe that Paul would use so redundant an expression as the revised version attributes to him in the next verse: “In diligence not slothful.” Surely Paul would not employ such awkward tautology. I think Godet has given the proper interpretation and translation: “As to zeal, be not slothful;” then I would also translate the following verses in the same way: “As to spirit, be fervent; as to the season, be up and doing (serve promptly); as to hope, rejoicing; as to tribulation, enduring; as to prayer, continuing steadfastly; sharing the needs of the saints; showing hospitality.” In each instance he states the virtue in a grammatical case that means “in respect to,” and then indicates how the virtue is to be practiced. This makes a beautiful addition to our golden string of pearls. But we must hurry on.

## **6. “Bless your enemies.”**

Christians are to bless even their enemies, not to curse them. Were that virtue to become general among so-called Christians, how altered the world would be! War would be impossible among professedly Christian nations, and when victory has been won, no violent and vindictive terms of peace would be imposed. Christian people and Christian nations would never put themselves on the same level as the people who seek to conquer and oppress them. Just as soon as possible, they would try to establish a peace of good will and amity among all nations. And especially would they avoid putting duress and oppression on future generations.

## **7. “Sympathy.”**

A beautiful Christian trait is that of sympathy, fellow-feeling; so the apostle says next in the text, “Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them

that weep.”

## **8. “Be Like-Minded.”**

No less attractive and important is the next injunction: “Be like-minded with one another, not caring for high things, but associate with the lowly.” This is golden advice. Its practice in the world would solve all our difficulties and perplexing problems. Suppose that the rich would practice the virtue here commended, would it not allay the discontent of the needy and ill-fed and ill-clad? Oh, this disposition to “mind high things,” to be uppish and overbearing, to desire to domineer and show authority, how much misery it inflicts upon the world! When shall we attain to the Biblical conception of the value of every man as a rational and immortal being? When Jesus said, “There is joy among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth,” He gave God’s appraisal of each individual, no matter what position in life he might occupy. High-mindedness is the bane of the world. It looks upon the poor and the ignorant as mere chattel, and that attitude breeds discontent, resentment, class feeling, and all the chain of evils in the social and industrial sphere. Would that all men would lay aside this un-Christian spirit of pride, and would “condescend to men of low estate!”

Then the era of peace on earth and good will among men would break upon the world. May God speedily bring it to pass! If all people will truly accept the grace of God in Christ, use their talents for His cause, and practice the virtues He enjoins in His holy Word, He will open the windows of heaven, and pour His showers of millennial blessing upon the world.

# **12. Adding Virtue To Virtue.**

## **Rom. 12:16-21. The Third Sunday After The Epiphany.**

Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:16-21)

LAST SUNDAY we were permitted to consider together a number of the gifts and graces that pertain to the Christian life. Our Epistle for today continues the subject, beginning where last Sunday's Epistle ended. According to God's Word, the Christian life is a continual progression, a moving upward constantly to better and nobler attainments. The ethics of our religion is not meager. It adds virtue to virtue, and includes all the virtues, until the Christian has reached a complete and symmetrical character; or, as the apostle puts it, until he has attained the proportions of "a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

Today, as we follow our text, we shall find that the apostle gives us the arithmetic of the Christian life, a simple sum in addition. Therefore our sermon is entitled "Adding Virtue to Virtue." The Gospel for the day recites two beautiful Epiphanies of our Lord as He went about doing good; he healed a leper, and restored a centurion's servant who was sick with palsy. So He was our example in well doing, in helpful living. Let us now attend to our problem of spiritual addition.

### **I. Add The Virtue Of Docility.**



The authorized and revised versions put it thus: "Be not wise in your own conceits." That, we are inclined to say, is not good English, for we do not use the plural of the word "conceit;" and, besides, that word is not in the Greek. The literal translation is, "Be not wise in your own selves." So the meaning is, Be not wise in your own sight or estimation. The positive side of the command would be, Be docile, teachable, humble-minded. In the negative form and in colloquial usage it would be, Do not be conceited.

Is not that practical and much-needed advice? Let us ponder it for a little while.

This age needs the admonition of the text. It is not an age that is renowned for humility and reverence. Our progress in science and art and invention has made us vain; we exalt man and his achievements unduly, and forget God. Far too many even think they can dispense with Him entirely. The Zeitgeist holds that it is sufficient unto itself. It is an era of the deification of man. Man has done so much, has achieved such great wonders within the last century, that he can do all things by his own wisdom and strength. The temper of high-mindedness is the tap-root of all rationalism. Man and his reason have been so exalted that they no longer need a special revelation from God, but can find out the Almighty (if there is such a Being) and all things else by their own unaided efforts. For that reason many men's attitude toward the Bible is critical and skeptical, rather than docile and spiritual. In his pride man forgets his mental limitations, overlooks the vast areas of truth that he has not yet discovered and surveyed, and feels that he knows all things. He forgets, too, that spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and therefore rushes into the Bible, which is a spiritual book, with his unregenerate reason, and, as might be expected, makes havoc of its teaching.

Perhaps it would be well to point out some of the limitations of human knowledge, in order to puncture the great, swollen windbag of modern conceit. Let us propound a few questions: What is the ultimate essence of things? What is the final unifying principle? Have any of the human philosophies of the day been able to give an answer that is satisfactory? Not one, not one. What is the essence of matter? If there are atoms, what are they? What are electrons and ions? If there is a universal ether — and many philosophers and scientists doubt it — what is its essence? How did it come into existence? How did it get started on the way of evolution into palpable substance? What is electricity? - Is it a substance or a force? What is mag-

netism? What is gravitation? Why and how do material bodies act upon one another over millions and billions of miles? These insoluble problems pertain to the material realm. The mental sphere is no less mysterious. What is mind? How can it think, feel, will? How can mind determine itself, initiate motion, action and thought? How can any substance move itself? How can the mind think of itself, make itself its own object? What is the self, the ego, the I? Or suppose there is no such an entity as mind, but only material substance, then how can material substance become self-conscious, and function in feeling, thinking and willing? If there are two quiddities, mind and matter, how are they correlated in the processes of perception and thought? How can men see, hear, feel? Moreover, what is life? Is there a vital principle or not? Or is life merely the result of chemical combinations?

These, and a thousand other problems, are not even approaching solution in this age of boasted wisdom. Indeed, so far as fundamental things are concerned, we have just been grazing the surface. We have been able to manipulate things quite skillfully, discover mysterious laws, multiply inventions good and bad; but as to the elemental essence of things, our ignorance is almost as dense as was that of the ancients. In view of these considerations, the people of this age stand in sore need of the exhortation of the text, "Be not wise in your own eyes."

Again, it is only the docile person who makes progress in knowledge. The conceited student stands in the way of his own culture, because his pride prevents him from keeping an open mind toward truth. In his youthful conceit he discounts the ability of his instructors who are older and more experienced than he, and so he does not take the mental attitude of a learner. It is a great pity when a student gets the notion that he "knows it all." However, the text will apply to the teacher as well as to the student, for vanity often finds a home in the professor's chair. The teacher who will never admit the possibility of error is not only a bundle of conceit, a mental coxcomb, but really closes his mind to progress, and grows dogmatic and obnoxious. As a teacher of theology, we confess that we have many, many times gone to school to our students in the class-room, and we trust that we have always been willing to accept a new truth or suggestion, and to admit an error when shown that one was committed. That is the only way to make the classroom a real place of improvement. In the school of life we are fellow-students. The teacher who has not the hospitable mind ceases to develop. Nor does this mental attitude of humility and teachableness in both

pupil and teacher derogate at all from strong convictions of truth. A man may be firm and positive without being conceited.

In church matters it is also well to be tractable. A layman who is opinionated and headstrong, and acts as if he knew more about theology, the Bible and ecclesiastical affairs than his pastor, who has been a life-long student, and has been trained as a specialist in such matters, simply invites trouble and causes sad confusion. A minister would be regarded as an insufferable meddler if he were to dictate a policy to the merchant, the lawyer, the physician, or any other specialist. So, other things being equal, the minister should be regarded as the eXpert in matters pertaining to religion and the polity of the Church. Yet, on the other hand, to give every one his due, the minister ought also to be humble, and open to kindly suggestion. He should not think it a reflection on his capacities for some one else to think of a plan that may be worthy of candid attention. Here and there is a pastor who wants to be an ecclesiastical boss; who wants to “lord it over God’s heritage.” In his vanity he looks upon himself as almost infallible, and quarrels with every man who has a suggestion or criticism to offer. The conceited preacher does as much injury to the Church as the conceited parishioner. Mutual respect is the better way.

The same principle obtains in all the relations of life. The mental cockcomb never agrees well with his fellowmen. His air of superiority makes him offensive everywhere. It is a fine Christian art to find the golden mean between weak pliancy and obstinate vanity, but the Spirit of God in the heart will enable the Christian to walk in it.

## **II. Add The Virtue Of Moral Beauty.**

The old version says, “Provide things honest in the sight of all men.” Excellent advice indeed! Nothing is more important for the Christian than to be honest in every way — honest in speech, in business, in thought. In fact, to speak of a dishonest Christian is a contradiction, for honesty is one of the essential elements of the Christian religion. You might as consistently speak of black whiteness as to speak of a dishonest Christian. However, a dishonest church member does the cause of Christ incalculable harm. He becomes a stumbling-block to weak people. “In the sight of all men” is added in order to make it plain that we should not only be honest in our hearts, but

should also avoid the very appearance of dishonest transactions, lest we bring reproach upon the cause of Christ. Sometimes people are just a little dishonest, or are dishonest in little things. This, too, should be avoided. “Pure gold through and through” — let that be the Christian’s slogan.

The revised version translates this sentence thus: “Take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men.” This is no improvement, but, rather, is more indefinite than the word “honest.” Yet it is important that Christians should live honorably before the world, so that no stigma may rest on their characters. However, the word translated “things honest,” or “things honorable,” might better be translated “things morally beautiful;” for the word means beautiful, and is often used to designate things that are ethically good and noble as well as physically attractive. There is moral beauty. Indeed, the most beautiful thing in the world is a truly moral and spiritual character. One may live amid repulsive physical surroundings, and yet keep oneself morally pure. So Paul’s advice is pertinent and impressive: “Live in such a way as to make your religion attractive in the sight of all your fellowmen.” This thought comports with what Paul says elsewhere (Tit 2:10): “that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.” No garment is more beautiful than the garment of true religion.

### **III. Add The Virtue Of Peaceableness.**

We are glad Paul gives this advice, and puts it in so sensible and discriminating a way. To translate literally, he says: “If possible, so far as concerns yourselves, be at peace with all men.” He implies that it is not always possible to keep peace with everybody. Sometimes people will take offense at anything you do, and without any occasion whatever. If you were to trim your sails to everybody’s notions, you never would get anything positive and constructive done. You need not quarrel with people, but if they will not regard you with favor after you have done your duty, you cannot help it; you must submit to their disliking you. This is especially true if it becomes necessary for you to do wrong or compromise principle and truth in order to curry their favor. In such cases you must be content with their ill-will — at least, until you can win them to the side of truth.

However, this exception furnishes no excuse for being quarrelsome or super-sensitive. Our text puts it quite emphatically: “Make every reasonable

effort to live on peaceable terms with all your fellowmen.” The trouble with some people is, they are inclined to be combative rather than pacific, and no sooner does a difference of opinion occur than they inject the personal element, and then ill-will is engendered. We once knew a young ruffian who went about from neighborhood to neighborhood picking quarrels, and engaging in brawls. He thought himself brave and manly. But everybody despised him. One day he insulted the wrong man, and received a severe trouncing; and the universal opinion was that he deserved it. There is such a thing as being a kind of ruffian in the community and even in the Church, though one may not descend to a contest with his fists. Let us be irenic whenever possible without compromise of principle, and polemical only when we cannot avoid it.

## **IV. Add The Virtue Of A Forgiving, Non-vindictive Spirit.**

So important is this grace that Paul enjoins it in two places in the text. First: “Recompense to no one evil for evil;” then: “Beloved, avenge not yourselves, but give place to wrath: for it is written, Vengeance belongeth to Me; I will repay, saith the Lord. If therefore thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.”

What a volume of salutary counsel is contained in that paragraph! How it would imparadise the world if it were universally exemplified! Greed and vindictiveness are the bane of the world and the cause of many woes. Among nations this principle prevails to too great an extent: One nation in its wrath threatens to be revenged upon another, and then the other, to be even, wreaks out its resentment on its fallen foe. If the spirit of revenge animates both, then both have descended to the same level. When will nations learn magnanimity and greatness of soul? When will they cease to be impelled by the petty, the mean and the vindictive? How nobly General Grant treated the conquered foe at the surrender at Appomattox, demanding no humiliation, but bidding the conquered army to go home and rebuild their country! What an example of generosity our government showed in making peace after the Civil War, never requiring a cent of indemnity, never executing a single Confederate leader, but passing an amnesty bill to pardon all

who laid down the arms of rebellion! Such treatment did more than anything else to restore the feeling of amity between the North and the South. It was right; it was politic; it was Christian. Our Republic has heretofore been conspicuous for its magnanimous treatment of a conquered foe. In the Spanish-American war we demanded no indemnities of Spain, but actually, to her profound astonishment, paid her for the possession of the Philippine Islands. "God bless our native land; firm may she ever stand!" May she always practice the Christian principle of heaping coal of fire on an enemy's head, and so melt down all his wrath and resentment. May the United States never wage a war of vindictiveness, and never be party to imposing vindictive terms of peace!

The revengeful temper comes from the evil one. The sole motive that actuates him is hatred of God because He cast him out of heaven for his sin. Were he able, he would ruin God's whole creation. Whenever he succeeds in bringing evil upon the world, he gloats over his work with diabolical glee. When we feel and act in a like manner, we prove that we are his children, and not the children of God, who is good to all, sending His rain upon the just and the unjust alike.

The resentful temper never heals a wrong. If some one insults you, and you recompense evil for evil, you put yourself on the same level, and simply intensify and perpetuate the quarrel. Do you know that the world would have been destroyed long ago by its own wickedness and violence, had there not been enough forgiving people to keep peace and good will among men? No wonder Christ called His followers the light of the world and the salt of the earth!

As these are expository sermons, I desire to explain a statement in the text that may puzzle some of my hearers: "For it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Does it mean that God will wreak His vengeance on those who sin against Him? No; the word translated "vengeance" has as its root meaning "giving a righteous judgment;" therefore rendering a just sentence. So the meaning is that we must not seek to judge and get even with our enemy, but leave him to the judgment of God, who will administer a just recompense. God only is competent to adjudicate rightly. If it were left to men in their anger and resentment to mete out judgment upon their enemies, they would over-reach; but God will make no mistakes. At His judgment-bar there will be no miscarriages of justice and

equity. A thousand times would I prefer that He would vindicate me than to try to vindicate myself.

Now note Paul's great counsel: "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink." Suppose all people and all nations would practice that precept, do you suppose there would be any more tyranny, hatred and war? Impossible! And what does the apostle mean when he says, "For in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head?" He does not mean to call down judgment on the offender, but to melt down his anger, make him ashamed of his bad conduct, and win him back to friendship. Anselm (see Lutheran Commentary) interpreted the "glowing coals" to mean repentance, so that the offender "will grieve that he has injured you from whom he has received only good." And again: "Just as glowing coals kindle the body on which they fall, so your good deeds will influence the heart of your persecutor to love, and by your example you will provoke him to well-doing by the fervor of the Holy Spirit."

## **V. Add The General Virtue Of Overcoming Evil With Good.**

This is the last word of the text: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." This teaches that there are times when we must stoutly resist, must be on the defensive. When a foe attacks us from without, we must call on all our reserve powers to withstand his assaults. And this we shall be able to do by putting our trust in God. While He will not do our resisting for us, He will not permit us to be overcome by any foe, but will with every temptation provide a way of escape.

But evil must always be overcome in the right way. We cannot fight evil with evil. That will simply spell defeat, for evil can never be made to fight itself. "Two wrongs will never make a right." Put up the good against the evil, and victory will be yours, for God is on the side of the good, and his power is the only power that is infinite. Some people proclaim this adage: "You must fight the devil with fire." That depends on the kind of fire you mean. If you try to fight the devil with his own kind of fire, you will find him more skillful in its use than you are; and that will mean your defeat. But if you fight him with heavenly fire, with God's fire, then you need have no fear but that success will be yours.

In our individual lives Paul's advice is good. If evil thoughts come to the mind, crowd them out with good thoughts. When the Holy Spirit comes into the heart, He ejects the evil spirit by the very act of entering.

We have finished our problem in Christian arithmetic as far as our text carries it. If all the virtues named are joined together by the plus sign, they will make a large and powerful sum. And if all of them were cultivated in their full strength and due proportion by Christian people, the Church would be "fair as the moon, bright as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."



# **13. The Greatest Grace Of All. Rom. 13:8-10. The Fourth Sunday After The Epiphany.**

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:8-10)

A NUMBER OF YEARS AGO Henry Drummond wrote a booklet entitled, "The Greatest Thing in the World." It was based on Paul's saying in his well-known chapter on love (1 Cor. 13:13): "But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love." Paul taught the same doctrine in our Epistle for today: "Owe no man anything, except to love one another, for he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law."

For several Epiphany Sundays we have been giving our attention to a veritable necklace of Christian graces, showing that our holy religion requires nothing less than perfection of character. Of course, the grace of love has pervaded all these virtues; has, indeed, formed the motive power back of and in them all; and it has also been mentioned a number of times. But in the lesson for today Paul seems to sum up all his instructions, and include them in one all-comprehensive injunction, as if he were to say, "Let me now put all my teaching in a single word; and that word is love." In this doctrine he simply enforced and repeated what Christ had taught when He gave this as the greatest commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," and then added, "The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Our Lord also exhorted His disciples again and again to love one another, telling them that in this way they would prove themselves to be the children of God. So Paul and Christ agree. Paul did not

modify Christ's teaching; he expanded and unfolded it logically, as he was led by the Holy Spirit, whom Christ had promised to His apostles.

The Gospel and Epistle for today are related in this way: Christ proved His love to His disciples by quelling the storm on Galilee, and saving their lives; so we are to show our love to our fellowmen by deeds of kindness. Our Lord's Epiphanies are to be a pattern for us. We are to follow in His footsteps. Now let us gather together the teaching of our Epistle under three main heads:

## **I. Love Pays All Debts.**

The first injunction of the text is, "Owe no man anything." Just before this selection Paul was discussing Christian men's obligations to state authorities, to "the higher powers." He enjoined them in this way: "Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." Then he sums it up by adding, "Owe no man anything."

A good motto, this. Of course, real Christian love would solve the whole question, for no man who truly loves his fellowmen. will permit a debt to run unpaid. He will be scrupulous in the discharge of every money obligation. However, the grace of love is not something that simply works automatically or of its own accord, as we know from practical experience; therefore the urgent injunction is needed to be careful about the discharge of our debts.

Some professed Christian people are lax about paying their financial obligations. They neglect to pay their debts until compelled to do so. They soon acquire the reputation of being "poor pay," and are put on the merchant's "black list." They must sometimes even dodge their creditors on the streets. That certainly must be an uneasy kind of life to lead. Even ministers are sometimes careless about paying their bills. No one can compute the harm they do to the cause of religion. Of all men, ministers should be the most scrupulous in discharging their financial obligations. Their very calling demands that they shall be patterns of ethical uprightness in every way.

Let it be understood that just and necessary borrowing of money, in which a lawful rate of interest is paid, is not forbidden in the text, for that would render many legitimate business transactions impossible. It should be

remembered that money borrowed on interest is not a real debt until the principal is due, and that the lender is receiving a just profit from his loan; that is why he makes it. And if, when the principal becomes due, the note is renewed by mutual agreement, that is an honest Christian business transaction. All of us have at times been compelled to borrow money on such terms. But to let an obligation run far past due, and evade making a fair and frank settlement — that is dishonest, and therefore a violation of the Christian rule of the text, “Owe no man anything.” How beautiful it is, however, when business men deal honorably with one another, and put friendship into their transactions. The author for a number of years had business dealings with one of the foremost publishing firms of the country, and is glad to say that the company were perfectly “square,” and put as much cordiality and friendship as business into the transaction. Every remittance was accompanied by a friendly letter. That is the way Christian men should conduct their dealings with one another — mingle genuine cordiality with the transaction. It will help business itself, making it flow smoothly and establishing confidence.

Some helpful observations are made on this passage in the Lutheran Commentary: “The state or habit of debt is forbidden. Transient debts underlie all commercial enterprises. The debt forbidden is that which is unpaid when due.” Then the writer adds: “But so far we are touching only the surface of these words. Luther enters into their depth when he says: ‘You should not be in debt as men, but as Christians: so that your debt shall be a free debt of love, not a debt of necessity, arising from the law. Paul teaches Christians here that they should so conduct themselves to magistrates and to every one that no one could make any complaint against them with respect to outward law and government; but he urges that they should do more than such obligation requires, and even when it is not demanded of them, should make themselves debtors, and serve those Who have claims upon them.’”

In short, Christian love will lead us Christians to cancel all our debts, financial, social and otherwise, to our fellowmen, to the State and to the Church. However, while love will move us to do this, love itself comes under a different category. And this brings us to our second division:

## **II. Love A Debt That Can Never Be Canceled.**

“Owe no man anything, except to love one another.” As much as to say: You may discharge other debts, but the debt of love can never be fully paid; you are always in duty bound to love your fellowmen. Most patently does Dr. Henry Eyster Jacobs put it in the Lutheran Commentary: “He cannot truly love his neighbor, who tries by loving him once for all to rid himself of the obligation to love him any more.”

Perhaps you will recall Luther’s apt paradox which he sets forth in his little book, “The Freedom of the Christian Man.” He says: “The Christian is a free lord over all things, and subject to nobody; the Christian man is a ministering servant of all things, and subject to everybody.” Then he adds: “These two essential propositions are clearly set forth by St. Paul in 1 Cor. 9:19: ‘For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all that I might gain the more.’ Also Rom. 13:8: ‘Owe no man anything but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.’” Then Luther goes on to prove, by frequent appeal to the Holy Scriptures and by invincible reasoning, that through faith in Christ the believer becomes a free man, that is, free from sin and the law; but faith in Christ brings love into the heart, and then through love he freely makes himself a ministering servant to his fellowmen. Let us quote more of Luther’s vigorous language: “The Christian man lives not in himself, but in Christ, and in his neighbor through love. Through faith he soars high up into the air, to that which is above him, to the throne of God, and there enters into the very being of God. Out of God and from His lofty throne he descends to that which is beneath him, thus being brought into sympathetic touch with all classes and conditions of humanity, with the world at large; and that through love; yet ever remaining in God and divine love... This is, then, the true, the genuine, the ideal, the spiritual Christian liberty; the liberty that frees our hearts from all sins, all laws, all commandments; the liberty that surpasses all other liberties by as much as heaven is higher than the earth.”

The reason this servitude of love to our fellowmen is not slavery is this: it is voluntary. Just as Christ made Himself the ministering servant of man, and yet was not the slave of mankind, so the Christian is a free man; yet he voluntarily and lovingly, and not through force, gives himself to the service of humanity. He does not do this to please people, but to help and save them. He does not do their bidding or give them aid in anything that is wrong; but tries to bring them to a better life by all means in his power. And this debt he feels he never can discharge. As long as he lives, he realizes

that he is debtor to both the Jews and the Greeks. Beautiful servitude! Only the Christian can know how to be a free man and a servant at the same time.

“Captivity is captive led,  
Since Jesus liveth who was dead.”

### **III. Love A Virtue That Sums Up All Other Virtues.**

#### **1. The general truth here taught.**

“He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law;” “Love does not work evil to the neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.” Now the moral law, embraced in the Ten Commandments, includes all the virtues of the Christian life. If we were to obey them perfectly, we would be perfect. But in our natural state we cannot obey them, because our carnal disposition is prone to do evil, to do the very opposite of the divine requirements. So something must be done to reconstruct, or perhaps we would better say to recreate, human nature. “Ye must be born again.” But by the new birth a new disposition is created within us, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, and we love all our fellow-beings because He loves them; and thus our natures are put into accord with the holy law of God, so that we can obey it. Then we observe its requirements, not because we must, but because we desire to do so. Love in the heart furnishes both the motive and the strength to keep God’s holy commandments. We keep them truly, inwardly, *ex animo*, from the heart, and not in a forced and perfunctory way. That is the difference between Christian and legalistic service: the one is free; the other coerced; the one is spiritual; the other mechanical; the one claims no merit; the other wants to earn a wage.

“Love is the fulfilling of the law.” The word means fullness. This is profound. The idea is this: if we keep the law in a legalistic spirit, we keep it only outwardly, and therefore partially; but if we keep it through love, we keep it both outwardly and inwardly — that is, in its fullness. We fill it full.

What a relief it is to be emancipated from the legalistic bondage of the law! For in that condition we always feel it a burden, and never know when we have done enough to merit salvation. But when we are impelled by the

rule of love, we love the law of God; it is our delight; we meditate in it day and night; the more we obey it, the lighter becomes our task, and the more joyous. It is pleasant to do that with which you are en rapport. Love makes duty a delight. Love binds up all the virtues inculcated in the law, and correlates them into a living unity. Love removes every contradiction among them. And, most of all, love removes all schism between the believer's heart and the holy law of God.

"Happy the heart where graces reign,  
Where love inspires the breast;  
Love is the brightest of the train,  
And strengthens all the rest.

"'Tis love that makes our cheerful feet  
In swift obedience move:  
The devils know, and tremble too;  
But devils do not love.

"This is the grace that lives and sings  
When faith and hope shall cease;  
'Tis this shall strike our joyful strings  
In the sweet realms of bliss."

## **2. The special application of the general truth.**

The apostle mentions several of the commandments in the second table of the law: "Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not commit murder, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

It is plain that all these commandments will be kept, in both the letter and the spirit, if love dwells in the heart. Would any person who has true neighbor love commit the foul and harmful sin of adultery? No, indeed! For such a sin always works harm to others as well as to oneself. If love prevailed, would anyone commit murder? Would anyone steal from another? Would anyone bear false witness against another? Would any man covet what is his neighbor's? Impossible! Love comprehends and fills to overflowing all the commandments. Love is the ultimate and unifying principle

in the Christian's ethical life. To have love is to have all the rest of the graces; to be without love is to have none of the rest.

It may be asked why love is superior even to faith, as Paul teaches in his great Corinthian chapter. There are fundamental reasons: First, love is the result of faith; second, faith is only a means, while love is an end in itself. So it might be said that faith is the servant of love. Third, when faith has been swallowed up in perfect knowledge, love will still abide forever and ever. Love is the ruling principle of heaven; it makes heaven heaven. Fourth, God is love, and that statement cannot truthfully be made of any other quality. God did not create the world for the sake of faith or hope, but for the sake of love.

Perhaps some one will ask why Paul names, in the text, only the commandments of the second table of the law, which inculcates man's duty to man. Is not the first table, setting forth our duties to God, even more important? Yes, that is true; but in this thesis Paul, as the context shows, was dealing with men's relations to one another. Elsewhere he inculcates their duties to God, especially in the earlier part of the Epistle to the Romans. However, the principle announced in the text will also hold regarding man's duties to God. If the love of God is shed abroad in his heart, he will also obey the commandments of the first table, just as Christ taught when He declared that the whole law and all the prophecies rest upon the two commandments to love God with "all the heart and one's neighbor as oneself.

No further exhortation is needed, my Christian friends. The discussion of the text carries its own application, and ought to make its own appeal. I will simply add that what the world needs today more than anything else is the practice of Christian love; love to God first of all; then love to neighbor, love to country, love to humanity. Where ill-will holds sway there will be sorrow, wrangling, jealousy, war. The only panacea is Christian love. Love will right the oppressor's wrongs; love will solve our social problems; love will remove our labor troubles; love will merge statesmen into accord; love will bring the true federation of the world. Love is organizing; hate is disorganizing. Love is constructive; hate is destructive. Love unites; hate divides. Love solves all problems; hate creates all perplexities.

My brethren, if we cannot bring the world under the sway of love, we should at least make it the regnant principle in the Christian Church and among Christian people.

# 14. God's Elect: What Kind Of People They Should Be. Col. 3:12-17. The Fifth Sunday After The Epiphany.

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. (Colossians 3:12-17)

DERIVED FROM THE EPISTLE FOR THE DAY, we phrase our theme thus: "God's Elect People: What Kind of People They Should Be." But we want to relieve your minds at the beginning of the idea that we intend to discuss the doctrine of election or foreordination. While it is an important doctrine, a volume would be required to discuss it properly, and especially to be fair to all parties concerned in the controversy. We might say this much, however: the text plainly indicates that God's election is not arbitrary; that His elect people must do something themselves to "make their calling and election sure," as Peter puts it. Yet, in connection with that thought, we must remember that God always intimates the movement of salvation — that is, He first comes to man, calls him, and enables him by His grace, ever before man can accept the gracious overture. So no merit pertains to anything that man does; he is saved solely by divine grace. The evangelical doctrine of *solo gratia* must be preserved.

But Paul's purpose in our text was entirely practical; so ought a sermon on the text to be, if it is to be truly expository. Taking it for granted, then,



that God has elect people, we shall follow the text in the delineation of their character. Paul addresses them as “holy and beloved,” by which he means that they are set apart for a holy purpose and are loved of God and himself. What, then, are some of the characteristics of God’s chosen people? We will notice —

## **I. Their Beautiful Attire.**

Paul often used figures of speech, for he was no dry and prosaic writer. So here he says, to transliterate, “Clothe yourselves with a heart of compassion,” etc. Note how often the Bible uses metaphors, similes and parables that connote the idea of beauty. Everything about the Christian religion makes for beauty. A truly Christian civilization will gradually convert the physical world into a place of beauty, an Eden, so that by and by there will be no noisome, nauseating and offensive places or objects. While natural beauty is not the highest kind of beauty, yet moral and spiritual forces always create natural beauty and go hand in hand with it. No person who has the love of Christ in his soul can live in filth and unseemliness.

However, the noblest kind of beauty is moral and spiritual beauty. That is the reason the Bible always uses the imagery of beautiful things in the material world to describe spiritual realities. No doubt this is the chief meaning of the New Jerusalem in the apocalypse of St. John, when he speaks of the jasper walls, the gates of pearl, the streets of gold, the river of life, the crystal sea, and the white throne; also when he says that the saints are clothed in white raiment. Nothing so refines and develops the aesthetic taste as the religion of the Bible. Hence the highest art in painting, sculpture and literature is produced under Christian influences. Nothing could be more inspiring than the pictures of the Madonna and the Child, drawn and painted by the great artists, in the old galleries of the world.

So here in the text Paul bids the elect of God to clothe themselves with the attractive garments of Christian virtue. They are not plain and homely attire, but most beautiful. What are some of their salient decorations? “A heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering.” Would not a person wearing such a garment be arrayed in moral beauty? There is nothing unseemly about such apparel. The attractive feature about it is, it contains nothing “loud,” nothing bizarre, nothing garish; it is just the

most simple, heavenly beauty that can be imagined. It is not a, garment for mere worldly display. 'No one ever thinks of saying that such a Christian is showily or gaudily dressed; but people exclaim, "How becoming in his attire! How exquisitely beautiful!"

Genuine goods are the only kind for the elect to wear — no shoddy, no sham. "A heart," says the text. That means all silk or all wool — nothing cheap and flimsy. So the Christian's garment is to be a garment of true sincerity. We have already discussed some of its elements in previous sermons; let us simply name them here, and give a word of comment in passing: "Compassion" — pitiful toward those who are in distress; what disposition is more becoming to God's people than that? "Kindliness" — that describes a disposition: to feel kindly toward others, to judge them charitably, to be too great-souled to indulge in harsh feelings or speech. Oh, for more people who would wear that part of the Christian's garb! Then there is "humility" (literally, "lowly mindedness") — another beautiful part of the Christian's array, the opposite of pride and conceit. How much better and happier the world would be if people wore the mantle of lowliness! The next virtue mentioned is "gentleness" or "mildness" (which is a nearer translation than "meekness," as it is in the authorized version), and then comes "longsuffering," the one meaning that Christians are lenient in their judgment and kindly in their speech, and the other that they are patient under trial; thus both virtues are the opposite of severity and hastiness in dealing with others. How many hurts of the world these graces would heal, if they were generally practiced! The apostle exhorts Christians to be forbearing and forgiving, and then adds the supreme motive: "As Christ forgave you, so do ye also." We have often urged the forgiving spirit, and so need not dwell upon it today, except to remind you that we cannot truly pray the Lord's Prayer unless we have such a spirit.

The apostle puts the crown on his catalogue of Christian graces by saying: "And above all these, put on love, which is the bond of completeness." Here Paul comes back to the greatest virtue of all, which comprehends and binds them together in a complete unity. He teaches elsewhere the same doctrine and the same ethical principles. Love is not a separate part of the Christian's raiment, but the warp and woof of all the other parts, giving them their real value and beauty. That is to say, when you have love, you have all the other graces; when you do not have love, you have none of them.

In the next part of the text the apostle changes his figure of speech. Relative to God's elect people, we must consider:

## II. Their Inward Rule.

This lesson is taught in the injunction: "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which also ye were called in one body. And be ye thankful." The word for "rule" is a strong word, meaning to arbitrate, therefore to reign fully, to have complete control and final decision.

But, after treating of the all-inclusive virtue of love, why did Paul add anything more? He might have said, "Love tells the whole story; I need not add another word. Anything further would be tautology." We reply, man needs something more than general truths and general rules. He needs detailed and specific instruction. Suppose a teacher, in beginning his school term, should say to his pupils, "I have just one rule to announce, and that is, Do right!" That would indeed be good and helpful; but before many days had passed, he would have to define what he regarded as right in specific cases, and so would have to add from time to time more definite rules. God might have said to the Israelites at Mount Sinai, "Love fulfills the whole law; therefore love God and one another: you need no other commandment." And that would have been sufficient, had not His people been weak and ignorant; but He had to accommodate Himself to their needs and limitations by giving the detailed instruction of the decalogue, with many other minutiae in the civil and ceremonial laws. They had to be shown how to carry out the law of love. So it is every-where. In theology we need both the doctrine and the practical application. In the Science of ethics we first lay down the moral principles; then indicate how to apply them in practical living.

Here therefore Paul pursued the normal pedagogical method. He laid down the principle of love, then added the needed details and applications. One way in which love finds its deepest expression is in peace; so Paul said, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts." "The peace of Christ!" That means that the composure which Christ Himself possesses is to be regnant in our hearts. How can we have such peace? Through the Holy Spirit whom Christ pours into our being. Whatever belongs to Christ He imparts to us. Just as He said to His apostles: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give

unto you.” Therefore the peace that Christ has and that He is willing to impart to His people is the only true and solid and abiding peace. All composure that is based on finite things is unstable, because a building cannot be more secure than its foundation. Suppose our peace of mind is founded on human fame, or worldly pleasure, or earthly possessions. Ah! but they are not sure and steadfast. They may be ours today, and flit from our grasp tomorrow. Then what becomes of our peace? No; if we would have true and enduring tranquility, it must come from an infinite source — from Christ Himself.

For good, solid and useful living you and I must have peace of mind. Our fundamental problems must be solved. We must have peace with God and our own consciences. So long as we do not have that feeling of agreement with the highest things, we will be anxious about our own status and welfare, and so cannot surrender ourselves wholly to the work of God’s kingdom. Do you find the unsaved people around you working for souls? No; they cannot do that kind of work because they know that they themselves are unrescued. First we must ourselves be saved; only then can we rescue others. Yes, lack of the peace of Christ in the soul cuts the nerve of spiritual activity. Oh! let us get our lives on a solid basis. This is so important that Paul adds: “For this purpose ye are called in one body.” That is, we are bound together in the Church unto a life of concord so that we may, without handicap and anxiety, labor in unison for the salvation of the world and the edification of one another.

Something more is enjoined in the text for the help of God’s elect people:

### **III. Their Indwelling Motive-Power.**

And what is it? “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.” What is meant by the Word of Christ? Dr. Moffatt translates it “the inspiration of Christ;” but that is a gloss, and weakens the original. Dr. Kent, in “The Shorter Bible,” gives it “the teachings of Christ;” which is better, but not literal. The literal is “the Word of Christ.” To the Colossians, to whom Paul was writing, it must have meant the preaching of the gospel by the apostles, whom Christ promised to lead into all truth and to bring to their remembrance all that He had taught them. Paul wrote thus to the Galatians (Gal. 1:8, 9): “But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto

you any gospel other than that we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preach unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema.” Surely then Paul must have meant by “the Word of Christ” the gospel which he everywhere set forth. He declared that he had “the Spirit of Christ.” He also asserted again and again that he had not received his gospel from men, but from the revelation of Christ. But Paul held to the inspiration of the Old Testament, for, in speaking of it, he declared, “All Scripture is inspired of God.” So by the Word of Christ he must have meant at least the Old Testament and his own teaching.

But where do we find that teaching today? Only in the Bible. So it is evident that for us today “the Word of Christ” must mean the Holy Book. If it does not, then the Word of Christ, which Paul insists should dwell in our hearts, has not been transmitted to us, and the apostle’s injunction is valueless. Suppose some one should ask you, “Where will I find the Word of Christ?” What would your reply be? Surely, “In the Bible.” If it is not there, it is nowhere. Do you think it likely that the Son of God would have come into the world to redeem mankind without providing for definite teaching concerning His person and mission for all generations? Not only Paul, but likewise all the apostles and evangelists, profess to tell the truth regarding Christ and His salvation, and we must either set them down as falsifiers or believe their message. But everywhere they bear the sign manual of truthfulness and sincerity, and were willing even to seal their testimony with their blood.

Accepting, therefore, the plain teaching of the apostle, his counsel to let “the Word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom” is very important. It is to dwell in us — to take up its permanent abode, not merely to favor us with a transient call. When the Word of God remains in the heart, it gradually pervades the whole life and enriches it more and more as the years go by. All Christians will bear witness to its beneficent effects. Then it is to dwell in us. It is not merely to be accepted mechanically, not merely with the intellect; it is to take possession of our inmost being; to mold our lives and characters; to impel our feelings and propel our wills. It is to dwell in us richly. The Word of Christ will enrich the soil of our hearts and minds, making them more fruitful every day. And that is its invariable effect when taken truly into the soul; for the more we study God’s Word and receive it into good and honest hearts, the richer and better it becomes; the old truths

become more precious, and new truths are ever coming to the light with their inspiring and helpful messages. No wonder the prophet bore testimony to its value: “Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee.” The text also says that the Word shall dwell in us richly in all wisdom. That is, with all its wealth of wisdom; therefore, imparting all wisdom. Paul wrote to Timothy: “But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a babe thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is divinely inspired (God-breathed), and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly furnished unto every good work.” Truly the Word of God gives real wisdom, wisdom regarding eternal and heavenly things, as well as those that are temporal and earthly. Nothing so perfectly equips a man for the real work of life as the Word of God. It furnishes instruction of the most vital kind for every circumstance and emergency of life. No man who follows its directions will go wrong. Besides, we find in it increasingly the seed-principles of all true knowledge. There is not an established scientific, philosophical, ethical and spiritual truth that does not find its roots somewhere in the fertile soil of Holy Scripture. It may not be there always in fully developed form, but it is there seminally.

Most beautifully, too, does our text suggest one important way in which God’s elect people shall make the Word of Christ effective. While Paul never forgets the individual, he also never forgets the Church, the collective body of Christ’s people. So he says: “Teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, with grace singing in your heart to the Lord.” Let us remember that this instruction is directly connected with the Word of Christ, which is to be the basis of all the teaching, admonishing and worship. The basis was not to be human wisdom or scientific speculation — but the sure Word of God. There is to be teaching, because God wants His people to know more and more about His will; admonition, because God’s elect must be warned of their constant peril from temptation; and what simple and beautiful and hearty social worship is enjoined! Psalms are to be used; nowhere will Christians find a more deeply spiritual expression of their feelings and aspirations than in the Psalms of the Old Testament. I wish more of them were set to sweet and simple music in our books of worship. When we sing the Psalms, we know that we are express-

ing the first-hand sentiments of the Holy Spirit. Of this we cannot always be sure when we sing humanly composed music.

Says Dr. E. T. Horn in the Lutheran Commentary: "With Psalms. Doubtless the Psalter. The Psalms of David were sung by the Jews in worship, and naturally formed a part of the service of the early Church. The Psalms are the Prayer Book of the fellowship of Christ — they are given of God; they record the communion of the Old Testament saints with Him. How dear they were to our Lord is evinced by His words on the cross; and the experience of every generation of His saints has been sung in them." Then he quotes from Ambrose: "This is the peculiarity of the Psalter: that every one can use its words as if they were peculiarly and individually his own." The Church needs just such a vehicle of religious expression in its worship.

But other melodies besides the Psalms were to be used: "Hymns, that is, sacred songs of Christian composition," says Dr. Horn. Luther thought the reference was to other songs than the Psalms taken from the Holy Scriptures, such as the songs of Moses and Deborah, the Magnificat, Benedictus, Nunc Demittis, Gloria Patri, etc. Such worship lifts the soul to God in pure objective praise which never fails to produce its proper subjective effect. Then Paul adds "spiritual songs," of which Luther says, "Songs not taken from the Holy Scriptures, such as might be made at any time." St. Clemens of Alexandria desired to have such songs put in the place of the objectionable music and songs of the Greeks. How the early Christians sang their hymns of praise everywhere! We quote again from Dr. Horn: "St. Jerome tells us that the Psalms-were to be heard in the fields and vineyards of Palestine. The plowman, as he held his plow, chanted Hallelujah; the reaper, the vine-dresser, and the shepherd sang the songs of David. Sidonius Apollinaris represents boatmen, as they worked their heavy barges upon the waters, singing Psalms till the banks echoed with Hallelujahs, and applies to it the voyage of the Christian life." Let us follow their example, always "singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord."

"Let songs of praises fill the sky:  
Christ, our ascended Lord,  
Sends down His Spirit from on high,  
According to His Word."

And now we come to the last injunction of the text to God's elect people: it points out —

## IV. Their Norm Of Conduct.

Paul gives a summing up of everything that has gone before: “And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

Time will not permit us to dwell at length on this part of the text, though it is fundamental. What an excellent motto for Christian people: “Do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ!” That would make the whole life religious. Suppose we did all our work in the house, on the farm, in the shop, in the office, on the street, in the school-room, yes, and engaged in our recreations on the playground and elsewhere, in Christ’s name, with what a hallowed atmosphere would our lives be surrounded! And why should we not do so? Is it not true that everything that is right is in accordance with the will of Christ? Did He ever condemn anything that was right and good? Never! He blesses all righteous and honorable work and employment. Thus everything that is right is religious, and therefore your work, my brother or sister, can all be done in the name of the Lord of glory.

If this were everybody’s motto, no one would engage in an evil business, a business calculated to do harm to himself and his fellowmen, for he could not follow such employment in the holy name of Jesus Christ.

To do our work in the name of Christ is to do it by the authority of God Himself; for “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.” Therefore God’s elect people are always allied with the sovereignty of God, and hence have all reason to give thanks unto God the Father through Jesus Christ, the Son. Amen.



# **15. The Verity Of The Holy Scriptures. 2 Pet. 1:16-21. The Transfiguration Of Our Lord.**

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (2 Peter 1:16-21)

THE EPISTLE for the day is an important and bracing one, especially to those who maintain the evangelical position. It is a divinely inspired testimony against rationalism, destructive Biblical criticism, and all tampering with the Holy Scriptures. No wonder Dr. Kent omitted it from “The Shorter Bible”! And yet we marvel that he, or any man, should have the presumption to elide so vital a section of God’s Word.

Peter was one of the disciples to whom Christ promised the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. As we analyze the text, we shall see what kind of testimony the Spirit moved him to bear respecting the Sacred Scriptures. The text naturally divides itself into two sections.

## **I. The Revelation To The Apostles.**

### **1. It was not made up of cunningly devised fables.**

Here is a direct denial of the very position of the rationalists of our day — Seydel, Jensen and Drews of Germany, J. M. Robertson of England, and W. B. Smith of the United States, who look upon the story of Jesus as mythical. Over against these men, Peter expressly declared: “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and advent of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

We must note the value of Peter’s challenge. Was he the kind of a man to follow fables, however artfully fabricated? He certainly was not credulous; indeed, he was very unbelieving, so that, even after Christ had appeared to him in His resurrection form, He rebuked him for his slowness of heart to believe. He had to have proof positive and palpable. Is it likely that such a man could have been duped? Besides, what motive could have impelled Christ to practice deception on Peter and the other apostles? No worldly honor or emolument was or could be offered them. Christ even forewarned them that they would have to suffer persecution for His sake. And they did have to endure persecution of the hardest kind, and most of them at last had to wear the martyr’s crown. What inducement, we demand, was there to practice deception on these men? Again, what kind of men were they ethically? Did they live corrupt lives or pure? Did they teach pure principles or corrupt ones? These questions answer themselves. Men who lived such upright lives and inculcated such lofty moral principles surely could have been neither credulous dupes nor designing impostors. It is ethically impossible. If they wrote and acted like wild fanatics, the case would be different, but always and everywhere they evince saneness and soundness of judgment. Therefore, from the nature of the case, they could not have followed “cunningly devised fables.” The men today who advocate the mythical theory of Christianity prove, by that very token, their inability to understand its inner spirit and find its ethical secret.

We would demand, further, that the records of the New Testament be closely scrutinized. Do they read like fables? Cannot every unbiased mind sense the historical realism and verisimilitude in them? The very soberness with which the miracles are told contrasts in a most marked way with the absurd narratives of pseudo-miracles. Neither is there anything occult or secretive about the gospels and epistles. Everything is open and above board. Paul declares that “these things were not done in a corner.” Not long ago we read a book on the Buddha, written by a Buddhist. Taking his own account of the career of Buddha, we could not help noting the vital difference

between the wonders attributed to him and the miracles ascribed to Christ in the gospels. The former bear the ear-marks of myth and legend; the latter carry the sign-manual of historic verity.

Peter not only disclaims that he and his fellow-Christians had followed cunningly devised fables, but declares that they had first-hand and palpable evidence of “the truth as it is in Jesus.” He says: “But we were eye-witnesses of His majesty.” Then he refers to a special incident in the life of Christ: the time when he and John and James were with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. This is the solemn and impressive way in which Peter depicts the scene: “For when He received from God the Father honor glory, this voice came from the majestic glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; and this voice we heard borne out of heaven, when we were with Him in the holy mountain.” Therefore the revelation of God in Christ, instead of consisting in cunning devised. fables, was —

## **2. A well established fact.**

The apostles were eye-witnesses of His revelation. Taking into consideration all the circumstances, the apostolic testimony is competent and convincing. When Christ revealed Himself as the Son of God on the Mount of Transfiguration, it was in broad daylight; there were no stage trappings, no weird music, no dark corners, no curtained alcoves, no devices of any kind that would lend themselves to deception; neither was the imagination of the disciples wrought up to a high pitch of expectation; everything was plain and open and honest; and yet right there before their eyes Jesus because transfigured, so that his face and even his clothing shone with a heavenly radiance, and then they beheld Moses and Elijah standing and conversing with Jesus. We do not see how they could have been deceived; nor do we see that there would have been any motive for deception. What would Jesus have gained by pretending to be what He was not? More than that, He lived so purely before them that Peter afterward wrote, “In Him was no guile,” and His teaching was always of the loftiest ethical character; therefore to assume that He practiced cheap imposture upon His disciples is unreasonable to the point of absurdity. The apostle John also declared that he had first-hand knowledge of Christ (1 John 1:1-4): “That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld and our hands have handled concerning the

Word of Life... declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ; and these things we write that your joy may be full." Afterward the apostles were willing to sacrifice even life itself for the sake of their testimony. Taking into account, too, the fact that millions of people in the history of the world have been saved from sin to righteousness through the gospel, the conclusion becomes indubitable that the New Testament record bears the stamp of verity. Such beneficent results do not flow from myths, legends or impostures. The people who think they might, simply prove their lack of ethical and spiritual insight. If a man has ever experienced the saving power and grace of the gospel, he knows that it is true.

Why was that vision on the Mount of Transfiguration vouchsafed to the three apostles? To convince them of their Lord's divinity, and enable them afterward to appeal to it to convince others. Had they not had ample proof that Christ was the Son of God, they would have quailed before the opposition with which they were assailed. Shortly after Pentecost Peter and John were arrested and put into prison. Did they flinch or waver? No; they stood firm. When the Jewish council forbade their speaking and teaching in the name of Jesus, their reply was: "Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak of the things which we saw and heard." These are words of unfaltering conviction; they are also words of soberness, and bear no marks of wild enthusiasm.

It is plain, too, why the apostles should hear the voice of the Father on the mountain, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." That was an endorsement of the Son by the Father. It proved to the apostles not only that the Son had come into the world in accordance with the Father's will, but also that He had been doing the Father's will in the world. The apostles needed precisely such assurance to make them strong and unflinching when times of trial came. Peter also bore just as undoubting witness of the resurrection of Christ. On the day of Pentecost he said: "This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses." After he had healed the lame man at the door of the temple, Peter, speaking of Jesus, said: "Whom God raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses." When Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin, Peter bore this testimony regarding the lame man who had been healed: "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,

whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, in Him doth this man stand here before you whole.” We cite these passages to make clear Peter’s firm conviction based on the testimony of his own eyes. He believed in the adage that “seeing is believing.”

Now, if Peter’s testimony is true, we need have no difficulty in accepting the rest of the New Testament revelation, for all of it agrees with Peter’s declarations. All the other writers were as sincere as he, and bear the same unequivocal testimony. All of them were honest, upright and sane men, ready to suffer and die for their faith, and all professed to tell the truth; therefore we have no reason to doubt their veracity and competency. Moreover, Christ promised to guide them into all truth by His Spirit. Paul expressly declares that he received his gospel by the revelation of Christ. If men so noble and well-poised did not witness to the truth, it is idle, and worse than idle, to look for truth in all the wide world. If, however, they testified to the truth, the whole history and influence of Christianity has been assigned an adequate cause. It would be passing strange if a lot of “cunningly devised fables” should produce the experience of divine pardon and regeneration in the hearts of those who believe on Jesus Christ. Is it consistent with the logic of things that deception, imposture and superstition should impart peace, love, joy and hope to the human heart?

Now, if the New Testament is God’s revelation, how about the Old Testament? This brings us to the second part of our text, in which Peter bears clear testimony to —

## **II. The Revelation To The Prophets.**

At this point we must attend to the exegesis of the text. The old version puts it in this way: “We also have a more sure word of prophecy,” which gives the impression that the testimony of the Old Testament prophets was more reliable than that of Peter and the other apostles; but that is a mistranslation, and so we must set it right, as the revised version does, which says: “And we have the word of prophecy made more sure.” The original is still stronger: “And we have the prophetic word more strongly confirmed;” for the word translated “more sure” is a comparative of the word which means confirmed or made steadfast. So Peter teaches this important truth in the text, that the revelation of Christ to the apostles gives powerful confirma-

tion to the revelation made by the prophets of the Old Testament. If there ever had been the shadow of doubt regarding the Old Testament, it has all been now removed, since Christ came into the world, and confirmed the Old Testament by His teaching and His marvelous fulfillment of the prophecies. Yes, Peter's testimony is that the New Testament confirms the Old. And let me say here to all critics and rationalists that, if the New Testament is divinely inspired, it carries with it the inspiration of the Old Testament; for Christ and His apostles everywhere endorsed the Old Testament and appealed to it as the authoritative Word of God. Now let us see how Peter enforces this truth.

## **1. The Old Testament a light.**

After referring to the word of prophecy, Peter says: "Whereunto ye do well to take heed; as-unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts."

Peter certainly does not agree in his estimates of the Old Testament with the Graf-Wellhausen school of Biblical critics. When did they ever advise people to "take heed" to it, or speak of it as "a lamp shining in a dark place?" No; with them the Old Testament is made up chiefly of myths, legends, folk-lore, traditions, and contradictory documents. In his work, "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament," Dr. Driver uses page after page to show that there are many "variant" statements and narratives in the Old Testament. Dr. W. F. Bade, in a recent book; makes the Old Testament a crazy-quilt of discrepancies. We are bound to say that these men do not agree with the apostle Peter; nor do they agree with our Lord Jesus Christ. We stand with Christ and His apostles on this matter, and are persuaded that people even today will "do well to take heed" to the historical, moral and spiritual teaching of the Old Testament, which is indeed "a lamp shining in a dark place." What would we know, for example, about the origin of the universe, of life, of man and of sin, if it were not for the history in the Old Testament? There the problem of origins is plainly solved for us. And that is a vital matter; for if we do not know whence we came, neither do we know why we are here and whither we are going. Wrap man's genesis in obscurity, and you make his purpose and destiny obscure. Make it clear that God made man in His own image, as the Bible declares, and the other problems have their solution; for the New Testament continues the revelation of the

Old by revealing to us the remedy for sin and the eternal destiny of man. What a marvelous organic unity is the revelation of the Bible! It is all intended to irradiate the dark places of the earth. We wonder why some men want to obscure its light. Do they love darkness better than light?

However, the Old Testament is not the full light; it is a lamp shining in an obscure place — until ah! that is very important — until “the day dawn and the morning star arise in your hearts.” It is so beautiful, so harmonious, this teaching of the inspired apostle: the Old Testament revelation was preparatory to the New; the old lamp shone in a dark place, and kept the world from perishing, and grew brighter, until the fullness of time when Christ, the Sun of righteousness, came to bring in the full revelation of the divine plan of redeeming grace and love. It is too beautiful, too rational, not to be true. If it were not true, the most beautiful and rational thing in the world would be the greatest fraud. Surely no one believes that the world is based on unreason and absurdity. Observe how sweetly accordant with Peter’s testimony is that of John, who says: “The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath revealed Him.” No less harmonious is the teaching of the letter to the Hebrews: “God, having of old time spoken to the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath, at the end of these days, spoken unto us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things; through whom He made the worlds.” Thus, while the New Testament ushers in the full light, we should still take heed to the lamp of the Old Testament, which casts its light on the problems of origin and preparation.

## **2. The Old Testament not a human production.**

Peter makes some clear and positive statements regarding the prophecies of the olden times. Here some of the translators have certainly mistaken Peter’s meaning; for when we translate literally his next statement, we find it to be this: “Knowing this first, that all prophecy of Scripture is not of its own unloosing.” What does that mean? That the prophets did not speak their own thoughts; that their own minds were not the source of what they spoke and wrote. Prophecy does not come of itself; it comes from another and higher source. That this is the correct exegesis is proved by what follows: “For not by the will of man was prophecy produced at any time.”

Thus we see the logical connection between the two sentences: “No prophecy of Scripture is of its own unloosing, for not of man’s will was prophecy produced at any time.”

That, my brethren, is the apostle Peter’s conception of the Old Testament Scriptures: they did not come by the will of man. How radically that view differs from the ideas of the modern radicals! For example, here is a book written by a former president of a Christian college, in which the author maintains that the Old Testament contains the “ideas” of the Jews regarding religion. In the whole work there is no mention of divine inspiration. We must set Peter’s testimony over against these critics. It is plain that the apostle held that the Old Testament prophecies did not originate with man. They came from a higher source. When you examine the Old Testament prophets from Moses to Malachi, you will find that all of them disclaim speaking merely their own thoughts and conceptions. So both the Old Testament and the New are pointedly against the destructive critics. For our part, we gladly take our stand on “the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture,” as Gladstone called the Bible, let others do what they will. And we verily believe that the Church will maintain her spiritual power and efficiency only as she takes this firm and uncompromising position.

But our apostle was a logician; he never left his reasoning process floating uncertainly in the air; so here he clearly and precisely tells whence the Old Testament prophecies came:

#### **4. The Old Testament came from God.**

Note the closeness of His reasoning (we shall try to bring out the emphasis of the original): “But, being borne along by the Holy Spirit, spake the holy men of God.” Just why the revisers of the New Testament weakened the passage by their translation we do not know. At all events, Peter put the emphasis right and strong, for with him there was no let-down regarding the inspiration of the Old Testament prophets. They were impelled, carried along, by the Holy Spirit in their utterances; they did not set forth their own “ideas.” Their prophecies were not a natural evolution; they were a divine inspiration; they did not come from below; they came from above. Peter was not afraid to lay stress upon the divine element in the production of the sacred writings; no more was he afraid that the “human” element might be overlooked. I have read many a work on the rationalistic criticism from



Wellhausen to Kent and Bade, and desire to say that all of them are far more concerned for the “human” element than for the divine element in the Bible. Never fear that the human element will be slighted. If you uphold the supernatural element, the human part of the work of composition will fall beautifully in its place, for God knew just what instruments were best fitted to convey His revelation to the children of men. The apostle says he chose “holy men of God.” So he saw to it that no men were chosen as prophets who would impose their own “ideas” upon a credulous world. From Moses to the last of them, these prophets always said, “Thus saith the Lord,” and then spoke forth the Lord’s message. In one place in the Mosaic record it is averred: “God spake all words.”<sup>1</sup>

We have offered quite an apologetic today for the Word of God; but our text has logically led us along that line. “With Peter we hold that,” being moved by the Holy Spirit, the holy men of God spoke” forth their ringing and inspiring messages; and we believe with Paul who says: “All Scripture is inspired of God.” Here we stand; we can do no other. Let the poet also voice the heavenly doctrine:

    "Lord of all power and might,  
    Father of love and light,  
        Speed on Thy Word;  
    O let the gospel sound  
    All the wide world around,  
    Wherever man is found:  
        God speed Thy Word.

    "Lo, what embattled foes  
    Stern in their hate, oppose  
        God’s holy Word!  
    One for His truth we stand  
    Strong in His own right hand,  
    Firm as a martyr band:  
        God shield His Word!

    “Onward shall be our course,  
    Despite of fraud or force;  
        God goes before;  
    His Word ere long shall run  
    Free as the noonday sun;  
    His purpose shall be done:  
        God bless His Word!”

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1. On the doctrine of Biblical inspiration many great and good works might be cited, but space can be spared to mention only the following. Cave: “The Inspiration of the Old Testament;” Urquhart: “The Inspiration and Accuracy of the Holy Scriptures;” Warfield’s article on “Inspiration” in “The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,” issued in 1915 and edited by Dr. James Orr. ↩

# 16. The Christian Race Course.

## 1 Cor. 9:24-10:5. Septuagesima Sunday.

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. (1 Corinthians 9:24-10:5)

THERE IS more or less of a connection in all our lessons from the epistles, diverse as the subjects seem to be. Last Sunday it was our privilege to consider together the inspiration and authority of the Word of God. Today we will have some plain and practical directions as to how we should regulate our lives according to that word. Paul will be our guide today, as Peter was last Sunday.

In our text today Paul used a striking metaphor to illustrate the life of the Christian. He was writing to the Christians at Corinth, which was only nine miles distant from the stadium where the famous Isthmian games were played, in which there were boxing, leaping, racing and other athletic sports. Paul knew that the Corinthians were familiar with those games, and so he used them to illustrate some features of the Christian life-course. He represented that life under the figure of a race. We will note both his comparisons and his contrasts. Let us consider —

## I. The Discipline Needed.

No athlete would think of entering the stadium for a race without undergoing the necessary training. Paul does not speak of all the discipline that was needed in the old Greek games, but especially one. He says: "Every one that strives in the games controls himself in all things." A rule of the Greek games was that the athlete had to refrain from every kind of sensual indulgence for ten months prior to entering the contest. What a powerful lesson on temperance that teaches! The contestant had to abstain from all intoxicating liquors, because it was known then as now that alcohol, even in small quantities, had a tendency to weaken the muscles, to make them more or less flabby. If that is the effect of alcoholic stimulants on the man who runs a race for a little earthly fame and a fading laurel wreath, we may well learn the lesson of total abstinence. The powerful runner in a race, before thousands of spectators, was not ashamed to be called a total abstainer; indeed, it was a badge of honor. Why be ashamed of such a designation in running the much more important race of the Christian life?

But of course the self-restraint that the contestant put upon himself did not consist merely in refraining from intoxicants, but included self-control in every other way — in eating as well as in drinking; in mastery over all the bodily passions.

So if we desire to be swift and powerful in running the Christian race, we must exercise self-control. Every sinful indulgence will handicap our efforts and endanger our reaching the goal. We cannot carry our sins with us on the Christian stadium. It is utterly contrary to the rules of the game, just as it would have been for a drunkard or a debauchee to enter the race-course in the Isthmian games. I fear too many people weaken themselves by sin, and thus sooner or later put themselves out of the Christian race. How many begin well, but soon fall by the way! Yes, the Christian runner must go unencumbered by anything that would hinder free spiritual action. So the writer to the Hebrews, no doubt transcribing Paul's thoughts, admonishes us in this way: "Seeing, then, that we are compassed about with so great a crowd of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doeth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."

## II. The Rule For The Running.

Whatever other rules of the game there might have been, Paul lays emphasis on one of primary importance; he says: "I therefore so run as not uncertainly; so fight I as not beating the air."

By these statements he means that he does not run in an aimless way, or, changing the figure to that of the boxer, he does not strike out wildly, hit or miss, but plants his blows with definite intention. Like a genuine athlete, he has trained himself to do his duty well and with singleness of aim. As he runs along, he will not allow himself to be swerved to either side of the race course. What would you think of a racer in the game who would stop along the way to pick a flower or flirt with a maiden? No; he must keep his eye on the track and must pursue it to the end, if he would prove a winner in the race.

These are very valuable directions for the Christian, who is running a different kind of a race and one of vastly more importance. Yet how many people loiter along the way, and allow themselves to be diverted by every frivolous attraction! The world allures them; riches tempt them; pleasure beckons them; and instead of keeping their eyes on the mark, they look to the side, waver, yield, and drop out of the race, far too many of them losing the prize altogether. Do not think for a moment that the Christian has no pleasure as he runs. He does not need to deny himself anything that is right and good; anything that does not handicap him in the Christian race; but all sinful indulgences unfit him for the stadium. You cannot run in the Christian race-course, and at the same time travel in the broad road of sin.

When Paul declares that he does not run along uncertainly, he no doubt had another matter in mind: he knew what he believed; he was not in doubt as to the ground on which he was running, the course he was to pursue, nor the goal he was to win. A man of true faith, the way lay open and clear before him. He did not try to run the course of life with blinders over his eyes. He had accepted Christ, received the regenerating and enlightening Spirit, and therefore the vital problems of life were solved for him once for all, so that he did not need to go back again and again to see whether he was on the right track. "So fight I as not uncertainly," he declared. It was just as he said elsewhere in his writings: "I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him

against that day.” No man can run swiftly, gracefully and successfully who is uncertain about the way. Doubt never wins the moral and spiritual prize. “He that doubteth is like a wave of sea, driven by the wind, and tossed.” “The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.” That is why skepticism makes so little headway. It is always doubting, always trying to solve unsolvable problems, ever stumbling over difficulties; or, as Paul puts it, “ever learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth.” It is only when a man has the light of Christian faith and experience that he can pursue his course with confidence, joy and celerity.

### **III. The Prize To Be Attained.**

There is a prize, and it will be interesting to note some features about it. Regarding this matter there are some points of contrast as well as of comparison between the Isthmian racer and the Christian racer. Let us note —

#### **1. Faithfully To The End**

Paul says: “Do you not know that in a race, though all the racers run, yet only one of them gains the prize?” So it is in earthly games. Many enter the contest, but only the swiftest runner wins the reward. The others may have trained just as long and carefully, and may have striven just as hard in the race itself; yet all of them are disappointed.

Not so in the Christian race, my brother! No one who runs faithfully to the end will fail of the recompense. The divine Judge does not look upon the swift and gifted alone; he also regards fidelity, sincerity, earnestness, purity of motive. Every one who perseveres will receive the unfading wreath. “Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee the crown of life.” Yes, God regards faithfulness and perseverance even more than brilliancy of performance. So do not be discouraged if your progress does not seem to be so rapid; only see to it that you keep steadily on the racecourse to the end.

#### **2. No Competition in the Christian Race**

In worldly games there is always competition. One racer tries to pass the other. One wins the award over the other. Sometimes ill-will is engendered

through such rivalry. The winner gloats and brags; the loser becomes jealous and angry.

It is not so on the Christian race-course. There is no competition there; no desire to win something over another contestant. Each one is just as anxious that his fellows shall win prizes as he is to win one for himself. Indeed, all the Christians runners encourage and help one another along the way. That is the basis of all our fellowship in the church; of public worship and of all social functions. Do you know that this Christian race is so nobly ethical that, if one runner were to try to outstrip another only for the sake of victory, that very fact would either put him out of the course or sadly slacken his spiritual pace. On the Christian race-course the motive counts more than anything else.

### **3. Set A Good Example To Encourage Others**

Yet, though there is no rivalry, we may encourage one another by setting a good example. If one person sees that another is faithful in attendance on the means of grace, that will be an incentive to similar fidelity. When we see how liberal other Christians are, we find that we, too, can give more to Christ's cause than we thought we could. If I see you running along swiftly and gracefully, I will be cheered to follow your example. That is what Christ meant when He said: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in heaven."

### **4. Perseverance Necessary, and...**

In some respects the natural race resembles the Christian race. For example, in both perseverance to the end is necessary. In the former the racer who grows tired and stops by the way will win no prize. Every winner has to keep on to the goal. So, in the Christian life, it will avail nothing to begin and then stop midway, or anywhere along the course. The grace of perseverance is absolutely needed. "Faithful to the end," must be the Christian's motto. But it is cheering to know that the reward is sure. "Be thou faithful unto the end, and I will give thee the crown of life." "The promises of God are yea and amen to them that believe." "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God and believe in Me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you."

“Christ hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” No; there is no doubt about the prize at the end of the Christian race-course. “Be not weary in well doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not.”

## 5. The Reward

I call attention to another beautiful feature of the Christian’s prize: It is partly bestowed during this life. The prophet somewhere says of the Lord, “His reward is with Him.” There is joy in being a contestant on the stadium of Christian activity. No one has so much real joy as the true Christian. He knows that his pleasures are right; hence he has the answer of a good conscience toward God and man. That is solid joy; joy that leaves no sting behind. That is why we can speak of “the peace of God which passeth all understanding.” And what a delight it is to know in your heart that you are running on the highway of truth! You are not muddling along in doubt and uncertainty, pursuing an *ignis fatuus* [wisp]. The assurance of truth and salvation imparts a deep and solid joy.

## 6. An Incorruptible

Another thought is worth cherishing. Paul says of the athletes who take part in the worldly games that they strive for a “corruptible” crown, but believers for “an incorruptible.” How true that is! The laurel wreath that bedecked the head of the victor in the Isthmian contest would be green and fresh for a little while; but soon it would wither and fade away. Not so the crown of the true believer. It shall shine forever in the kingdom of the Father. Even as the eons of eternity pass in never-ending cycles, it shall grow brighter and fairer. Peter speaks of “an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.” It surely is worth while to strive and sacrifice to obtain such a reward. What are Victor’s wreaths and conqueror’s crowns in comparison!

There is another paragraph in our pericope for today. Paul dropped his simile about the runners on the racecourse, and made use of the experiences of Moses and the people of Israel during their pilgrimage through the Red Sea and the wilderness to illustrate some principles of the Christian life; yet for sermonic purposes we may bring this part of the text also under the imagery of the stadium and its games. From it we learn what is —



## IV. The Christian Runner's Source Of Strength.

Note what Paul says here: “But I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual meat, and all drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank of an accompanying spiritual Rock, and the Rock was Christ; yet with most of them God was not well pleased, for they were strewn in the desert.” The purpose of this reference to the Israelites is expressed in the next verse: “Now these things became types for us, warning us not to lust after evil things as they lusted.”

By the way, we note that Paul here refers to Moses as a real character, not as a mythical or legendary one, and to the incidents of the sea and the wilderness as real historical incidents, not fictitious inventions. He was no higher critic of the negative type.

But let us apply this passage to the Christian racecourse. Even though Paul has changed the figure of speech, he connects this parts of the lesson immediately with what goes before. His intention was to give Christian people warning as to their manner of life by citing these incidents from the Old Testament. The Israelites were under the cloud and passed through the sea. But who put the cloud there to guide them, and who parted the waters of the sea to permit them to pass over dryshod? It was God. So you are to rely on Him for strength in your Christian racecourse. Do not think that you can succeed in reaching the goal and winning the prize without divine aid.

Then He says the people were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, which means that they were bound to him as their leader who had been chosen of God. If they would follow him as he followed God's directions, all would be well with them. So with us. If we will follow the inspiration of our ministers who are called of God and who are true to Him and His Word, we will make good progress in our race and win the prize at the end. Then he says that the people ate spiritual food and drank spiritual drink. That is significant. After all, though God fed His people physically in a miraculous way, yet their real sustaining food and drink were spiritual; that is, their real source of strength lay in the supernatural — in God. Paul does not agree with the critics who think the people of Israel were fed on

legendary, mythical, or evolutionary food, nor merely on their own “ideas.” No; God was their shield and their fortress. Like us, they were dependent upon Him. They had bodily food, but he said to them: “Thou shalt not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

Then Paul refers to the rock. You will recall that, when the people were crying out for thirst at Kadesh Barnea, Moses struck the rock before him with his rod, and a replenishing fountain of drinking water gushed forth. Now Paul interprets that incident, and makes an application of it. He says it was a spiritual rock. Why? Because, while it refreshed the people physically, it also directed their attention to God who gave them the water, and thus reestablished their faith in Him; hence it proved to be a spiritual as well as a material rock. Every gift in nature ought to be looked upon as God’s gift, and hence should lead us to faith in Him and gratitude and love to Him.

But now Paul makes an unexpected application: he says, “And the Rock was Christ.” Why did Paul give that interpretation? If we will simply accept the whole Bible as an organic unity, as God’s integral plan for the redemption of the race, all will be very plain. By his experience Paul had found God through faith in Jesus Christ. Before he came to Christ he did not know God except in a cold and distant way. But after his conversion “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.” Christ was “Immanuel, God with us.” He was “God manifest in the flesh.” This being Paul’s experience, whenever he looked into the Old Testament, which was also a part of God’s revelation, He found Christ there. God had revealed Himself to him through Christ; so all God’s revelations were made through the eternal Son. Here, then, far out in the wilderness, Jesus Christ, though not yet incarnate, was the spiritual Rock from which flowed the true water of life. With this teaching that of Christ harmonizes (John 7:37, 38): “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture saith, from within him shall flow rivers of living water.” So Paul had found the spiritual key to the Old Testament: it was Christ.

Let us learn the same lesson. Christ must furnish us the strength to enter upon and continue in the Christian race for the prize of eternal life. He says: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life;” “Without Me ye can do nothing.” And Paul says: “I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.”

"On Christ by faith my soul would live;  
From Him my life, my all receive;  
To Him devote my fleeting hours;  
Serve Him alone with all my powers.

"Christ is my everlasting all;  
To Him I look, on Him I call;  
He will my every want supply  
In time and through eternity."

We will take time for a few words of practical application.

[1] If we have not done so already, let us enter the Christian race. In this race there are to be no spectators and critics. All must take part in the game — all who would win the prize of eternal life.

[2] Being in the race, let us make progress. There should be no standing still; indeed, to stand still in the race-course and block the way is impossible; the rules of the game will put the "quitter" out altogether.

[3] We should make as rapid progress as we can. The figure used by Paul is that of running. That gives us a good suggestion. We should run; we should not be content to move at a snail's pace. There should be perceptible progress from day to day and from year to year. I put a pointed question: Is our progress in spiritual things rapid enough to be compared to running? Or would it better be compared to crawling? Sometimes the poet's lines seem to be quite apt: "Our souls, how heavily they go to reach eternal joys!" But may our experience be the opposite. God help us to make rapid progress in the grace of holy living. Amen.

# 17. Should A Man Defend Himself? 2 Cor. 11:19 — 12:9. Sexagesima Sunday.

For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise. For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face. I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also. Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not. In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands. (2 Corinthians 11:19-12:9)

It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (2 Corinthians 12:1-9)

OUR TEXT TODAY is a long one; therefore we cannot treat it in detail, but must try to find its inner unity, and treat it as a whole. What was Paul trying to prove in the text and context? He was defending himself and his apostleship. He felt that the gospel demanded such self-justification. Some people think it is never necessary to make any explanation respecting themselves, no matter how much they are wronged or slandered, or how much the truth has been assailed. They declare that nobody will believe the idle rumor, which will be advertised all the more widely if they make an explanation. As for the truth, they contend that it will take care of itself; it needs no defense.

This is a lackadaisical, if not a lazy, way. It cannot claim Paul on its side; for the apostle vigorously defended himself in his letter to the Corinthians. We shall see that he was justified in doing so; that it was necessary for the sake of the gospel of Christ. And what was the trouble at Corinth with which he had to deal? It was this: He had established the church there, had first preached the gospel to the Corinthians, and so had laid the true foundation for their faith. After he had left them, other men came to them, and made the proud boast that they were superior to the apostle; indeed, that they themselves were the real apostles. They held their heads high; they strutted and bragged; and actually made some of the Corinthian Christians believe that they were great men, with better credentials than the apostle Paul, who deported himself among them with a humble mien, putting himself in the background, and proclaiming only Christ and Him crucified. He did not want them to glory in men, but in Christ; therefore he had not pressed his own claims as an apostle, or as one who had received special revelations.

But now that he saw the disposition of the Corinthians to allow themselves to be beguiled and imposed upon by boastful pretenders, and thus endanger their salvation and the cause of the gospel among them, he felt that it was time to set forth his claims as an apostle. He did not like to speak of himself in this way. It sounded like boasting, and seemed to him to be foolish; but he saw that it was necessary. He claimed no special command from Christ to take this course, but felt that it was right; yet the sequel proves that, after all, he was led by the Spirit of God. So we need not fear but that the lesson for today is just as authentic as any other part of Paul's writings. The incident teaches that sometimes God permits us to exercise our own judgment, and does not give an express command for every act; but even

then, when we act in His fear and pray for His guidance, He will direct us in the right way. As the Psalmist put it: “Commit thy ways Unto the Lord, and He will direct thy paths.”

Let us classify the main teaching of the text.

## **I. The Things That Paul Could Rightfully Boast Of.**

### **1. He had not tried to dupe the people.**

Others had done so, especially the false apostles. They preached another gospel, which was no gospel; they imposed on the people. So he rebukes the people for permitting themselves to be so easily deceived. “You put up with fools gladly,” he says, “seeing you yourselves are so wise!” Then he said, they would put up with a man who would lead them captive, or exalt himself, or even smite them on the face; they were servile before those pretenders; they were easily duped.

But he had never treated the Corinthians in that way, he tells them. He had never boasted before them; had never even asked them to support him financially, but had secured his livelihood in another way, so that he could preach the gospel to them without money and without price. Never had he taken the least advantage of their confidence. So why should they desert his teaching, and follow those false apostles, who were making merchandise of the gospel? Was it not for their own good that he justified himself in this vigorous way?

### **2. He was a Jew — a lineal descendant of Abraham.**

But if those pretenders boasted so loudly of their prestige, he would also advance his claims, though it seemed to him foolish to do so. The false teachers professed to be blue-blooded Jews; therefore the Corinthian Church, composed of Jews, should listen to them. Paul’s counter-claim was that he, too, was a Jew, a lineal descendant of Abraham? As a Hebrew of the purest blood, no other man had a right to speak with more authority.

### **3. He was a minister of Christ.**

Some of the false teachers set up the claim that they were the only ministers of Christ. This was done with an ulterior purpose, for elsewhere in Paul's letters we learn that some of the Corinthians held that they cared nothing for Paul or Peter or Apollos, but were only for Christ; they were sectarian and narrow even in His name. So here came the pretenders, and declared, "Well, then, we are your leaders; we are the real ministers of Christ."

Paul had to head off this claim by saying that he, even more than the pretenders, was a minister of Christ, for he had met the glorified Christ on his way to Damascus, and had received his gospel directly from Him, not from anyone else, not even from his fellow-apostles. Besides, he had preached only Christ among the Corinthians. He says elsewhere (1 Cor. 1:10, 11): "I laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon... Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." So, on the score of being a minister of Christ, he could boast of superiority over his detractors. Here again he did right to defend his apostleship, for his purpose was not to exalt himself, but to hold up the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **4. He was more abundant in labors and sufferings for Christ.**

Here Paul had a decided advantage over his would-be competitors, who were trying to disparage and injure him. What had they done in the way of self-sacrificing labor for Christ and the Church? Nothing. They were simply getting an easy living out of their willing dupes. Did that prove them sincere and earnest? Then he pointed to his own labors and hardships for the sake of the gospel as an evidence of his veracity and sincerity and unselfishness. Would not these works prove that he was their true friend and a real apostle of Christ? Would an impostor be willing to endure such hardships?

Then he goes on to enumerate his labors and sufferings: beaten with stripes, imprisoned, stoned, shipwrecked, hungry, thirsty, cold, ill-clad, in all kinds of perils by land and sea. Then there was also the care of all the churches, with the constant calls for help and sympathy, so that wherever a Christian suffered, he suffered with him. Yes, surely, in all these trials and toils, he had made full proof of his ministry. There can be no stronger evidence of sincerity in a minister or a layman than the fact that he is willing to

labor and sacrifice for the welfare of Christ and His Church. Even as Christ and Paul appealed to their works as *prima facie* evidence of veracity, so we today have the same right.

## **5. He was favored with special visions.**

He says: "Though it perhaps is not expedient for me to glory in such things, yet I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord." The pretenders had doubtless set up similar claims; Paul proves that he was not behind them. About fourteen years prior, he had been lifted up to Paradise, whether in the body or only in the spirit, he did not know; and there he had "heard unspeakable words," which no human lips could repeat. Could any of his competitors match that for a direct revelation of God? Yet he never would have mentioned it, had he not been driven to it by the boasting of his assailants; indeed, such high and intimate spiritual experiences were too sacred to be talked about; and to describe them might lead other people to expect similar rhapsodies, instead of going contentedly along doing common service for Christ.

So Paul, while he mentioned this vision, because he was compelled to do so, did not desire to boast about it. He was modest and humble. Ah! that is a valuable lesson for mystics and fanatics and theosophists today, who make so much boast of their esoteric visions and experiences. Look at Paul, the great apostle, whose teachings have changed the currents of history, who says, after modestly describing his wonderful vision: "On behalf of such a one, will I glory; but on mine own behalf I will not glory save in mine infirmities." Yes, though he would have had, humanly speaking, a right to glory, and would have simply told the truth in doing so, yet he says: "I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or heareth from me."

And now comes the climax of what might be calleth Paul's modest boasting. He says that, lest his numerous revelations might puff him up, and make him vainglorious, God gave him a humbling experience, in which alone he would glory:

## **No. 5. A thorn in the flesh.**



It is idle to speculate as to the precise character of this affliction. Many surmises have been made, but had Paul meant that it should be known, he would have put the fact down in black and white. The main point is, it was an affliction to keep him humble. Was he tempted to be proud? That thorn in the flesh was there to remind him how weak and human he was, and how dependent on God. He even prayed three times for its removal. So it must have been something especially humiliating, for he sets it over against undue exaltation. The Lord did not remove the affliction, but He answered Paul's prayer in a better way: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my power is made perfect in human weakness." Then listen to Paul's conclusion: "Most gladly will I therefore boast of my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell upon me."

Now here was a strange boaster — unique in the history of the world. He had a right to glory if, from the human viewpoint, he wished to do so. He might vaunt himself as a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a minister of Christ, a toiler and sufferer for Christ without measure or equal, a seer of visions and revelations that bore him up to the third heaven; yet he apologized even for mentioning these high prerogatives, and declared that he would boast only of his weaknesses and the distressing thorn in his flesh! And why? Because then Christ's power and grace were manifested so much more conspicuously in upholding him. If he should boast of his strength, Christ would be thrust to one side and into the shadow; but if he gloried in his weaknesses, Christ would come to the fore as his helper and sanctifier. Thus he was willing to be a bond-servant to his Lord and Master. Like John the Baptist, he was willing to decrease in order that Christ might increase.

## **II. Why It Was Right For Paul To Defend Himself.**

### **1. What he said was the truth.**

None of his recital was untrue or exaggerated. It was right that the Corinthians should know the truth. Error always does harm. Truth is the only thing that will save the world. Paul would have done wrong not to give the people at Corinth the truth. Besides, we should remember that Paul was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for all subsequent generations. His

defense of himself at this place and before King Agrippa, and elsewhere constitutes a most valuable apologetic for the truth of the gospel in every age. You cannot explain Paul without admitting that Jesus Christ is true man and true God, and that He came into the world to save sinners. Yes, Paul had ample reasons for justifying himself, for the truth ought always to be known and error always exposed.

## **2. He defended himself only to defend Christ.**

His primary purpose was not to exploit himself. What he said of himself was said deprecatingly. Knowing that he had truly preached Christ at Corinth, that Christ was the only way of salvation, and that the men who were undermining him were impostors, and thus were imperiling the spiritual welfare of the people, he employed the only means at his command to bring them back to the true faith. If they should lose faith in him, they would lose faith in the Christ whose ambassador he was.

And herein lies an important lesson for us as Christians. Whenever misrepresentation is likely to injure the Church and the cause of Christ, we ought to be alert to make the proper correction. Of course, for mere personal matters the case is not so vital, but for Christ's sake and the sake of soul's defense may be highly important. People of the world sometimes get hold of false rumors about church members and ministers of the gospel, and they are all too ready to believe and circulate them. We ought to correct these errors whenever we can. We should not be afraid to speak out. Not long ago a worldling was cheated on Monday morning in a business transaction. In his wrath he declared that very likely the man who defrauded him had been praying in church all day on Sunday, just to make a pretense of piety. The man to whom he was speaking was himself a churchman. He at once challenged the accuser to prove his assertion. The latter hedged and hemmed. Then the Christian man said: "Go with me, sir, and we will look up the defrauder's record, and see whether he was in a church service at all on Sunday." The man declined, while his face grew red with confusion. "Then, sir," said the Christian man decisively, "since you are unwilling to investigate the matter, you know that you have no ground for your accusation; you do not believe it yourself; therefore you owe an apology to every sincere church member in this community."

We were glad to know that there was a layman of the Church who had the courage to speak out in that way. The false accuser will at least be more careful hereafter in what he says and where he says it.

In a temperance fight a minister was made the object of an ugly rumor, which was simply invented by his enemies to injure the cause. He did not care for himself, but he did care for Christ and His Church and for the moral crusade that he had espoused; so he hunted up the source of the story, and made the inventors admit that there was no basis whatever for it; then he informed the community of his complete vindication. He said to the people, "You have a right to know that I am making an honest fight against iniquity." Once a damaging story was circulated about a prominent minister of the gospel. He knew that many people of the world would be only too glad to believe it. One Sunday morning, standing in his pulpit, he made this statement: "For myself I care very little about the false rumor that has been circulated; but for the cause of Christ I am intensely concerned. Therefore I wish to announce, here and now, and in this public way, that any person or newspaper that hereafter gives circulation to this rumor will be prosecuted for libel to the full extent of the law." The story ceased circulating at once. Everybody knew, too, that it was false, or the minister would not have dared to come out with so public and courageous a denial. Every time a strong answer is made to an odious lie against Christian people it has a salutary effect, because it both exonerates religion and exposes the lying disposition of evil-minded people. Thus it serves a double purpose. Every person must judge when it is wise or worth while to make a defense, but when he does make it, he should do thorough work.

If Paul, for the sake of the gospel, felt it necessary to defend himself against obloquy, how much more should we defend the gospel when it is directly assailed! Some people say: "Oh! you need not defend the truth; the truth will take care of itself! Never engage in apologetic preaching!"

We cannot agree with such lackadaisical counsel. If the truth will take care of itself, why did the Son of God come into the world to proclaim it, and while He was here, why did He defend it so often and so earnestly? Why did the apostles "reason" with the Jews Sabbath after sabbath in their synagogues? Why did Peter make his valiant defense on the day of Pentecost, and afterward, when he was brought before the Sanhedrin? Why did Paul make his great apologetic before Felix and Agrippa? Why did the early defenders of the faith speak and write so vigorously in reply to the skeptical

and philosophic attacks on the Christian system? And today why are some of our most evangelical and earnest Christian scholars vindicating the divine claims of the Bible against the rationalists and dissecting critics? Is all this labor in vain? We reply with an emphatic, No! Had it not been for doughty champions of the faith through the centuries, the cause of Christ would have perished from the earth long ago. The men of the “let-alone” and “don’t-answer” policy would have simply permitted the enemy to enter the gates and capture the citadel without lifting a hand to defend the truth.

Some one rises to protest: “But may not apologetic preaching be over-done?” Yes, it may. No preacher should harp on one string all the time, nor preach only one kind of sermons. He should study diversity, and should fit his discourses to the needs of his church and community. Unless he does this, he cannot be said to be “apt to teach,” nor “a workman who needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the Word of truth.” But apologetic preaching may also be under-done. The minister may never answer the doubts of the people of the community. Some of them may have honest doubts that trouble them a great deal. But the dogmatic preacher never tries to resolve them. He simply shouts, “You must believe! you must believe!” Many honest thinking people resent that style of preaching, while they greatly appreciate a discourse that sets forth “the sweet reasonableness of the gospel.” They want their minister to be well enough informed to be able “to give an answer to every one that asketh a reason for the hope that is in him.” Let not the minister who does not want to take the trouble to study the problems of the day profoundly flatter himself that the people do not think, do not read, and are not aware of the objections and arguments of infidels and critics. Many of them know at least something about these matters, and they want their pastor to be able on proper occasions to deal adequately with them. If he fails to do so, they will lose confidence in his courage or ability, or both.

Let the modern defender of the faith remember that he is in the apostolic succession. He can trace his vocation, which is as divine as any other, through Peter and Paul and James and Jude, through Justin Martyr, Origen, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Augustine, Anselm, Bernard, Luther, Butler, Lardner, Paley, Whateley, Christlieb, Luthardt, and many others of like ability and courage.

Will any of us sit silent and afraid when the very foundations of our faith are being sapped? I hope not. I hope that our laymen will read good works

on Christian evidence, so that when they meet an assailant of the Scriptures, they will be able to answer his objections kindly and thoroughly, and thus win him to Christ, and at the same time uphold the cause of truth.

# 18. The Primacy Of Christian Love. 1 Cor. 13:1-13. Quinquagesima Sunday.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity. (1 Corinthians 13:1-13)

“AND YET I show you a superior way.” That is what Paul wrote at the end of the chapter preceding our text, which is the well-known thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, dealing with charity or Christian love. In the twelfth chapter he had written to the Corinthians about the various gifts that should be cultivated in the Christian Church, the apostolic gift, the prophetic gift, the gift of miracles, the gift of tongues, the gift of teaching, and so on. In conclusion he urges them to be zealous for these high gifts of grace. “Yet,” he adds, “I show you a more excellent way;” and then he writes this won-

derful chapter on love. So love is the surpassing virtue, without which all the other gifts and graces which he had mentioned would be in vain. He gives the primacy to love. Let us follow the inspired apostle as he analyzes and urges this surpassing grace.

## **I. Its Transcendent Quality.**

By this we mean that it is the crowning virtue, the one that excels all the rest and that gives them their real value. Paul himself makes comparisons between love and some of the other gifts. So we may know that the comparison is not an invidious one.

### **1. He compares love with the gift of speech.**

This is the eloquent way in which he puts it: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.” Was it needful and timely for Paul to make this comparison? It surely was. There were people in the Corinthian Church who laid great stress on the gift of tongues, which was a peculiar gift of those early times. We do not know precisely what it was, save that among some persons it was greatly coveted. Sometimes it seemed to partake of the ability to speak in an unknown language; at other times it undoubtedly meant a special endowment of religious eloquence in a language that was known. It was a rare gift, and, when properly used, was edifying and inspiring to the Church.

But all brilliant talents have their accompanying dangers. The great danger of eloquence is pride, and especially desire for human praise; then soon human rivalry and jealousy are awakened. Some of the converts at Corinth spoke so eloquently that the people were captivated, and gave them unstinted plaudits. As a result, parties soon arose, one faction expressing preference for one favorite, and another for another. Some were for Paul, some for Peter, some for Apollos. Paul rebuked these parties in the first and second chapters of this epistle, and called them carnal because of their factious spirit.

Yes, the ambition to “shine,” to “play to the galleries,” crept into the early Church, as it insinuates itself everywhere and at all times. Paul was

afraid to show himself as brilliant as he really was, lest he attract too much attention to himself, and dim the glory of Christ. So he says (Chapter 2): “And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God; for I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified... And my speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; so that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” The difficulty with some of those Corinthian orators was, they became ambitious and vainglorious, thinking more of human praise than of divine approbation. They soon neglected to be controlled by the spirit of Christian love. So Paul came with his sharp rebuke of their pride, by saying that, though they spake as eloquently as the best trained orators or even as angels, if they did not have love, all their talk was but hollow sound.

Is this lesson needed today? Yes, as it always has been. Sometimes gifted men are more anxious to display their eloquence than to do deeds of love and kindness. Laymen may also be afflicted with that disease; but ministers are in special peril from the very fact that their vocation is largely one of public speaking. There are ministers who have the “itch for oratory;” who are more anxious to “make a fine impression” than to edify the congregation. They think more of self than of their message. Ambition soon cauterizes their souls, and true Christian love walks out. Their eloquent and rounded periods, their orotund voices, their rhetorical flourishes — all are only as “a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal;” all sound and no substance.

Acceptable address is not to be neglected. Indeed, to be rude and crude is the other extreme, and diverts attention from the speaker’s theme. But let it always be remembered that it is the gospel lovingly presented, and not human oratory, that is “the power of God unto salvation.”

## **2. Next Paul compares love with prophecy.**

This is also a divine gift. A prophet is one who is called to speak for God. That is the root meaning of the word. He may foretell, or he may simply proclaim the message that God gives him. To this is added the special gift of interpreting the mysteries or profound things of revelation. May so wonderful a gift also have its peril? Yes; so contradictory is human nature that every conspicuous gift may become a source of temptation. So Paul means



to say that even the prophet must take heed to his motive, lest he be filled with pride and lose the spirit of simple Christian love. With love, his gift is most useful to the Church; without love, it is a snare and a temptation.

### **3. Strange to say, Paul next compares love with faith.**

How Paul extols faith in other places! Did he contradict himself here when he said that even faith without love is nothing? No! he was only profound, as he always was; he looked into the heart of things, into their very essence. While he made fine distinctions, they were always differences. In this place he was not putting justifying faith over against love, but another kind of faith — the faith that was able to perform miracles; for he says, “Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains.” Might such a gift also prove a snare? It not only might, but it actually did, in the church at Corinth. There were people who for certain reasons were endued with miraculous power. Presently they began to look upon their gift as the chief one, comparing it disparagingly with other gifts. Here again love walked out, pride came in. Justifying faith could not thus have contradicted love, for Paul says it is “wrought in love;” but the other kind of faith, the faith that performs wonders and brings out the performer into the lime-light of popularity — that has its dangers; they come from the human craving for notoriety. “Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition,” should be sounded abroad everywhere. Those who possess the most outstanding talents are exposed to the most insidious dangers, and should be especially on their guard to cultivate the grace of humble Christian love.

### **4. Paul even compares love with almsgiving.**

“Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.” Would it be possible for a man to be as charitable as here indicated, without possessing Christian love? Perhaps not often, for if a man gave “all his goods to feed the poor,” it would be a pretty sure token that he had real love in his heart; but Paul means that, even if a man could go this length of almsgiving, and yet fail to be prompted by love, it would be of no avail in God’s sight; for God would look upon the motive of the benefaction more than upon the deed. So Paul makes the statement as strong as possible,

perhaps even hyperbolic, in order to set forth the paramount character of love.

Besides, there is such a thing as giving to the poor, and giving largely, too, merely for display. Christ said (Matt. 6:2, 3): "When therefore thou doest alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee."

So let us learn this lesson: All our gifts to the poor and to the Church should be actuated by Christian love, and not to win popularity. It is love, and love alone, that properly consecrates and hallows our gifts.

## **5. Another comparison — love and martyrdom.**

"Perhaps Paul meant that, if it were possible for one to give his body to be burned without love, it would be of no avail to him. But he does not put the matter in that subjunctive form, but rather implies that such a sacrifice might be possible. If there were no facts to prove him to be correct, we might doubt the validity of his mode of statement; but facts are more convincing than theories. In the early days of Christianity there were people who, in their fanatical zeal, courted martyrdom. In a very insidious way it ministered to their pride, and brought them into notoriety, and, most of all, was, in their eyes, a ground of merit entitling them to heaven. Like some people today who think that the soldier who dies on the battle-field makes atonement for his sins, and actually earns a clear title to eternal salvation, so these fanatical zealots sought martyrdom as a matter of merit. The true martyrs never did this. They avoided martyrdom as long as they could, and bravely made their defense before their accusers. They were always more anxious to live for Christ than to die for him. The fact is, if a man is not willing to live for Him, he will not be fit to die for Him. It is only the life of faith and love that will prepare any man for a victorious death. It is not dying that puts a man into heaven; it is the grace of God, appropriated by faith and wrought through love, that does that. So even if a person were to die to earn heaven, it would avail him nothing; for, after all, the love of God would not be in his heart, and therefore he would not be fitted to live in a realm whose atmosphere is surcharged with love.

Having now considered its transcendent quality, we will consider —

## II. The Ethical Quality Of Love.

Paul next delineates the wonderful ethical attributes of Christian love. But how shall we deal adequately with this marvelous series of statements? In a single sermon, we can merely give the outline, leaving the specific and fuller development for other occasions. There is enough material here for a dozen sermons. Note the versatility and richness of this primary Christian grace:

“Love is patient, kind.” What a rebuke to our impatience with people and things and to the unkindly feelings we cherish toward some of our fellowmen! “Love is not envious.” It rather rejoices in the success of others, and never seeks to belittle them. “Love is not vainglorious, is not puffed up.” Says the proverb writer: “Seest thou a man who is wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him.” Love never holds its head high in the air. Again: “Love does not behave itself unseemly.” That means that love is too kindly in spirit ever to be rude, crude, impolite and offensive. Love “seeks not its own things,” which is Paul’s idiom for saying it is not selfish; it thinks of other people; it is truly altruistic. Note again: “Love is not easily provoked” — not irritable; “reckoneth not evil” — that is, never resentful; “rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth in the truth” — meaning that love does not exult when wrong is done, but rejoices when the truth prevails; “covers all things” — does not expose the weakness of others to the public gaze; “believes all things” — puts the most kindly construction on the actions of others; “hopes all things” — never allows itself to become daunted and despondent; “endureth all things” — is not impatient and vindictive, but willing to suffer wrong rather than to “get even” with the wrong-doer, and thus commit another wrong.

These are the shining and beautiful ethical qualities of Christian love. Do you wonder that Paul says, in introducing his chapter on this crowning attributes: “And yet I show you a more excellent way?” Yes, the way of love is the way “that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” This eulogy on Christian love is the most impressive eulogy ever pronounced. Should not this virtue prevail in the Church? It would heal all our schisms. If it pre-

veiled throughout the world, all social, economic, national and international difficulties would disappear, and wars would cease for evermore.

### **III. The Enduring Quality Of Christian Love.**

#### **1. Love never faileth.**

The original for “faileth” means to “fall from,” and therefore the meaning is that love never falls down, that it stands upright and firm. Beautiful quality! Thank God! there is something in the universe that is perduring, amid all that is transitory and fleeting. Man’s earthly life itself is like the grass of the field, like a shadow that quickly passes; but if our lives are founded on love, we stand upon an impregnable rock. Will we bind our lives to the unstable and temporary, or to that which endures forever and ever? Which do you think would be the wiser plan?

It is surprising to observe some of the things that Paul declares shall come to an end; but, as has been said, he always probes into the real nature of things, and analyzes them fundamentally. In contrast with the perduring character of love, he says: “Whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away” — that is, rendered useless or abolished. Why? Because they shall be fulfilled, and will linger only as a precious memory. Not so with love; it shall simply grow better and stronger and more glorious as eternity’s eons roll along. Paul afterward explains more fully when he says: “For we prophecy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” Just so! All prophecy is only partial, after all. No prophet, however highly inspired, could tell all that the future contained for the people of God. But eternity, filled with love, will round out all deficiencies in the predictions of inspired prophets.

Then Paul says that tongues shall cease. This is right again, for in the future realm of love, God shall teach His people but one language — the language of love. So there will be no need for interpreters, translators, and explicators of mysteries. “They shall all be taught of God.”

We must try to penetrate into the meaning of another of Paul’s deep sayings: “Whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away” — that is, superseded. Is not that a strange statement? It may be strange to our partial understanding, but on analysis, we find it to be correct; for Paul adds, “For

now we know in part.” You see, he was referring to our limited human knowledge — the very knowledge on which many people pride themselves today, boastful of their marvelous erudition and superior scholarship. Surely Paul is right in saying that our limited knowledge shall be superseded by perfect knowledge in the full light of the glory of God in His kingdom of love.

Then follow those familiar statements which never lose their power and their charm: “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I thought as a child, I reasoned as a child; but when I became a man, I put away my infantile ways.” Sometimes Biblical interpreters do not grasp the logic of Paul’s saying here; it is this: In this life of limited knowledge, we speak, think and reason like children; but in the future, when we shall come to perfect knowledge in God’s realm of love, we shall do away with these crude modes of thought, speech and action, and shall think, talk and act like full grown men. That we have given the correct exposition of this passage is proved by the next statement of the text, connected by a conjunction: “For now we see through a glass obscurely, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know according also as I have been known.” It is all as pellucid as it is satisfying and inspiring: in the realm of perfect love, our vision shall be clarified and our knowledge shall be completed. Where perfect love reigns, it gives all things else. “What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?” “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

So love shall never fail. On the other hand, our text states expressly that

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## **2. Love shall endure.**

“And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

So the three cardinal graces will last on through eternity. How exhilarating is the prospect! We shall always have perfect faith in God — perfect confidence; doubt shall never enter to mar our joy. We shall always have hope, because, while all joys will be realized, and in that respect hope will

be swallowed up in realization, yet the hope that they will last forever and ever shall never grow dim or wavering in our hearts. Love, too, will always fill heaven with its glory, purity and felicity. The love of God will sway all hearts, and no envy, suspicion, or hatred will invade our breasts. Therefore love is the primary grace, the virtue that binds all others together in perfect unity. With it, they all exist and thrive; without it, they wither and die.

Henry Drummond said that “love is the greatest thing in the world.” It is only a partial statement. Love is the greatest thing, not only in the world, but in the universe, in infinity, in eternity, in God.

But why did Paul say that love is greater than faith and hope? Because he always thought things through before he made a statement. Faith, great a thing as it is, is only a human quality, not divine; you could not properly say that God has faith or is faith. So hope, precious and necessary as it is, is also a human virtue; you could not say that God has hope or is hope. Not so with love; it is both divine and human; you can say, “God is love;” indeed, the inspired apostle makes that declaration. God can be identified in His very essence with no other attribute as He can with love. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” for its redemption. Would we be the children of God? We must feel and practice “the primacy of love.” Else all our professions will be hollow noise and mockery. May love reign in all the Church of God!

"Lo, what a pleasing sight  
Are brethren that agree!  
How blest are all whose hearts unite  
In bonds of piety!

"All in their station move,  
And each performs his part  
In all the cares of life and love  
With sympathizing heart.

"Formed for the purest joys,  
By one desire possessed;  
One aim the zeal of all employs  
To make each other blest.

“’Tis the same pleasure fills  
The breast in worlds above,  
Where joy like morning dew distills,  
And all the air is love.”

# 19. A Prophet's Directions For Keeping Lent. Joel 2:12-19. Ash Wednesday — The First Day In Lent

Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?

Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people. Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen: (Joel 2:12-19)

OUR EPISTLE FOR TODAY, the first day in Lent, is selected from the prophecy of Joel. In the golden circle of the Christian Year we have come again to the Lenten season, which is the time of devout meditation on the goodness and love of God in sending His only begotten Son to redeem us. But such reflections will lead us to a sense of our sins and unworthiness, and therefore to earnest repentance. It is this call to repentance that is especially emphasized in the prophecy that constitutes our lesson for the day. For that reason it was selected by the Church.



A word about Joel and his prophecy. Very little is known of him. The first verse of the book says: "The word of Jehovah that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel." The name Joel, according to the Hebrew, means "whose God is Jehovah." Pethuel means "the sincerity of God." I gather these facts from the great commentary of Dr. C. F. Keil on the Minor Prophets. He also informs us that Joel must have lived before Isaiah, Amos and Hosea, and he gives convincing reasons for his opinion. He also contends that the prophecy is to be interpreted literally and not allegorically — a view in which we coincide. We are glad to note, too, that Dr. James Robertson, now deceased, the great Hebrew scholar of Glasgow, Scotland, took the same position in "The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia," edited by the late Dr. James Orr.

And what was the occasion of the prophecy? Says Dr. Keil: "An unparalleled devastation of the land of Judah by several successive swarms of locusts, which destroyed all the seedlings, all field and garden fruits, all plants and trees, and which was accompanied by scorching heat, induced the prophet to utter a loud lamentation at this unparalleled judgment of God, and an earnest call to all classes of the nation to offer prayer to the Lord in the temple, together with fasting, mourning and weeping, that He might avert the judgment." The first chapter refers to the ruined condition of the land; the second to the approaching judgment of God; in view of both, the prophet earnestly calls the people to repentance.

Now let us see what lessons this prophecy contains for us today. We have had no visitation of locusts or other destructive insect pests. Our crops have been abundant. In many ways we must acknowledge the goodness of God in sparing us from failure in material things. However, as a nation and as individuals we have much cause for repentance. We read of riots, strikes, grafting, profiteering, extravagance, greed, worldly pleasure to an unlimited degree, class hatred, coarseness in our recreations, Sunday desecration, lynching and murder, and many other forms of evil that ought to cause us to hang our heads in shame and contrition before God, who is justly offended at our numerous and flagrant transgressions. If we do not repent, we know not what judgments God may visit upon us. How can He be patient much longer? Our only fear is that, if we persist in our reckless course, He will by and by proclaim: "Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone." If ever the people of America should observe the season of Lent in true humility and repentance, it is now. We have ventured forth to correct the evils of other

nations; behold, we are overborne with evils of our own. How does the inspired prophet instruct us to keep Lent?

## **I. We Must Turn To God.**

The text says: “Yet even now, saith Jehovah, turn ye unto me with all your heart.” The trouble with Israel was, when she was prosperous, she turned away from Jehovah, and went after worldly pleasure and the vain idols of pagan nations. Israel did not want to be “a peculiar people,” different from other nations in the true worship of God and in righteousness of living. She wanted to be like other nations; she wanted to “follow, the style.” She desired to ’be in “the social swim.”

And that is the trouble with many people of our own country; they have forsaken God and His way of righteousness; they have been untrue to His Word, and have proudly proclaimed that human reason, and science, and philosophy are their sufficient guide. Who will deny that we have been conspicuously guilty of such departures? We have wanted to be in the fashion with certain other nations, which thought they had reached that degree of scholarship and power when they could dispense with God and His special revelation. If we persist in this course, I fear God will presently give us up to our own devices. He will say: “You think you know better than I, as I have revealed the way of righteousness in my Word; so go to, and see what you can do without Me.” That would be the worst judgment God could visit upon us — simply to let us go our own willful way. Every time in the history of the world a nation has been given up to its own devices, it has rushed headlong to ruin.

Therefore let us turn back to God and His revelation. Let us take Him for our support and His Holy Word for our guide. Then let us see whether He will not open heaven’s window’s and shower His benefactions upon us. Let the nation never think it can pilot its own way over the unknown sea of the future without God. Let us repent and go back to Him. And it should be done with all our heart, as the text demands, and not in a perfunctory spirit. “Every way of man is right in his own eyes, but God pondereth the heart.” “The sacrifices of God are a broken heart; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

The text puts it very aptly: “Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto Jehovah your God.” In the olden time the people rent their garments as an index of repentance and humility, but the practice deteriorated into form and outward show;’ so God called upon the people to rend their hearts, and not their garments — that is, to engage in sincere, heartfelt repentance, real sorrow for sin. Let us also learn the lesson. Mere outward forms of prayer, supplication and contrition will not satisfy God, who looks upon the heart. Good forms of worship have their use, and are not to be disparaged; but they must and cannot be made a substitute for heart religion. Until America repents sincerely of her forgetting and ignoring of God and her departure from His Word, His face will not be turned to us with favor and blessing.

“With broken heart and contrite sigh,  
A trembling sinner, Lord, I cry;  
Thy pardoning grace is rich and free;  
O God, be merciful to me!”

## **II. We Must Engage In Fasting.**

Our text says: “Turn unto Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.” In olden times fasting was a part of the service of repentance. It was not intended in itself to be meritorious, but was a symbol of self-denial. As people denied themselves food, so they were to deny themselves the pleasure of sin. The outward service reminded them of the need of inner self-infliction. If man would refrain from food, which would not be wrong in itself, how much more would he refrain from really sinful indulgence! In that respect perhaps some fasting might be profitable to many people today, particularly in Lent. We are so used to indulging our appetites to the full in eating and drinking that we become luxurious in our tastes, and have no disposition to deny the natural man any indulgence that he may crave. I repeat, bodily fasting might be a wholesome discipline. It might help us to cultivate habits of abstention and self-denial. Many people are so accustomed to gratifying every wish that, if the temptation presents itself even to church members, they feel they must go automobile driving on Sunday, even during the hours of the church service. So anemic spiritually have we grown through indulgence that we no longer have strength to

say “no” to any allurements. Our motto seems to be, “What we want to do, we want to do so feverishly that we cannot refrain.” A little bodily fasting, I repeat, would not injure us ethically and spiritually, and might prove very salutary.

However, the fasting that I would urge is abstention from worldly, compromising pleasure. There are some kinds of indulgence that appeal to many people, and they declare that they can “see no wrong in them;” yet their invariable effect is to dull their spiritual interest and dampen their spiritual fervor. For example, suppose you have remained until a late hour at some worldly social function, will you feel very fervent in prayer and worship the next day? And will you be likely to be in a very penitent frame of mind? Nay, my friend, there are some things that are wrong simply because they distract one’s interest from spiritual matters. If they do nothing more, they consume time and strength that might well be spent to better purpose.

How this self-indulgent habit grows upon many people! They lose all virility, all strength of will. Listen, my people: let us sometimes say “No!” to our desire simply to prove ourselves their masters. Oh, this weak and pliant yielding to every enchantment — it is the bane of this self-indulgent age! Even people who occupy high positions in the Church sometimes cannot deny themselves and their families certain forms of worldly pleasure, no matter how much offense they give to their brethren, or how much harm they may do to the body of Christ.

In the early part of Job’s prophecy, in lamenting the sad condition in Judah, he says: “That which the palmer-worm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the canker-worm eaten; and that which the canker-worm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.” Thus between these noxious insects and the fiery drought, the land was desolate. What are the palmer-worms, locusts, canker-worms and caterpillars of our American life? They are worldly greed, worldly ambition and worldly pleasure. Along these lines, therefore, the prophets of God should proclaim a fast.

### **III. A Solemn Assembly Should Be Called.**

Let me quote the vigorous proclamation of the prophet in the text: “Blow ye the trumpet in Zion. Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly; gather the people, sanctify the assembly; assemble the old men, gather the children and

those that are yet unweaned; let the bridegroom go forth from his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of Jehovah, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare Thy people, O Jehovah, and give not Thy heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them: Wherefore should they say among the peoples, Where is their God?"

What shall we think and say of America's shameful neglect of assembling for religious purposes? When our President and the Governor of the commonwealth call upon the people to gather together on our National Thanksgiving Day to praise and worship God, how many of them heed the proclamation? How many church people heed it, to say nothing of the people of the world? What do the vast majority of the people of our country do on that day, which ought to be a holy day? They make it a day of hilarity and sport, of feasting and revelry? What a shocking piece of mockery! Should we wonder if the Almighty would turn away with nausea, as He did in Judah's time (Isa. 1:12- 17)? "When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand, to trample my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me; your new moons and Sabbaths and the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary of bearing them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."

Let these stern reproaches sink deep into your hearts, oh, people of America! If our President should call a day of fasting and prayer, requesting us to ask divine direction in these crucial times, do you suppose the people would respond in large numbers? Ah! I fear that he dare not make such a request of the American people, because it might be turned into hollow mockery on account of the small numbers who would respond.

But why should God's people come together in solemn convocations? Because God calls us to do so, and thus there must be a sufficient reason. Because they need to encourage and admonish one another to repent, and turn to God, and reform. Because men are social beings, made so in the image of God, and therefore they cannot round out their Christian character in

isolation. Because their example will rebuke the ingratitude of the people of the world, and warn them to think of their obligation to God. Because they can thus unite their prayers in one common supplication at a throne of grace. Oh! there are many reasons why we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is. People who do not love God's house and God's people will not love God, nor be grateful to Him.

Again, if we cannot feel the weight of our sins as we should, perhaps the preacher, who has been agitating before God on account of his own sins and those of the nation, may preach in such a way as to lead us to true contrition of soul. Our text exhorts the priests, the ministers of Jehovah, to weep between the porch and the altar, and pray to God to spare His people, so that reproach may not come upon them, nations rule over them, and pagans mock them by saying, "Where is now their God?" Suppose that Japan, China and India read about our strikes and riots, our discontent and greed, our lust and lynchings, how they will mock us! How they will jeer, and say, "Behold, how well their God takes care of them." We may as well face the reality. We make Christianity obnoxious in the sight of the heathen by our departures from God's law of righteousness.

Thus far our sermon has been full of rebuke and exhortation, but we have been following the suggestions of the text. Is there not a pleasanter, or at least, a more comforting and cheering, side to the picture? I am glad to say there is, and the text points it out. If Judah would repent and turn to Jehovah, He would not turn them away unblessed. We have the same God today. Therefore —

## **IV. If We Will Return To Jehovah, He Will Return To Us.**

Listen to the comforting messages of the text: "Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto Jehovah your God; for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy, and will repent Him of the evil. Who knoweth whether He will not turn and change His attitude, and leave a blessing behind Him?" Note again, in verse 18 there is a change of tense, and the historical mode of statement is introduced. The meaning is that the people have assembled, fasted, prayed and repented, after which the

text says: "Then Jehovah was jealous for His land, and had compassion upon the people; and Jehovah answered and said unto His people,"Behold, I will send you grain and new wine and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations."

We appeal to history, both sacred and profane — though there should be no profane history — whether that has not always been God's way when distressed nations have turned to Him in true repentance and reformation: has He not always repented of the threatened evil, restored them to His favor, and sent upon them both temporal and spiritual mercies? Have you ever known a nation that has been true to God and His righteousness to be destroyed? That, indeed, has not been prosperous and happy? On the other hand, what has been the fruitful cause of the downfall of nations? Only one thing — Sin! Israel's history, which is an epitome of all history, proves this fact again and again. Reformation always brought divine blessings upon her head.

Departure was always followed by distress, famine, defeat in battle, oppression and exile. I wish that we as a nation could learn this patent lesson in the school of Israel's experience. "All these things were written for our admonition," so that we might profit by their mistakes.

But our lesson surely points forward to the time of redemption, and so, in entering upon the season of Lent, we should not remain in the Old Testament. Temporal blessings are indeed the least of the mercies we have received from God. They endure only for a while even at the best. The spiritual blessings that Christ has obtained for us by His incarnation, sacrifice and resurrection far surpass the good things of the world. Here is salvation full and free, both for this life and the life to come, won for us by His death on the cross. Surely the goodness of God ought to bring us to repentance. And to more than repentance: it ought to bring us to lives of gratitude, purity and service. Frances Ridley Havergal tells us, in effective and touching verse, how we should respond to the loving self-sacrifice of our Saviour:

"Thy life was given for me;  
Thy precious blood was shed  
That I might ransomed be,  
And quickened from the dead.  
Thy life was given for me;  
What have I given for Thee?"

"Thy Father's home of light,  
Thy rainbow-circled throne,  
Were left for earthly night,  
And wanderings sad and lone.  
Yea, all was left for me;  
Have I left aught for Thee?..."

"O, let my life be given,  
My years for Thee be spent;  
World-fetters all be riven,  
And joy with suffering blent.  
Thou gavest Thyself for me,  
I give myself to Thee."

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus! Let us pray.

"Almighty and most merciful God, our Heavenly Father, of whose compassion there is no end; who art long-suffering, gracious and plenteous in goodness and truth; forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin: We have sinned and done perversely; we have sinned and grievously offended Thee; against Thee, Thee only, have we sinned and done evil in Thy sight; but we beseech Thee, O Lord, remember not against us our former iniquities; let Thy tender mercies speedily prevent us, for we are brought very low; help us, O God of our salvation, and purge away our sins, for the glory of Thy holy name, and for the sake of Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen."



# **20. Winning Approval For The Pure Doctrine. 2 Cor. 6:1-10. The First Sunday In Lent.**

We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.) Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. (2 Corinthians 6:1-10)

THIS IS ONE of the chief tasks of Christian ministers and people: to live and speak in such a way as to win men's approval of the religion which they confess. Unless you and I can commend it as something good and valuable, men are not likely to accept it. I do not mean that, even by doing our best, we can win all men to Christ. Our Lord lived a perfect life before men, yet the people of His time crucified Him. So His apostles followed closely in His footsteps in faith and purity, but nearly all of them had to wear the martyr's crown. There are people in every community who have no disposition to forsake their sins and sinful pleasures; and so, whatever you and I may do, they will either scoff at us, or ignore our efforts to bring religion to their favorable notice. At the day of judgment such people will have to give an account of their own deeds, and I fear it will not fare well with them.

However, we Christian people ought to do everything in our power to commend our holy religion, in order that we may by all means win as many people to Christ as we can. Then we will have discharged our responsibility,

and no blame can be put upon us if at last impenitent sinners are visited with condemnation.

Our text indicates in a variety of ways how we may commend the pure Christian doctrine to our fellowmen. The very first word contains fruitful suggestion: “cooperating.” Then how shall we commend the pure Christian doctrine?

## I. By Cooperating With God.

[Editor’s Note: This section (I) veers to the edge of what is now called “Universal Objective Justification”, a misinterpretation of the Gospel. *Caveat Emptor*]

If you look closely, you will see that the words “with Him” are not in the original, as is indicated by the Italics in both the old and the revised versions. But evidently that is what Paul meant, and what he said, too, as we shall see if we attend to his close reasoning.

In the preceding chapter he had taught the pure doctrine of Christ. Note (verse 18): “But all things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ.” Verse 19: “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.” Also verse 21: “Him who knew no sin He made to be sin in our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” There we have the pure doctrine of salvation by atonement set forth. That is what we call the objective redemption that Christ wrought for us.

But it is not enough that God wrought for us an objective salvation; it must also be applied and accepted; God will not force it upon us. Therefore, after Paul has said that God has made Christ sin for us to atone for our sins, he adds: “But cooperating, I exhort you not to receive God’s grace in vain.” That means that we must work together with God to make the redemption which He has wrought out for us through Christ effective in our own hearts and lives. This, then, is the blessed order of salvation: Christ wrought redemption for us on the cross; the Holy Spirit through the Word and Sacraments brings that redemption to us, and enables us to accept it through His effective offer; from that point on we must “cooperate” with Him in making that redemption fruitful; otherwise Christ died, and the Holy Spirit sought to apply God’s grace, in vain. In our natural state we cannot “cooperate with God, for the carnal mind is enmity against Him; but after He has enabled us

by His Spirit, then we can work with Him, and we must do so, if His grace is to be effective in our lives.

So this is the first way to commend the pure doctrine of Christ — to work with God, to cooperate. It is God's will that we should accept salvation. We commend God's holy plan of Salvation when we accept it. It is God's will that we should grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ; we commend His doctrine when we exemplify such progress in our lives. God wants us to bear witness to Christ, who said, "Ye are my witnesses." What a beautiful way that is to advertise God's love and grace! By working thus in harmony with God as His true junior partners, we give to the people around us a favorable conception of His revelation.

## **II. By Cooperating Fruitfully.**

To quote literally, Paul says: "I exhort you not to receive the grace of God unto fruitlessness," or, as the common version has it, "in vain." And how could that be done? Well, far too many people receive the grace of God in confirmation or in a special meeting, and are faithful for a while; then they grow weary or careless, cease to cooperate with God and the Church, and go back to the beggarly elements of the world. That is a poor way to commend religion. Every backslider, every apostate from the faith, does vast harm to the cause of Christ. The people of the world cannot understand why, if religion is so good a thing, anyone who has once possessed it should be willing to part with it. Of course, they do not understand the nature of true religion; but by being disloyal to Christ, the backslider adds to their misunderstanding, and gives them ready excuses for refusing to come to Christ. That the backslider does great harm has been proved historically again and again. Go to any community where there was once a flourishing church, and many people professed conversion, and where afterward large numbers of them became recreant, and you will find it a "burnt district" religiously — a locality in which it is almost impossible to revive an interest in religion. The backsliders themselves are apathetic, often outbreakingly wicked, while others point to them as "shining examples" of the failure of Christianity.

On the other hand, how the church flourishes in a community where the people cooperate with Christ; where they bring forth the precious fruitage

of good works and consistency of life! Let us beware lest we receive the grace of God in vain.

We may also commend the pure doctrine of the gospel —

### **III. By Cooperating Promptly.**

After exhorting the Corinthians not to receive God's grace in vain, Paul continues with a logical "for": "For He saith, I have heard thee in an acceptable time, and in the day of salvation I have succored thee," quoting from Isaiah 49:8. Then he adds: "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." He quoted the passage from Isaiah to enforce the duty and urgency of cooperating at once with the grace of God, lest the favorable time and Opportunity might pass unimproved; so that they would never need to give vent to the pathetic cry of the prophet: "Lo, the harvest is past and the summer is ended, and our souls are not saved."

Nothing is more detrimental and dangerous than delay in religion. It does harm to the individual himself who thus trifles with the most vital matters. He indulges the habit of procrastination, until by and by it chains him hand and foot. Every postponement weakens his will. As time goes by, his character becomes more and more fixed in evil. For that reason few people are converted after middle life. The proportion of those who are saved grows rapidly less after twenty years of age. The vast majority of the Christians in your community, and in any other, accepted Christ when they were young. There is a clear psychological reason for this. You and I cannot tamper with the structure of our minds without doing it serious injury.

But the person who puts off coming to Christ also does harm to other people. All persons have more or less influence. One person's procrastination will encourage others to follow his example, if for no other reason than that people feel more secure when they have plenty of company. The prologuers [delayers -Ed] form a kind of "social set" among themselves, and more or less directly abet one another in their method of life.

Oh! let us remember, for our own sakes and for the sake of our fellowmen, that "now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." Every invitation of the Word of God is in the present tense. When God says now, it is perilous for men to say by and by.

Another excellent way to commend the doctrine of Christ is —

## IV. By Cooperating Blamelessly.

Our text expresses the thought in this way: "Giving no one in anything an obstacle to stumble over, that our ministry be not blamed." The word that I have translated "an obstacle to stumble over" is one word in the original, and means a striking of the foot against.

So Paul meant that Christians should so conduct themselves as to be blameless, and cause no one to stumble. This agrees with Christ's teaching, for He warned His hearers against causing a little child to stumble or be offended. Paul also elsewhere teaches: "Judge this, rather, that no man put a stumbling-block in his brother's way, or an occasion of falling." Whenever a professing Christian does wrong or lives inconsistently, it causes some one to stumble or find fault, and religion has to bear the blame. Instead of bringing reproach upon Christianity and the Church, the apostle Peter enjoins Christians by their well-doing, to "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." In this way they will not only silence criticism, but will commend religion to all fair-minded people.

Of course, the fault-finder should remember that the church-member's inconsistencies will not excuse him. He cannot expect to go to heaven on the righteousness of true Christians; how much less will the wickedness of hypocrites furnish him a passport to heaven! At the last day, when he appears before God, he may hope to put the blame for his own sinful life on some weak or inconsistent Christian; but God will say to him: "What were you doing all the time? Merely finding fault? Well, that is too easy a business for manly men. You should have tried to set your fellowmen a good example and help them to do right, since you knew so well how Christians ought to live. So your place is among the impenitent on the left hand. The fault-finder will then discover that all his drastic criticisms on others will not keep him out of perdition.

Nevertheless, this mode of argument is not meant to afford comfort to confessing Christians who put stumblingblocks in the way of their fellowmen, and bring obloquy on the cause of religion. They should clear their own skirts by their consistent living. If they do not, their punishment on the day of judgment will be all the severer, and they will have to bear it in company with their critics to whom they have furnished a pretext for rejecting Christ. Mis-living on the part of church people is like putting into the hands

of your enemy a club with which to maul you; you furnish the, weapon, and he is only too willing to use it. No doubt many more people would be won to religion did members of the Church live more circumspectly. Paul says of the bishop, which-means a minister of the gospel, that he should “have a good report of them that-are without, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” The injunction might be broadened out to include all professing Christians. Peter says of false prophets that “many shall follow their lascivious doings, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.” Paul thus rebukes the unrighteous Jews: “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you, even as it is written,” referring to Isa. 52:5. Thus there is every reason for Christians to live exemplary lives before the world, so that they may commend their holy doctrines to all people. And this brings us to our fifth division. How else may we win approval for our faith?

## **V. By Cooperating Comprehensively.**

This is rather a long word, but it expresses Paul’s next injunction: “In everything commending ourselves as God’s servants.” Paul now wishes to include everything that he has previously said and that he will say afterward. Observe that he does not say to “commend ourselves” for our own sake or our own glory, but “as God’s servants,” so that the glory will be God’s.

Then Paul gives another of his favorite lists of graces and virtues that remind us of a necklace strung with diamonds. In this brilliant series he shows in how many ways Christian people may exemplify the highly ethical principles of their religion. There are so many that we cannot dwell long on any of them, but their mere recital should produce a deep and solemn impression. Every ethical principle that can be thought of is included in the categories of the Christian religion. Always spiritual, it is always ethical in its spirituality. Let us note this bright catalogue of Christian principles by which God’s people may “prove the doctrine all divine.”

“In much steadfastness.” When a Christian walks firmly day by day from youth to old age in the way of life, what a tribute it is to the upholding grace of God! Every aged Christian man or woman does untold good for the cause of Christ. How many such inspiring characters there are in the Christian Church!

God's grace is also approved by patient endurance "in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments." Of course, here Paul was referring to his own diversified experiences, in which he bore so much tribulation for Christ's sake, and bore it in such a spirit as to win plaudits for the supporting grace of God. Had he grown impatient and pessimistic under trial, he would simply have annulled his influence as a follower of Christ; but by patient endurance he proved that what he confessed was true, namely, that the grace of God was sufficient for him in every emergency. Some of the afflictions he endured were certainly hard to bear. Think of the stripes — forty save one, he says elsewhere. His back was bared and thirty-nine cruel lashes were inflicted upon him, until the blood flowed from his lacerated flesh. Yet he bore the infliction without complaint. What would we have done under the circumstances? Let us remember that Christianity would never have endured through the ages to bless and enlighten us had there not been such heroes of faith as the apostle. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." Then there were his imprisonments. Nothing could have been harder for a man of his temperament to bear than enforced idleness for months and years in a dungeon or a cell. The weary waiting day after day, not knowing when or how it would end — that was enough to shatter the fortitude of any man who was not supported by the grace of God. But he bore it patiently, and thus commended himself as a true servant of God.

Then he continues: "in tumults," referring to the many times when both Jews and Gentiles stirred up the people against him, and even stoned him. "In labors, in watchings, in fastings." In spite of all his suffering, how diligently he toiled, organizing churches, preaching the gospel, making a livelihood by manual toil, and writing epistles that are blessing the world today. Then he changed the series of commendations to another phase: "in pureness" — with all his temptations, he lived uprightly before God and the world. "In knowledge" — he was not the friend of ignorance and superstition, but disseminated light and truth wherever he went. "In long-suffering, in kindness" — these difficult but highly ethical virtues were not neglected. And now comes a strange interjection: "in the Holy Spirit" — why did he introduce the source of all his strength in the midst of the series, as if it were only one of them; coordinate instead of controlling? There must be a sufficient reason, for Paul would not string things together in a haphazard way. No; he places the gift of the Holy Spirit right in the midst of the cate-

gory, between “kindness” and “love unfeigned,” to prove that He sustained him in all his endeavors, even those that were the hardest for him to carry into effect. To suffer all the wrongs imposed upon him, and yet feel kindly and love sincerely required more than human strength; it demanded divine help and grace, which were afforded him by the Holy Spirit.

And now he adds, “in love unfeigned” — in genuine love, not love that was put on or affected. Paul never would betray his Master or a fellow-being with the betrayer’s kiss, as Judas did. His love was whole-souled and heartfelt. Nothing but the grace of God could have filled his soul with such love toward his maligners and persecutors. In the history of the world you will find such genuineness only among the disciples of Him who, “when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.”

Paul pursues his way amid the shining Christian graces: “in the Word of truth”; this perhaps means that he treasured truth above all things, and was never guilty of dissembling, prevarication or double-dealing. Moreover, he would not hide or dim the truth of the gospel which Christ had revealed to him, but would proclaim it in season and out of season. Then he adds: “in the power of God”; meaning that, in all these trials and labors, he did not depend on himself, but God’s power was made perfect in his weakness, so that the glory belonged only to God.

Next we come to a shining member of this inspired and inspiring series: “by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.” Paul elsewhere exhorts, “Put on the whole armor of God,” which means that Christians should be thoroughly panoplied for their contest with sin. Here he means the same thing: he equipped himself for both aggressive and defensive warfare; with the sword of the Spirit in his right hand, he would attack and slay sin; with the shield of faith in the left hand, he would ward off the fiery darts of the enemy. Again he says: “amid glory and dishonor, amid evil report and good report.” One of the most difficult tasks is to keep calm and kind in the midst of evil reports intended to do us harm. In this grace Paul also succeeded. Perhaps it is almost as difficult to keep from becoming vain in good report. In both cases the grace of God is needed.

As now another change occurs in this wonderful series — a succession of contrasts, which sometimes sound almost like contradictions; but they are put in this way by the apostle to make them all the more striking and impressive. He was a master of rhetoric. Observe: “as deceivers, yet hon-



est.” What does he mean by that paradox? He means that his persecutors and traducers called him a deceiver, but in it all he was honest and upright. Luther once said (see Lutheran Commentary on this passage): “All Christians and pious people must have the title of deceiver, and if we fail to have this title, we do not belong to Christ.” Even our Lord was called a deceiver (Matt. 27:63), and the disciple is not above his Lord.

“As unknown, yet well known.” What is the interpretation here? We can do no better than to quote from the Lutheran Commentary: “Probably ‘unknown’ refers to some remark designating the apostle as ‘obscure,’ a mere tent maker, neither wise, nor mighty, nor noble in the eyes of the world. A few knew his true quality at that time; the knowledge of him was even then growing with marvelous rapidity, and is growing more and more as the years roll on. The word ‘well — known’ sounds almost like a prophecy.” So we see that the people who sneered at him as an obscure person are all forgotten, while the apostle’s fame is still increasing. Thus history vindicates the true man.

Next he says, “As dying, and behold we live.” More than once the apostle was thought to be dead; yet God protected his life through all peril until his great vocation was accomplished. “As chastened, and not killed,” meaning that the discipline that came upon him, severe as it was, only purified him, and made his life brighter and more potent for good. “As sorrowful, but always rejoicing.” No doubt his trials brought a touch of sorrow into his life; yet his sorrow was only a ripple on the surface, as it were, while the great ocean of his inner life was full of calm and sacred joy. Thus the Christian religion resolves all contradictions. And think of this: “As poor, but enriching many.” Surely from a worldly point of view, the apostle was poor enough, so that at times he had to depend on charity; yet how his example and writings have enriched the world with faith, hope and joy, all of it of the highest and most satisfying kind! Think for a moment how poverty-stricken the world would be today in spiritual knowledge, had it not been for Paul and the gospel which he proclaimed.

And now comes the climax: “As having nothing, and possessing all things.” What a precious paradox! In a sense Paul had nothing, nothing of the world’s goods, sometimes nothing but a dungeon and a chain; and yet, in another sense, and that the deepest and most vital, he possessed all things; for, as he said, he was a son of God; and if a son, then an heir; an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. He who has Christ has every-

thing that is needful, and will by and by come into possession of all the good that the universe contains. Paul said, "All things are yours."

Now we see how Paul commended the doctrines of Christ to the world. If ever a man succeeded, he "proved the doctrine all divine." He never played false; he never showed the "white feather" of the coward; he never flinched from duty; he never permitted himself to be diverted from the straight path. He fought the good fight, he kept the faith, he finished the race-course. His proof of the divinity of the gospel has convinced the world. In many ways he ought to be an inspiration and an example to us, so that we may say with him: "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, even as we obtained mercy, we faint not; we have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Yes, we are Christ's representatives in the world; let us represent Him worthily.

"For all Thy saints, O Lord,  
Who strove in Thee to live,  
Who followed Thee, obeyed, adored,  
Our grateful hymn receive...

"They all, in life or death,  
With Thee, their Lord, in view,  
Learned from Thy Holy Spirit's breath  
To suffer and to do.

"For this Thy name we bless,  
And humbly pray that we  
May follow them in holiness,  
And live and die in Thee."

# 21. The Pure Ethics Of The Christian Life. 1 Thess. 4:1-7. The Second Sunday In Lent.

Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. (1 Thessalonians 4:1-7)

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION never lowers the moral standard — never, so to speak, “lets down the bars.” It demands nothing less than perfection. A noted Chinaman some years ago passed this criticism on the Christian system; he said it held the standard too high; it was unattainable. No better encomium could be passed on our religion. If it required less than the perfect standard, that very fact would prove that like other religions and philosophies, it was of human origin and invention. Suppose that Christ had said, “You need not aim at perfection; you cannot attain it, anyway!” what would we have thought of Him as a religious and ethical teacher? But He proved His divinity by enjoining upon His followers to “be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

Now ethics and religion are not the same thing, as some modern speculators try to make us believe. Ethics is not religion, but it is an essential element of religion, just as nitrogen is an essential element of air and hydrogen of water. Could you abstract the nitrogen from the air and still have air left, or hydrogen from the water and still have water left? So you cannot separate true morality from the Christian religion and still have the Christian religion left. You may have a kind of worldly ethics, the ethics of convention

and civil institutions, without religion, but wherever Christianity exists, it must include all forms of morality of the highest type. The fact is, faith in Christ produces the true morality, the really ethical life. Do you ask why? Because it saves men from their sins, puts them right with God and man, and implants within them the principles of true holiness, so that, with God's help, they can do God's holy will. That is the divine order of salvation according to the Christian system.

In the Lenten season special emphasis is laid in all our lessons upon the pure ethics of the Christian life. There is need of such emphasis today. The war has brought out many of the elemental evil principles of human nature, as war always does; so that today the Christian minister must often "cry aloud and spare not." Our lesson deals with some general ethical principles, and then, in a delicate way, enjoins purity in a very special department of human life. We will consider these in their order.

## **I. The General Ethical Principles Enjoined.**

The apostle was very earnest and at the same time very gracious in his manner of address; for he realized the importance of the subject, and yet did not wish to give offense. So he said: "Finally, brethren, we beseech and exhort you." We ought to be willing to listen to such a voice. Let us give close heed to what he enjoins.

### **1. To walk according to instructions.**

This is what he says: "We beseech and exhort you, brethren, in the Lord Jesus, to walk according to the instructions which ye received from us." In previous sermons we pointed out that Paul had founded other churches. So he had established the church at Thessalonica; he had laid the foundation there, as he had at Corinth; he had carefully instructed the people in the spiritual and ethical principles of the gospel of Christ. Now he entreats them to live in accord with those instructions. He feared, no doubt, that some of them would be neglectful, or let down the high standard which he had inculcated. He had shown them the way; now he wanted them to walk in it.

Just such earnest admonition is needed today. The people should hold fast to the teaching of their faithful pastors, who have been proclaiming the

gospel to them. They cannot find a better rule of life. There is no other gospel than the gospel of the Bible, which teaches us primarily how to be saved from sin, and then how to live holy lives before God and the world. If a liberalist comes with a modified gospel, he will be sure to let down the bars ethically, for laxness of doctrine leads almost invariably to laxity of morals. There is not that fine, pure atmosphere of spiritual morality in any liberalistic system that there is in the strict orthodox faith, which insists on the atonement made by Christ for sin and real regeneration of the heart. Nothing is more gratifying to the pastor than to see his people, the aged, the middle aged, the young people and the children, taking heed to his earnest teaching about the purity of the Christian life; but nothing pains him more than for them to depart from the high doctrinal and ethical standards which he has set up.

The apostle also enjoins upon the Thessalonian Christians —

## **2. To walk in such a way as to please God.**

Of course, this follows from what has just been said, for those who live according to the gospel will be pleasing to God; but we need to emphasize a little more the Person whose approval we should ever seek. It is well enough to please people when we can. I have just referred to your trying to please your pastor; that is an incentive that is worth while, provided he has instructed you in the pure gospel. But that should not be your chief motive. There is perhaps too much of a man-pleasing temper in all of us. We think more of human applause than of the approbation of God. That is one reason why our lives fall so far below the true standard — we are so anxious to please people, to win praise from men, whose conceptions fall far below God's requirements. More than that, the desire for human praise is itself a selfish motive, and therefore soils the fine ethical atmosphere of the gospel; whereas to seek God's favor is the highest moral motive that can actuate the human heart.

## **3. We are also enjoined to make progress.**

Paul says, "Walk in the way I have told you," and then adds, "Abound more and more, for ye know what injunctions we gave you through the Lord Jesus." That is one beautiful characteristic of the Christian religion — there

are always greater heights to attain. Have you ever climbed a lofty mountain? You scale one acclivity, then another height is reached, and another, and another, and still the dizzy summit lifts itself above you. And if at last you attain the snow-mantled peak, you look up and behold, the blue canopy of the sky, with its fleecy clouds scudding past, is still far above you.

I am glad that is the character of our religion. It always beckons us onward and upward, leading us to “higher realms and spaces,” so that we are never satisfied with mediocrity. Our motto is still “Excelsior.” Yes, according to the text, we are —

#### **4. To aim at perfection.**

“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.” Do not let some of the controversies over the word “sanctification” lead your minds away from our main theme. The word that Paul used is from *agios*, which means holiness or ethical purity. So Paul teaches that it is God’s will that His people should be holy, noble and pure, just as he says in the last verse of the text: “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.”

So we are exhorted to strive after holiness day by day, even though we may never attain perfection, at least not in this life, which is far from friendly to grace. But if we do thus endeavor, we surely shall reach a greater moral and spiritual elevation than if we aim at a lower standard. Paul put the matter forcefully in another place (Phil. 3:12-14): “Not that I have already attained, or were already perfect; but I press forward to lay hold on Jesus Christ, even as He has laid hold upon me. Brethren, I count not that I myself have yet attained; but one thing is my ambition — forgetting the things which are behind, and bending forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

We have now discussed the general ethical principles of the text, and have found them to be of a fine and exalted character. Evidently the apostle next felt that he had a delicate duty to perform, but he did not evade it. So we must not fight shy of our duty, but must expound what the text inculcates:

## **II. The Special Ethical Practice Enjoined.**

## 1. Note the sin to be avoided.

To put it frankly and plainly, it is fornication, or sexual lust. On this outstanding evil of our times the Church must “cry aloud and spare not.” She dare not soothe herself to sleep by saying, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.” The war has probably greatly aggravated this worst sin of the human family, and some of the revelations made as to the status of affairs are sufficiently alarming, causing public-spirited men and philanthropists to tremble for the foundations of our present-day civilization. The statistics regarding venereal disease are amazing and humiliating, bringing the burning blush of shame to the cheek of modesty. Our country needs to hear the tocsin [bell -ED] of alarm. I have traveled over some of the chief countries of Europe; yet I never have been in a country where sexual vice was so brazen, so shamelessly advertised, as it is in America. One who travels frequently on the railway trains feels insulted and shamed by the conduct of men and women who seem to have no modesty or shame, and who play the wanton before the eyes of their fellow-passengers.

“Thou shalt not commit adultery,” is one of the commandments that was written by the finger of God himself, amid the most awful and impressive circumstances, and it cannot be violated with impunity. Nature herself punishes, in the most terrific way, the indulgence in lust. God’s special wrath is kindled against it. No nation that does not restrain it will prosper, but will come to shame and ruin. I wonder whether the distress of the times, the riots and strikes and general discontent, are not largely due to the divine reaction against our flagrant violations of the laws of sexual purity.

If one may take the billboards as an index, the moving-picture shows are mostly of an erotic character, as if sexual love and passion were the paramount things in life. As represented on the screen, the relations of the sexes are often very suggestive and compromising; there is almost always some kind of family trouble, with people falling in love with the wrong persons; men often assault women with criminal intent; and there the spectators sit, their eyes glued upon the moving show, growing more and more hardened to such disgraceful scenes; and how often the rake and the rowdy turn out to be the heroes. What kind of a civilization is going to be built on such a dubious foundation?

Our text gives lascivious people a trenchant admonition; it warns against indulging “in passion and lust like the nations that know not God.” That is,

the people who surrender themselves to their base salacious passions are compared to the pagan nations. Then Paul says, “Let no man go beyond and over-reach his brother in this matter.” He means that men should never break up other men’s homes. What can be more vile and brutal than that — for a man, a human viper, to creep into another man’s home and inveigle his wife or his daughter, bringing life-long shame and anguish to his victims! “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife,” is another stern mandate from thunder-riven Sinai. Under the old Hebrew law adultery was a capital crime, punished by death. That proves God’s hatred of the base sin of sexual uncleanness. We turn now to —

## **2. A virtue commended.**

I am glad to speak on this subject. Paul says (giving the interpretation along with the translation): “Let each of you learn to take a wife unto himself chastely and honorably.” There is nothing more beautiful than true conjugal love and lawful wedlock. When a man loves and respects a woman enough to desire to make her his lawful wife and life companion — that is a truly ethical desire and accords with the purpose of God. A home where love and mutual confidence dwell is the place on earth that is nearest to heaven.

God established monogamous marriage at the creation, for the record in Genesis says, “He made them male and female,” and we know that he created only one woman for the one man. Our Lord also placed His divine stamp and seal on the hymeneal union of one man and one woman when He said, “Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder.”

Shall I give you a new definition of marriage? Marriage is God’s method of propagating the race without sin. All other methods are wicked and defiled. Thank God, there are many happy homes in the land. After all, divorces are the exception. When one occurs, it creates a scandal, and that proves that the general sentiment is good, or such separations would cause no disturbance in a community; they would be too common. So let the young people seek one another in true love and wedlock, then sacredly keep the marriage vow. Let Christian young people go to God’s house for their wedding service, that the solemn covenant may be entered into under the auspices of religion, with the blessing of God and His Church resting upon the plighted couple. Such a service will make an indelible impression. It



properly recognizes matrimony as a divine institution, not merely as a civil contract. That will make it all the more sacred and binding.

So let there be plenty of happy homes in the land. A country composed of happy homes, where the marriage vows are scrupulously kept, will, by that very token, prove itself a moral community, a religious commonwealth, and will be pleasing to God, and receive His blessing.

### **3. Reasons for the foregoing admonitions.**

First, “the Lord,” says the text, “is an avenger of all these things, as we forewarned you and testified.” That is Paul’s way of saying that God will visit condign punishment upon the man who destroys his brother’s home and alienates another man’s wife. When you remember all the woes that are pronounced upon adulterers in the Word of God, you may depend upon it that God will not deal lightly with such gross offenders.

Second, Paul says, “God has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.” Observe that he does not use a euphemism in depicting the sin of adultery; he calls it “uncleanness.” That is what it is — filthy, vile, disgusting, loathsome debauchery. God cannot look upon any kind of sin with any degree of allowance. How must this fetid sin of adultery appear in His pure eyes! Oh! let us remember that He has called His people unto the beautiful grace of holiness.

And this brings me back to the general subject for the day — the high ethical character of our religion. It is inspiring to all noble-minded people to know that the Christian religion rejects everything that is morally ugly and impure; and that, on the other hand, it commends, upholds and instills everything that is morally beautiful, ennobling and salutary. It condemns every vice; it commends every virtue. Therefore it is adapted to prepare us to live righteously and happily in this world and gloriously in the world to come.

"Blest are the undefiled in heart,  
Whose ways are right and clean;  
Who never from Thy law depart,  
But fly from every sin.

"Blest are the men that keep Thy Word  
And practice Thy commands;  
With their whole heart they seek Thee, Lord,  
And serve Thee with their hands.

"Great is their peace who love Thy law:  
How firm their souls abide!  
Nor can a bold temptation draw  
Their steady feet aside.

"Then shall my heart have inward joy,  
And keep my face from shame,  
When all Thy statutes I obey,  
And honor all Thy name."

# 22. The Divine Pattern. Eph. 5:1-9. The Third Sunday In Lent.

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.

But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) (Ephesians 5:1-9)

TODAY WE SHALL TAKE the opening sentence of the Epistle as our unifying and controlling thought: "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children." That will give us our theme, "The Divine Pattern." The teaching of the text agrees with other parts of the Holy Scriptures. In the Old Testament we find the divine command, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." In the New Testament our Lord gave the same injunction when he said: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." The divine character is to be man's pattern and archetype. This command is implied in the high and holy doctrine taught in the first chapter of Genesis, that man was, created in the image of God, and therefore has capacities for reproducing the character of His Maker. What an inspiring conception that doctrine gives us of man and his destiny! How much more elevating than to think of him as the descendant of brute ancestors!

So, according to the text, God is our pattern, and we should be imitators of Him. Let us note, as indicated in the text, the various ways in which we are enjoined to copy our Divine Pattern.

# **I. Copy The Divine Pattern As God's Children.**

## **1. "As Dear Children"**

"As dear children," says the text. The revised version put its, "beloved children." It is natural for children at a certain time in life to imitate their parents. The boy patterns after his father, the girl after her mother. When parents do what is right, it is a blessing that children have this desire implanted in their nature.

If we are the "beloved children" of God, we should endeavor to prove ourselves worthy of our Father by trying to be like Him. When people see, that we are cultivating a god-like character, they will have confidence in us, and our lives will be winsome for Him. On the other hand, if we misbehave, and still profess to be the children of God, people will judge our Father by our conduct, and that will cast discredit upon Him.

## **2. "Walk As Children of Light"**

The text also says (verse 8): "But ye are now light in the Lord; walk as children of light." Good advice, indeed! "They that are drunken are drunken in the night; but let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and, love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation." So God's children should walk like children of the light, frank, open, honest and sober, and should "renounce the hidden things of dishonesty." In this way they will prove that they are the true children of God, whose very throne is a throne of righteousness.

# **II. Copy The Divine Pattern In Love.**

This injunction is also derived from the text, which says; "Walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for you as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Here Christ, who was God incarnate, is set forth as the divine archetype whom we are to copy. He loved us; so we should love Him and our fellowmen, that we may be like Him. The extent

and proof of His great love for us are declared in the fact that He gave Himself up for us as a sacrifice and offering. His love was not mere empty profession; it was demonstrated by His conduct. No greater love could He have shown for us than to leave the realms of glory, take upon Him our nature, and suffer and die for us, tasting death for every man. Now, if we walk in love and follow our Pattern, we will also demonstrate by our acts of kindness that we have imbibed His spirit. Let us ever try to walk in the Redeemer's footsteps, and thus prove ourselves the true, newborn children of God. Nothing is greater than godliness. Says the apostle: "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

### **III. Copy The Divine Pattern In Purity.**

Under this head the text makes a number of specifications. which we will classify and consider.

#### **1. The Sins To Be Shunned.**

Again the apostle warns against the vile sin of fornication. For its lucidity and effectiveness we give the translation by Dr. Moffatt: "Never let any sexual vice, or impurity, or lust be so much as mentioned among you — that is the proper course for saints to pursue." This is further emphasized in a verse that comes later in the text: "Be sure of this, that no one guilty of sexual vice or impurity or lust (that is, an idolater) possesses any inheritance in the realms of Christ and God."

No sin is more frequently denounced in the Bible than the sin of adultery. In Paul's day it was one of the crying sins, as it is today. To a large extent, it is sapping the manhood and womanhood of our country. Among many people continence seems to be an unknown virtue. Our people are accustomed to every luxury in eating and drinking, and that feeds and stimulates the animal passions. More than that, they have become so habituated to the indulgence of every bodily appetite and every desire for pleasure, and are so little disciplined in self-denial of any kind, that they do not know how to control any passion that may arise. Sexual lust goes with a self-indulgent age. A better observance of abstention of all kinds in the Lenten

season would cultivate in people the habit and ability to mortify the deeds of the flesh, and thus would be a wholesome discipline in itself. It was not for nothing that the Bible enjoined fasting at certain seasons.

In favor of sexual purity let me say that, after people have grown older, and are able to appreciate the true things of life at their full value, they are always thankful if they have been chaste and clean in their younger years, so that they need not cry to God in shame, as one did of old: "Remember not the sins of my youth nor my transgressions."

Again, if they have kept themselves from the sin of in chastity, they are always grateful for their self-control after they enter the marital state. On the other hand, pre-marriage laxity is one of the most fruitful sources of trouble in the home, and so often leads to the separating of husband and wife. When respect is lost, love also walks out of the door. I have no hesitancy in saying that sexual virtue among our young people is one of the necessary pillars in our civilization. If that is undermined, all other virtues will also be sapped, and the wreckage of civilization will be only a matter of time. No wonder the Bible gives no quarter to in chastity and utters this solemn warning: "Let no man deceive you with empty words; because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience." What a sentence is pronounced upon adulterers by the apostle when he declares expressly that no admission into heaven will be given to such offenders!

Here is another sin that must be avoided if men would be imitators of God and known as His beloved children. It is translated in this way by Dr. Moffatt: "No, nor indecent, silly or scurrilous talk — all that is improper."

One is constrained to dwell on these specific details for a few moments. "Indecent" talk is here condemned. Conversation is an index to character. "Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh." It is logical to conclude that the person who engages in obscene talk is obscene in his thought and life. At all events, there is nothing cruder, coarser and more reprehensible than the habit of exchanging filthy stories in which far too many people beguile the time. Nothing injures the influence of a Christian more, be he minister or layman, than to get a name for that kind of conversation. Every foul-mouthed person should be told to go to the bath and wash his mouth thoroughly, before he ventures to converse with decent and respectable folk. Think of a person making a sewer of his mouth! Keep thy lips pure, oh man! Better, perhaps, keep thy heart pure; then thy lips will also be clean.

The text further admonishes against “silly” talk. There surely is a surfeit of that kind of talk in the world today. Many people seldom say a serious sentence. Time was when young people, at least many of them, found pleasure in serious literary discussion, when the best books of the present and the past were reviewed by them. Whole evenings were delightfully spent in conversation about the best authors and their works. This led to diligent reading, so that each one could contribute his quota to the conversation. Is such the case today? To a very meager extent, we fear. Conversation is largely chit-chat; the most frivolous talk is heard, and no one seems to be able to keep his mind on one theme for more than a few moments. Even in many of our colleges the literary society is neglected, while the light and frivolous kinds of sport and amusement are all the vogue. The studious collegian is called by an uncomplimentary name, and is far from popular; but the young man who can talk nonsense and “trip the light, fantastic toe” is the general favorite, and especially if he is willing to spend his father’s money freely for the pleasure of others.

Not that people should have no fun and recreation; by no means. That would be the other extreme. There are times when the most serious-minded have need of relaxation; when the mind should lie fallow, so that, when it comes back to its regular work, it may do so with vigor and fruitfulness. But we must enter our protest against the modern fashion among many people of making fun and amusement the chief purpose in life. Some people really make hard work of their pursuit of the goddess of pleasure. One of the prophets said of the wicked, “They weary themselves to do evil.” One might add to the epigram that pleasure-mongers wear themselves out trying to find some new kind of pleasure.

The moving-picture shows cultivate the temper of frivolity and superficiality among the American people. You need not attend them to know a good deal of their character. Erotic subjects occupy the center of the stage, and far too often the love stories are not pure and uplifting, but suggestive of the prurient and illicit. It is surprising, too, to note how often the representations are rough and coarse, decorated with pugilistic fights, shooting affrays, scenes in wine-rooms and dance-halls, wild west revelries and brawls, and many other demoralizing spectacles; and yet there sit people of apparent refinement with their eyes glued upon the curtain, feeling no recoil or repugnance, simply becoming more and more accustomed to exhibitions that vitiate the taste and corrupt the morals. If the scenes witnessed on the

screen occurred in real life before people's eyes, many of them would go into hysterics of fright.

The comedy of these shows is also usually of a rude and coarse description. It is silly rather than humorous. On a recent Sunday in a certain city we had occasion to pass several of the moving-picture theaters, and noted that two of them advertised a couple of the coarsest and most hilarious comedians of the so-called "silent drama" known to the public today, while the other promised to edify its patrons with one of the wildest of "wild west" shows, with shootings and brawls galore. Was that an isolated Sunday? No; the like occurs Sunday after Sunday in many of our cities. Is it not pitiful that the Lord's Day, which was divinely intended for the worship of God and the cultivation of the spiritual life, should be brazenly profaned in this way? The spirit of triviality has taken possession of our people. Will we ever come back to sober thought, and begin to act again like the children of God? Or must we run our brainless course, until we are halted by some dire punishment from the hand of divine justice?

The text also rebukes "scurrilous" talk. Perhaps of all despicable people, the slanderer and the tale-bearer is the most despicable. Did somebody bring you a choice piece of scandal the other day, and seem to gloat over it as a buzzard would over a carcass? Depend upon it, if he can ever get hold of an evil rumor about you, he will peddle that, too, around among all your neighbors and acquaintances. The animal that brings a bone to your house will carry one away, if he can find one. All of us must take our turn in being talked about by the professional gossip. Never trust such a person with any confidence; he will be sure to betray it. He may seem to be your friend for a while — but, never mind, he will soon discover that you are not an angel, and then will be carrying tales around the neighborhood about you, as he does about every one else. What shall be done with the gossip? We can simply chant the litany, "Good Lord, deliver us."

Now, regarding all the sins enumerated, the text gives us plain and earnest warning: "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometime darkness; but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light." We must pass, then, from the evils against which we are cautioned so solemnly to —

### **3. The Beautiful Virtues To Be Cultivated.**



They are scattered like pearls through the text. One of them is “giving of thanks.” This cheering admonition follows immediately after the warning against foolish talking and jesting. How much better it would be to give thanks to God than to engage in vain conversation and follow after so many frivolous entertainments! Nothing is more beautiful than a thankful spirit. Depend upon it, there is always a solid character back of the temper that leads men and women to the church on the Lord’s Day to give praise and thanksgiving to God. They, too, might spend the Lord’s Day in pursuit of the flitting *ignis fatuus* of pleasure: but, no! they will not; they prefer the more substantial joys of the sanctuary in recognition of God, the Giver of every good and perfect gift. In no better way can we prove ourselves the children of God, and cultivate our minds and hearts for eternal residence with Him, than by worship and thanksgiving.

The last verse of the text and the one that follows it are uplifting to the soul, and exemplify again the exalted ethical character of Biblical religion. Here they are: “For the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth, proving what is well-pleasing to the Lord.” The apostle had just given the counsel, “Walk in the light”; then he added the virtues that the light produces, or that flourish in the light. “Goodness” — what is it? Well, it needs no definition. Goodness is simply goodness. The word good, when used in its ethical sense, simply includes all virtue, and bears with it the general idea of solidity, depth and honesty. When you say, “He is a good man,” you have paid any man the highest possible compliment. Everything added would be redundancy. And in this all-round virtue we should make God our pattern, for He is good to all and good in Himself.

Another fruit of the light is “righteousness.” How does it differ from “goodness”? There is no essential difference; only a shading of variation. The two words give slightly different angles of the same ethical life of the Christian. While “goodness” contains the suggestion of solidity and mellowness, the word “righteousness” suggests the bright, the upright, the sterling, the strong. In this great quality God is to be our criterion, for the Scripture says: “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Thy throne, O Lord.”

One more blessed quality belongs to the fruit of the light, according to the text; and that is truth. Why is truth named as the fruit of the light? Because truth always flourishes in the open light of day. Whenever men are sure that they have the truth, they are open and frank, and desire all the facts

to be known. They are not even afraid to let “the public” know the truth, and the whole truth. In statecraft, whenever there is “secret diplomacy,” and matters affecting the public welfare must be handled in a “star chamber,” and the declaration is made that it is “not safe for the people to know what is being done,” you may rely upon it that some selfish and ambitious scheme is on foot, and that the plotters are more intent on securing some personal end and emolument than in promoting the highest well-being of the nation and the world. In a professed democracy there should be no secret machinations. If the people cannot be trusted, then they are unfit to rule themselves, and their country should not be called a democracy. The name becomes a travesty. There is always reason to suspect the integrity of the public man who thinks that he must keep something from the “dear public” for the “dear public’s” sake. He either has too exalted an opinion of his own ability, or else he has some ulterior purpose in view that can be secured only under the cover of secrecy. Frank and open diplomacy is the only kind that carries the sign manual [signature -ed] of truth.

The same is true in all the affairs of life. Truth thrives in the light; error and falsehood under cover of darkness. In regard to religion, that which is true seeks no disguises, no dark rooms, no occult mysteries, no Delphic oracles. The Church and all her institutions should be open as the day, with no dark, walled-in places, causing suspicion of something crafty and deceptive. The Bible is an open book, and should be freely and frankly investigated. There is, in short, nothing cryptic or sly about the Christian religion; in everything it is open and frank. The reason is that it is true, and truth needs no disguises. So, in order to be the real children of God, who dwell in pure light, we must seek the truth, and desire it above all things. This is Christ’s own assurance: “If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Of Himself He declared, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.”

Yes, truth makes men free; error always enslaves them. Blessed is the man who has received the assurance of truth by an experience of the heart! In the hour of trial he will stand. He will be an imitator of God, who is the source of all truth and goodness and righteousness.

# 23. Which Do You Prefer? Freedom Or Bondage? Gal. 4:21-31. The Fourth Sunday In Lent.

Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. (Galatians 4:21-31)

EVERYBODY WANTS TO BE FREE. There is nothing under which people chafe more than under servitude. Even the hint that a man may be a slave of any kind stirs resentment in his mind and injures his self-respect. In this Republic our greatest slogan is liberty. We sing again and again, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing!"

However, it must be said in all candor that many people are not as free as they think they are, or perhaps we would better say, as they profess to be. There are various kinds of freedom. All of them are to be commended; but the highest kind is moral and spiritual freedom. If a man were in the bondage of sin and evil habit, he would be in worse thralldom than if he were incarcerated in a prison. Our text today deals with this problem of true freedom, and therefore gives us an appropriate theme for this fourth Sunday in Lent.

For several reasons the text is somewhat difficult, and therefore it will be well to attend to its exposition first, and then we shall be the better prepared to make the practical application. Sermons on the Gospels and Epistles of the Christian Year must, from the nature of the case, be expository. So we will attend to —

## **I. The Exposition Of The Text.**

Let us try to get an understanding of the situation in the church of Galatia with which Paul was dealing. He had established the church there; had laid the foundation of their religious life, and that foundation was the vital doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ alone. He had taught them plainly and repeatedly that they could be justified and saved in no other way. But after his departure from them, other teachers, especially Judaizing teachers, had come among them, and had perverted the pure gospel, by insisting that they must be circumcised, and must keep the Old Testament law in order to be justified before God. It was this condition that Paul was trying to meet. That is what he meant in the third chapter when he exclaimed: “Oh, foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth as crucified? This is what I would ask of you: did you receive the Holy Spirit through the works of the law or through the message of the gospel?”

You see, he was appealing to their experience. Before Paul preached Christ and Him crucified to them, they had tried to earn salvation by the deeds of the law, and had failed; but when they accepted Jesus Christ by faith, they had received the witness of the Holy Spirit that their sins were forgiven and that salvation was theirs. Could anything be plainer? They surely could not deny the facts of their experience. After more argument of the same kind, Paul comes to our text, and puts the matter in another way, using an Old Testament incident as an illustration. In order to set the statement before you in the clearest and simplest way, I will translate the passage into our modern modes of speech, adding a few phrases here and there in parentheses:

"Tell me, you who are so anxious to be under the law, will you hear the real situation regarding the law? It is recorded (in the Old Testament) that Abraham had two sons, one by his handmaid (Hagar) and one by the free-

woman (Sarah). However, the son by the handmaid was born after the flesh (that is, by mere natural generation); but the son of the free-woman was born through the promise (of God to Abraham and Sarah). Now this is an allegory (a symbol or type); the two women represented two covenants; one comes from Mount Sinai, bearing children unto bondage; this one is typified by Hagar, the handmaid; for Sinai, far off in Arabia, corresponds with the present earthly Jerusalem, which is in servitude with her children. But the true Jerusalem, the Jerusalem on high, is free, and is our true mother; for the prophet (Isa. 54:1) says:

“Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not;  
Break forth and cry, thou that travailest not;  
For the woman that is desolate hath more children than she that hath a husband.”

“Now we, brethren, like Isaac, are the children of the promise; but just as in those days the son who was born after the flesh persecuted the son born after the Spirit, so it is today. However, what says the Scripture? ‘Put away the slave-woman and her son, for the son of the slave-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman.’ Wherefore, brethren, we are not the children of the slave-woman, but of the free-woman. Stand fast, therefore, in the freedom wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not again entangled in the yoke of bondage.”

I have added to the morning’s lesson the next verse, in order to show how powerfully Paul tried to enforce the lesson he had derived from the Old Testament citation. Some of the rationalizing critics find fault with Paul’s exegesis, declaring that he used an Old Testament incident in an arbitrary way. That, however, is not the case. Paul expressly says that the incident regarding Isaac and Ishmael is an “allegory,” or a figure of speech with which to illustrate. In previous passages he had applied logic, and had proved that justification cannot come by the law, but only by faith in Jesus Christ; and now he simply desires to make the matter clearer by means of an illustration with which his readers were familiar. The same mode of enforcing truth is employed today by speakers and writers. Having proved their proposition by an appeal to facts and to reason, they say, “Now let us illustrate this truth to make it more vivid in our minds.” The illustration does not prove the proposition: it illumines it. If the critics would give the Biblical writers a lit-

tle credit for common sense in rhetorical usage, they would spare themselves a great deal of needless trouble.

Paul's illustration was really an apt and telling one. Ishmael was the son of a slave-woman, and was born according to the flesh and in accordance with some of the peculiar customs of the times. Therefore Hagar and her son very well represented or symbolized the old covenant, which was that of the law, and so held the sinner under bondage. But Sarah, Abraham's true and lawful wife and social equal, was a free-woman. Moreover, her son Isaac was engendered according to the divine promise and through supernatural power. Thus they correspond beautifully with the new covenant through which, by faith in Jesus Christ, men are freed from the duress of the law and the dominion of sin. Besides, Hagar and Ishmael vividly typified the earthly Jerusalem, so largely given over to earthly and fleshly pursuits; while Sarah and her divinely promised and begotten son symbolized the heavenly Jerusalem, from which Christ came and to which He returned with power and glory. In tracing these analogies Paul was following the normal pedagogical method, because, since he was writing to Jews, his reference to the Old Testament was especially appealing to them. He had doubtless imbibed his teaching and rhetorical methods from his divine Master, whose parables and similes are specimens of consummate art legitimately used.

So the interpretation of our text is this: We are not like Ishmael, the son of the slave-woman, in bondage to the law, straining to earn salvation by an impossible method; no! we are like Isaac, the son of the free-woman and the child of the divine gift and promise. We have been delivered from all thralldom by Him who was the true and lineal descendant of Isaac, and was the supernatural gift of God to the world, namely, Jesus Christ. He has made us free from the law. Note how nobly Paul stated this doctrine earlier in the chapter from which the text is taken: "So we also, when we were children, were held in bondage under the rudiments of the world; but when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

"Having now given the exposition, let us attend to —

## **II. The Application Of The Text.**

As has been said, everybody wants to be looked upon as a free man. Even men who are the slaves of vice, resent being called by their right name. Our text teaches us wherein we may obtain true liberty — through faith in Jesus Christ. “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

## **1. The Blessing Of Christian Freedom.**

Many salutary blessings come to us through Christ. None is greater than that of liberty. To be free is to be noble and happy. No man can rejoice when fetters are bound about his feet. Civil liberty is good, and so is freedom from industrial slavery. But no freedom is of so high a character as spiritual freedom. Even though a man might be in a dungeon, if he were a Christian, he still would be a freer man than his persecutors and jailers. They might be the slaves of vice, of hatred, of vindictiveness, of passion, while he kept his soul pure and undefiled through his trust in the all-prevailing name of Christ.

Many people have wrong and crude ideas of liberty. Their conception is that to do just as they please, right or wrong, is the real kind of emancipation. So when they can drink and carouse without restraint, they boast that they are the true freemen. Not so! Those who commit sin are the slaves of sin. There is no genuine freedom in wrongdoing. The person who is led about by his evil disposition is as much of a moral slave as the man whose limbs are bound by chains is a physical slave. The fact is, moral slavery is more disgraceful and ruinous than bodily slavery. Let us remember, then, that the only true liberty is the ability, through the grace of God, to do what is right. There is a real metaphysical reason for this. Note the argument: The wrong is finite, however powerful; therefore doing wrong is to pursue that which has its limitations, and so must lead to bondage. But the right, which is always the will of God, is infinite; therefore to follow the right is to set forth in a pathway that leads to boundless realms and spaces, and so to infinite freedom. That is why it is that, when Christ, the eternal Son of God, sets us free, we are free indeed.

## **2. Elements Of Christian Freedom.**

### **a. Deliverance From Sin**

Thank God, it is deliverance from sin! “He shall save His people from their sins.” The one defiling thing in the world is sin; it is also the one enslaving thing; the one thing that God cannot tolerate; the one and only thing that will keep men out of heaven. The Christian religion goes to the root of humanity’s disease; it is a specific, not a mere hit-and-miss nostrum. To change the figure, it breaks the chains that fetter the sinner, and does not merely gild them. When a man is freed from sin, he is emancipated from everything that enthralls. While freedom from sin includes all other elements of freedom, yet it will be profitable to specify further.

### **b. Freedom From The Bondage Of The Law**

Christ wins for us freedom from the bondage of the law. In our Epistle this idea was the main one, and it is indeed important. As long as people are living in sin, they are living, as it were, with the law of God dangling over them, and it seems to be saying: “Thou art guilty! thou art condemned! There is no hope for thee!” They are like the Christian traveler in Bunyan’s “Pilgrim Progress,” who followed the advice of Worldly Wise Man, and tried to find salvation by the way of Sinai instead of by the way of the cross; but the mountain of the law flashed with lightning and reverberated with thunder; so that he fled with terror to seek another way. No; you and I cannot find salvation by the way of Sinai. Luther tried that way, but found no peace for his soul; and so has many another. There are people today who are trying the Sinai way; but you hear no rejoicing from their lips, for they know that they have not found a full and free salvation. So it is with all legalists. They are never satisfied; they never know, and never can know, when they have done enough to merit pardon and salvation. They may go to the law for conviction of sin, but they will never find peace and pardon on the Sinai way.

Where, then is deliverance to be found? On the Calvary way. Do you see the deep and fundamental reason why this is so? It is because Jesus Christ was “born of a woman, born under the law,” and bore the penalty of the law on His own person in the sinner’s stead; therefore, when the sinner accepts that glorious substitution made for him on Calvary, the law no longer hangs menacingly over him. He is free from the condemnation of the law. His sins have been pardoned, because satisfaction to divine justice has been made for them. It might be put in this way: The law of retribution came down on



Christ, our Mediator, instead of upon us, so that we, as it were, could slip out from under it and escape. This holy doctrine is clearly taught in the messianic prophecy: “With His stripes we are healed... And the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquities of us all.” So the apostle likewise teaches: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”

### **c. By Faith Liberated From Doubt**

By faith in Christ we are also liberated from the subjugation of doubt. Surely there is no more distressing condition than to live in uncertainty regarding the great and vital problems of life. Look at the matter even from the worldly point of view. Suppose you are in doubt about your financial affairs, not knowing whether you will be able to keep your property for yourself and your family or not — is not your mind greatly disturbed? How different when you are assured that you have no need for anxiety regarding a livelihood! In a violent storm, while the wind is hurtling about the house and bending the trees almost to the ground, how terrible is the feeling of uncertainty! But when the tempest has spent its force, and calm has come again, and no injury has been done, what a feeling of relief and security comes to the heart! Uncertainty is one of the worst forms of bondage.

Just as true is this principle respecting the problems of religion. For example, no man can live the best kind of a life who is uncertain regarding the existence of God, the truth of the Bible, or the immortality of the soul. If he is in doubt about these matters, he can have no composure of mind until they are settled for him in a satisfactory manner. If he has no concern for the problems, the most vital and fundamental problems of human interest, that very fact proves that he is living a very superficial life, which will sooner or later pall on his soul. No; the life of certitude is on the solid life. You cannot build a strong life on a foundation of negatives any more than you can erect a substantial material structure on a foundation of chaff.

The agnostic is in a sore strait. He is the man who declares that he does not know. His life is built on nescience — that is, on “I don’t know.” You ask him whether there is a God or not; he answers, “I don’t know.” Ask him whether the Bible is God’s revelation or not; he replies, “I don’t know.” Is Jesus Christ the Redeemer of the world or not? He says, “I don’t know.” Is

there a future life or is there not? The same response, "I don't know." Do you have a soul or not? He answers, "I don't know." "Well, what do you know?" you ask. He replies again, "I don't know!" Would it not be a good plan for the agnostic to acquire some knowledge, to go to school awhile, and get a little education on the fundamental problems of life? Surely ignorance cannot be bliss in such a case. Is it not as strange as it is distressing that some men pride themselves on their ignorance and think it a sign of superior wisdom?

Now let us ask some Christian person, who has perhaps never brushed clothes against the walls of a college, but who has had a solid Christian experience, the same questions which we have put to the wisely ignorant agnostic, and see what his answers will be. "Do you know whether there is a God or not?" He replies, "Yes, I know there is a God, for I have felt the witness of His Spirit in my soul." "Is the Bible the inspired Word of God?" "Yes, I know that it is, because I have experienced its truth in my heart." "Is Christ the Redeemer of the World?" "Yes, I know that He is, for it was through Him that I found pardon, peace and assurance of truth." "Is there a future life?" "Indeed, there is, and I know it, for, by the grace of God, I have 'tasted of the powers of the world to come." "Ah! you believe, then, that you have a soul?" "Indeed, I know it," he replies, "for the Christ who redeemed me and gave me the assurance of truth, spoke of the body and the soul; and it is only the soul that can know these great truths." What do you say regarding such testimony? Why, here is a man who knows something! He has an education, whether he has ever gone to college or not — an education on the profoundest and most vital problems of human thought and experience. Which do you prefer — the nescience of the agnostic or the knowledge of the Christian believer? I know what your answer will be; if you wish to think solidly and live with a strong and noble purpose, you will prefer the man or woman who knows something.

#### **d. Faith Delivers From Fear**

Once more, faith in Christ delivers the believer from fear. Of course, this is the result of what has been said before. When the soul receives the assurance of pardon, salvation and truth, fear can no longer oppress it. As the apostle puts it, "Perfect love casteth out all fear." As long as uncertainty possesses the mind, there is "a certain fearful expectation of judgment."

True, the skeptic may declare that he does not believe so and so; yet in his soul he knows that he cannot be sure of his position. His state of mind is like that of a certain unbeliever who declared violently that he did not believe there was a future state of retribution. "And yet," he added, after a moment's reflection, "I would give all I have in the world to be sure there is no such a place!"

But faith in Christ removes all fear of either the present or the future. Death and the grave have no terror for the true believer. True, he desires to live in this world as long as he can, in order to do as much good as possible; yet he knows that death will simply usher him into a better and happier life. He is sure of an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him.

Oh! let us stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. Let us never permit ourselves to be entangled again in the yoke of any kind of bondage, whether of the law, or of sin, or doubt, or fear. Then we can join, heart and soul, in the sentiment of Mason Lowell's assuring hymn:

"Whether to live or die,  
I know not which is best;  
To live in Thee is bliss to me,  
To die is endless rest.

"Living or dying, Lord,  
I ask but to be Thine;  
My life in Thee, Thy life in me,  
Makes heaven forever mine."

# 24. Great Blessings Through The Great High Priest. Heb. 9:11-15. Passion Sunday.

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. (Hebrews 9:11-15)

WHAT WE OWE to the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ no tongue can ever tell, no pen can ever depict. When Paul says that Christ is “all in all,” he tries to sum up in a few words all the blessings we receive from our Mediator and Redeemer. The hymn-writer also makes a rhythmical attempt at a summary:

"Lamb of God, we fall before thee,  
Humbly trusting in Thy cross;  
That alone be all our glory;  
All things else are only dross.  
Thee we own a perfect Saviour,  
Only source of all that's good;  
Every grace and every favor  
Comes to us through Jesus' blood.

"Jesus gives us true repentance,  
By His Spirit sent from heaven;  
Whispers this transporting sentence,  
'Son, thy sins are all forgiven.'  
Faith He grants us to believe it,  
Grateful hearts His love to prize:  
Want we wisdom? He must give it;  
Hearing ears and seeing eyes.

"Jesus gives us pure affections;  
Wills to do what He requires;  
Makes us follow His directions,  
And what He commands inspires.  
All our prayers and our praises,  
Rightly offered in His name —  
He that dictates them is Jesus;  
He that answers is the same."

The Epistle for the day, which is known as Passion Sunday, recites some of the blessings that come to believers through the mediation of Christ, who is called our High Priest. He is so called because a priest under the old covenant was a mediator between God and man. So all the priests of that dispensation were types of Christ. It was only by virtue of His eternally decreed and potent mediation that their mediation was in any way effective. They were not the real mediators, but were the human types of the true and eternal Mediator, the Son of God who became the Son of man. The epistle to the Hebrews was written mainly to set forth this doctrine — that the Old Testament ritual was composed of types and shadows which symbolized the Mediator of a "better covenant." The lesson for the day is one of the most impressive sections of this epistle, and depicts some of the great blessings that come to us through our great High Priest. Let us mediate upon some of them.

## **I. The Good Things Promised.**

The American revised version translates the first verse in this way: "But Christ having come a High Priest of the goods things to come." But evidently that is not the meaning of the inspired writer. It would seem to indicate that Christ's high-priestly office was intended to bring to the world only good things that lie in the future; but if we look at the text closely, we

will find this to be the literal translation: “But Christ, being come, a High Priest of the coming of good things”; which obviously means that Christ brought the good things that were coming — that is, that were promised and foretold in the old covenant, and were fulfilled in His person and through His mediatorial work. So our interpretation is that the writer refers to the good things that were promised and that have already come through the Redeemer’s office and work.

And what great blessings we enjoy even now through our great High Priest! We cannot mention them all, but the greatest joy and satisfaction we have come to us because He came into the world, and lived and suffered and died and rose again. For example, the things that were dimly revealed in the Old Testament have been clearly revealed by Him: that God is our Father; that He is reconciled and ready to forgive; that He is both merciful and just, and sends His saving grace down to us freely and fully without abrogating the eternal moral law; that He has prepared for us an eternal destiny of bliss for both body and soul. Another great present blessing that we receive from Christ is the inner witness of the Holy Spirit, giving us an experience of the truth. The apostle says: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him; but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit.” The writer of the Hebrew letter, in the chapter preceding our text, says: “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind; and on their heart also will I write them; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; and they shall not teach every man his fellow-citizen, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me from the least even unto the greatest.”

These are some of the blessings which were to come, which have been realized in Christ, and which are today revealed in His Word and witnessed by His Spirit; some of “the better things” which God has prepared for us; some of the great blessings which “angels desired to look into.” Christ Himself taught His disciples how much better His revelation was than that of the old covenant (Matt. 13:16, 17): “But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not.”

## **II. The Perfect Tabernacle.**

This is another blessing secured for us through the High Priestly office of Christ. Says the text: "But Christ, having come a High Priest of the good things promised, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation... hath entered once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Afterward the inspired writer explained what he meant, for he said: "For Christ entered not into the holy place made with hands, which are figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us."

In the old covenant the priests went into the holy place, and the high priest into the most holy place, or holy of holies, once a year, to offer sacrifices for themselves and the people; but that was only a tabernacle made with hands, and the services performed were only figures of greater and better things, all of which were fulfilled in Christ, who, after He had made a sacrifice of Himself, and had risen from the dead, ascended into heaven itself to make intercession before the very throne of God. The first tabernacle was only a temporary tent, and had to undergo decay like all earthly things. Not so with the heavenly tabernacle, which will be our temple and our home forever through the mediation of our divine High Priest.

This is another way of saying what Jesus had previously said to His disciples: "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God and believe in Me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you," etc. Christ's entrance into heaven means that its gates have been opened for His people, who shall dwell there with God forever. There is nothing merely temporary or symbolic about the redemption wrought by Jesus Christ; it is all blessedly real.

## **III. The Effective Sacrifice.**

In our Lord Jesus Christ, our true High Priest, we have the sacrifice that was effectual for the removal and expiation of sins. This could not be effected through "the blood of goats and calves," but only "through His own blood." "For," says the text further, "if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleansing of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ who,

through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your consciences from dead works to serve the living God? For this cause He is the Mediator of a new covenant, so that by means of a death that truly redeems from the transgressions of the old covenant, those who have been called may obtain the promised eternal inheritance.”

Ah, yes! the old ceremonial sacrifices and services could give only symbolical purification from sin. They were only a prophecy of “the good things to come.” But Jesus Christ, who was the eternal Son of God, come to earth in human guise, made the real and effective sacrifice for sin. He was the only one who could take upon Himself the sins and moral tasks of the whole human family, and bear them for us all; the only one who was able to “taste death for every man”; yes, the only one who could make “propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.” No man, no angel, no arch-angel, could have done this, for all of them were finite. Only the infinite Son of God, become incarnate, could offer an equivalent for the transgressions of the millions of sinners in the world’s history, and then, having finished His atoning work, rise from the dead, and lead captivity captive, giving gifts unto men. Even if it were thinkable that an arch-angel could have come in human form to atone for the sins of the world, he would still have to be suffering, and perhaps would have to suffer forever. But Christ, the eternal Mediator, could truly endure the penalty that justice imposed, and thus satisfy its demands. This doctrine has entered into the hymnology of the Church:

"Not all the blood of beasts  
On Jewish altars slain,  
Could give the guilty conscience peace,  
Or wash away the stain.

“But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,  
Takes all our sins away;  
A sacrifice of nobler name,  
And richer blood. than they.”

And yet, in spite of all this clear teaching of God’s Word, there are theologians today who teach that Christ made no real atonement for sin, no real reparation to the law of justice. They declare that He was a good man, the best man who ever lived; but that His life is only an inspiring example to



us, and His death only that of a martyr to the cause of truth and righteousness. If that is the true doctrine, why does the Bible teach that “He was wounded for our transgressions,” made “propitiation for our sins,” shed His blood for the remission of our iniquities? All this teaching is vain and misleading if Christ was not our particular sacrifice. More than that, what becomes of the divine law of justice, if God merely forgives sin without reparation. Could the divine mercy merely sweep aside the divine justice by an act of omnipotence? Indeed, no! That would have created an ethical schism in God and His moral economy.

Nowadays what is known as the “moral influence” theory has a good deal of vogue among the liberal theologians. By this is meant that it was not necessary for Christ to die on the cross to make satisfaction to the principle of justice, for God could forgive sin by a simple act of mercy; but, Christ suffered and died only to show His love for mankind, so that men would be moved to tenderness and repentance by this act of beneficence, and thereby would be led to amend their lives.

The difficulty with this theory is that it is wrongly named; it is not “moral.” It sets mercy up against justice, and that is unethical. It fails to uphold the justice of God, and simply waives it aside, and that is immoral again. It makes Christ’s sacrifice merely spectacular, and not essential, and that is another violation of moral principles. An acute modern writer, Dr. Albert L. Gridley, in his book, “Genesis as the Rock Foundation of Science and Religion,” has some interesting things to say regarding the so-called “moral influence” theory of the atonement. He argues the matter by means of an illustration. We Quote (pages 118, 119):

"A Russian nobleman, traveling with his family and his faithful servant, was overtaken by wolves. Every power was exerted, every resource exhausted, to reach a place of safety. Finally there was but one thing to do. One of them must be a sacrifice to save the rest. The servant volunteered, telling his master that, as he had hitherto shown his love by the service of his life, he would show it now by sacrificing himself to save them. He leaped to the ground. In the place where he was torn to pieces as a vicarious sacrifice, the nobleman erected a monument bearing the words, ‘Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.’ He sacrificed himself for a purpose, and an object was secured. But suppose he had gone out into the woods, when there was nothing at stake, to find the wolves to devour him? The master would have told him, ‘You can show

your love for me more effectually by living and serving me faithfully through the rest of your life.’

“Now what would have been the influence of Christ’s death if no further object was secured than a mere display? Just that of a boy freezing himself to death without an object; just that of a servant sacrificing himself when there was nothing at stake — nothing. Christ’s death exerts a moral influence because an object of infinite importance was secured. He redeemed humanity by the sacrifice of Himself. They must indeed have confidence in histrionic display who believe that an empty, purposeless death on Christ’s part could exert a moral influence. But to those who believe that ‘He bore our sins in His body on the tree,’ there is a drawing influence of incalculable power. He has made the atonement, the true, the only atonement for sin, and thus He is ‘the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.’ Here is the great fact of objective salvation. Here the mystery is explained, how God can be just and yet forgive sins. Christ has suffered in our stead, has borne the penalty for our sins, and this is the great foundation act upon which subjective salvation is established.”

These forceful statements need no further amplification. They lead us to consider another great blessing secured for us by our great High Priest:

## **IV. The Thorough Renovation.**

To be cleansed ceremonially is not sufficient. Therefore the text says that the Old Testament sacrifices could sanctify only to the purification of the flesh, which was only an outward purification; but “the blood of Christ who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot unto God,” shall purge our consciences from dead works, so that we can serve the living God. And how is this brought about through the atoning sacrifice of our Lord? In this way: Out of love the Father gave the Son to meet in our place the demands of the law of justice, and satisfy all its claims; and this had to be done because God is an ethical God, and has made the universe an ethical economy. Now, having satisfied the principle of justice, so that every ethical condition has been upheld and met, God’s mercy and grace can come down freely to us. So the Holy Spirit is sent into our hearts to call, enlighten and regenerate us, so that we can accept the loving sacrifice that Christ made in our behalf. Thus we are saved through His merits alone, and

yet at the same time the Holy Spirit ejects the dead works of sin from our consciences, purifies us truly and ethically, and creates a new and holy life within us. If this is not a thorough-going method of spiritual and ethical renewal, then man cannot be cleansed from sin and brought to holiness in a real and living way. There is nothing mechanical and arbitrary about the divine plan of redemption through Jesus Christ. It is all vital, real and organic. Had not our great High Priest made reparation to the principle of justice in our stead, divine mercy could not have saved us, because then God would have acted unethically; but Christ's substitutional sacrifice removed every obstruction, and God can purify us by His Holy Spirit through the blood of Christ.

But that is not all; the blessings of redemption are not merely temporary. It would be strange if they were; if Christ had come into the world and made so great a sacrifice merely to cleanse us from sin for a few years of mundane existence. No; the text teaches that our great High Priest secured for us another great blessing:

## **V. The Promised Eternal Inheritance.**

It says, "that they who are called might receive the eternal inheritance which was promised to them." Note several features of this great benison:

### **1. It is promised.**

We know therefore that we shall not be disappointed, for the promises of God are "yea and amen to them that believe." He is able to keep that which we have committed to Him against that day. "God is not slack concerning His promises as some men count slackness." Jesus added His own Word to that of the Father, for He said: "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you." So, depend upon it, my Christian friends, since God has promised, He will also perform, and we shall some day realize all the glory and blessing revealed in His holy Word.

### **2. It is an inheritance.**

It is not something that we have earned. It is something that we inherit. Through the blood of the everlasting covenant and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, we become the true children of God, and by virtue of that fact, we become the heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ to “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away.” We shall enjoy the blessings of heaven all the more because they are the free gift of God’s grace. Had we merited them by our own works, we would boast about our achievements, and go strutting about proudly in heaven. What kind of a heaven would that be! It would soon be filled with proud and bigoted people, just as the earth is. But, no, thank God! in heaven there will be no discords; all its inhabitants will sing one refrain, “Saved by grace! saved by grace!”

### **3. It is eternal.**

Well do we know that we cannot remain here long — at the very longest only a comparatively few years. What then? Shall we die like the poor dumb brutes, and sink into nothingness forever and ever? What a mockery that would be of all our hopes and aspirations? What a fiasco to the experience we have had of eternal life by accepting Christ as the Redeemer? No; that can never be. God hath revealed better things for the sons of God. Death does not end all. Death is only our commencement day in a career that shall never end. Our earthly life was only the college course that we took to fit us for the real existence.

Do you know what death is, according to the teaching of Christianity? Only a gate-opener. A story is told that an angel once came to take the soul of a Christian man out of the world. He led the man to a gate above which was inscribed, “The Gate of Death.” For a moment the man shrank from entering the gate; but the angel assured him that he had no need to be afraid; all would be well if he would enter without distrust. So he went with the angel through the gate; and When they had reached the other side, the angel bade his companion turn around and look at the gate again. He did so, and behold, he now saw inscribed above the portal this legend, “The Gate of Life.”

Yes, my dear friends, Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, has converted the gateway of death into the gateway of eternal life and bliss.

"Why should I shrink at pain and woe,  
Or feel at death dismay?  
I've Canaan's goodly land in view,  
And realms of endless day.

"Jerusalem, my happy home!  
My soul still pants for thee;  
Then shall my labors have an end,  
When I thy joys shall see."

# **25. The Humble Mind Of Christ.**

## **Phil. 2:5-11. Palmarum: The Sixth Sunday In Lent.**

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11)

YOU WILL RECALL that the Gospel for today, Palm Sunday, is the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem. It is a beautiful lesson for the day on which our catechumens are confirmed in such large numbers, because the triumph of Christ is a kind of type and prophecy of the triumph of our young people in having overcome sin and doubt and having come into full fellowship in the Church.

The Epistle for the day is no less pertinent and apt. It is one of the classical passages of the Word of God, the section that teaches us the great doctrine of Christ's humiliation and exaltation. You will remember that you learned in the catechism about the two states of Christ — that of humiliation, while he dwelt here in these earthly tenements, and that of exaltation, which He now possesses at the right hand of the Majesty on High. We read the lesson in the earlier part of the service, and we hope you have it well in mind. It begins in this way, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Then it goes on to tell us what kind of a mind Christ had, so lowly, humble and unassuming. It finally tells us about the glory to which God exalted Him because He had humbled Himself for man's redemption. Now, it is plain that the main purpose of the passage is to teach an impor-

tant practical lesson; but incidentally it teaches a great doctrine, one that is vital to Christianity, and one, too, that must be understood in order that we may be able to conform our practice to it. So we must first consider the doctrine of the text; then we shall be prepared to contemplate its practice.

## **I. The Holy Doctrine Of The Text.**

It divides itself into two sections doctrinally, and these we must attend to in their order.

### **1. Our Lord's state of humiliation.**

Let us see how beautifully this is set forth in the first part of the text. You have been accustomed to the usual translation. Suppose we translate it as literally as we can into modern English: "Have within you the same mind which was in Christ Jesus, who, subsisting in the form of God, thought it no prize to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, having taken the form of a servant, having been made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Let us take these various expressions, and try to interpret their inner meaning. First, Christ subsisted "in the form of God." This proves that He was divine, for He could not have existed in the divine form without being divine. So here we have a text that proves the deity of Christ beyond a doubt. What shall we say, then, of those liberals who teach that Jesus was only a superior man? Our reply is, they do not get their doctrine from the Word of God, but from their own human speculations.

But what is the meaning of the next phrase: He "thought it not a prize to be equal with God"? The word which we have translated "prize" means "spoils," such as the victor in a war is likely to claim. You will recall the adage, "To the victor belong the spoils," which is the adage of worldly and greedy nations that have conquered their enemies. But in the text the meaning is that Christ, even though He was divine, and might rightfully have claimed divine honor and glory, did not set up his claims and come to the world in great pomp and prestige. He might have done so, and thus received honor from men, whether He redeemed them from sin or not. But no! that

was not His spirit; He had a different mind, a humble one- Therefore, as the next sentence says, He “emptied Himself.”

In this passage we have an important doctrine, one that caused a good deal of variance of opinion among Biblical scholars. It is known as the doctrine of the *kenosis*, which is the Greek word for emptying. We think it well for Christian people to be able to understand some of these doctrinal matters; indeed, their minds may be occupied with many things of far less importance. What, then, was the *kenosis*? It could not have been an emptying of the divine nature of the Son of God, for He possesses that in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit, as the creed teaches: the three persons of the Godhead are one in essence, but three in persons. If the divine nature had been put under limitation the power and the glory of the whole Godhead would have been given up, and so the throne of the universe would have been abdicated, which would have meant the destruction of the whole creation. No; it was the self-emptying of the person or ego (the I) of the divine Son of God, who thus put Himself, voluntarily and lovingly for the time being, into human nature and under its limitations, so that He might function truly in and through it, and thus become truly human, just as the Scripture teaches, “And the Word became flesh (that is, human), and dwelt among us.” The divine ego of the Son assumed human nature; enfolded and ensphered Himself in human nature, and wrought through human nature, and so the creed teaches us that He was “very man of very man.” Only in this way could there have been a divine incarnation. No other kind of a union could have been properly so called. Had the person of the Son united Himself with a human person, that would have been only a mystical union, such as the believer has with God, but no divine incarnation. This will explain what Christ meant when He said again and again that He did not speak and act from Himself, but from the Father. It will explain the saying of the evangelist: “And the child grew in stature and in wisdom, and in favor with God and man.” Jesus plainly told His disciples that there were some things that the Son did not know, as, for example, the time of the last judgment. It was because, for the time, He had given up His glory and the exercise of His omniscience, and had put Himself under human limitation, in order that He might become truly man. Remember He did not renounce His divinity, but simply refrained from the exercise of His divine glory, knowledge and power. All the while He kept Himself in perfect touch with the Father and the Holy Spirit, so that He could draw upon them for every



need and exigency in the process of working out the redemption of mankind. So the Father gave Him power to perform miracles whenever such power was consistent with the divine plan.

It was a blessed act of condescension, this kenosis of the ego of the Son. For our sakes He assumed our human nature, experienced all that human beings experience, and that in a real way, not merely in a make-believe way, as Docetism taught, and at last bore human nature to the cross, and in and through human nature made atonement for sin, His divinity giving infinite value to the sacrifice.

This precious doctrine is clearly taught in this passage: "Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self, with the glory I had with Thee before the world was" — a passage that points explicitly to a pre-existent state — that is, prior to the incarnation — which was a state of glory, to which Christ prayed that He might now be restored. It is also taught in the passage: "Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich." This voluntary self-limitation of the divine Son of God for our sakes ought to beget within us the profoundest and most affectionate gratitude.

We have also in our text the sentence, "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself." In what did the humiliation of the Son of God consist? Here are several distinctions that clear thinkers will always want to understand. It was not the assumption of human nature, or the incarnation in and of itself, that constituted the humiliation; for Christ still retains the human nature He assumed, and has borne it to the right hand of God and glorified it. Since He did not assume sinful human nature, but the essential human nature as it was originally created, it would be no humiliation to assume it. We can easily imagine His assumption of human nature in such a form as to glorify it at once, in the very moment of the assumption, just as He glorified it at His ascension. Therefore we repeat, the incarnation itself did not constitute the humiliation of our Lord. No; it was the form of the assumption of human nature that made it a humiliation. He assumed it in the seminal organs of the Virgin Mary in embryonic form; He was born as human beings are born; He came into the world in the midst of the most lowly circumstances, and submitted to gradual growth in knowledge and stature; He put up with the limitations and trials of human life; He endured poverty, persecution, misunderstanding, abuse, unspeakable suffering and death. All these circumstances were the elements of His state of humiliation. Instead

of coming in glorified form in human nature, He came in the lowliest guise, the form of a servant, in order that He might truly suffer with us and for us according to the mode of human suffering. That noble hymn, *Te Deum Laudamus*, teaches this doctrine: “When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man, Thou didst humble Thyself to be born of a virgin.”

Nor should it be thought that the divine nature or substance was humiliated, for that could not be, inasmuch as the three persons of the Trinity possess the divine substance in common. Had the divine nature endured kenosis and humiliation, the whole Godhead would have abdicated the divine sovereignty, and the universe would have been without a governing head. It was the ego of the Son who voluntarily and for our sakes ensphered himself in human nature under circumstances of humiliation for the very purpose of bearing our sufferings and sins for us and in our stead. And this humiliation He suffered even to the extent of dying the ignominious death of the cross, which was the most disgraceful mode of capital punishment that could be administered at that time, the equivalent of the gallows or the electrocutor’s chair at the present time. Was not that indeed a marvelous sacrifice on the part of the eternal Son of God? He refrained from the exercise of the knowledge and power and glory of His deity in order that He might truly suffer in our stead and atone for our sins. It was as if a great and beneficent king should abandon his throne, become the lowliest subject of the kingdom, perform the meanest tasks of a servant, and finally die for the most wicked of his subjects.

However, because Jesus was divine as well as human, He was able to make complete atonement for sin by His infinite suffering; and then, having finished that part of His work, conquer death, and ascend again to His pristine glory in heaven; so that those who will accept the redemption He wrought for them may be saved forever and may share His glory. This brings us to the next division of our text, which teaches the doctrine of —

## **2. Our Lord’s state of exaltation.**

After He had emptied and humbled Himself, and become obedient to the death of the cross, the text says: “Wherefore God hath also highly exalted Him, and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth,

and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

The doctrine of the exaltation corresponds with the doctrine of the humiliation. In the first place, it could not have been the divine nature or substance that was glorified, for that the Son shares with the other persons of the holy Trinity. Next, it was the human nature that was glorified, because that had been assumed in the form of a servant and in most lowly guise; but now the human nature, having been borne to the right hand of the Majesty on high, was filled with all the fullness of the Godhead, and endued with the divine attributes, though not changed into the divine nature or essence. Then also the ego of the Son, who had humbled Himself to be born of a virgin, to function in and through lowly human nature, and to die the death of the cruel cross, now reascended to God’s right hand, and resumed His pristine glory, power and dominion. And now from His transcendent fullness He pours forth the Holy spirit upon His Church.

We have now dealt with the sacred doctrine of the text, which was not written primarily to teach doctrine, but to inculcate and enforce a very practical lesson. So we will now consider —

## **II. The Holy Practice Of The Text.**

In previous verses Paul had been counseling the Philippians to avoid all high-mindedness and faction; each should esteem others better than himself; each person should care for the interests of others as well as for his own; then he adds the first statement of the text: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not crave the prize of being equal with God, but emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant, and even then humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

Now what was the mind of Christ? It was a humble mind. Being divine, He might have come in great glory and dominated the world. He might have won the plaudits of all people and nations. He might have been lifted to the highest earthly throne. But, no! He was “meek and lowly in heart.” He had a beneficent end in view; not to win plaudits from the crowds, but to redeem men from sin and selfishness; and that could be done only by His

treading the pathway of humility, shame and vicarious suffering. In His love for you and me He chose the lowly path.

Now, the apostle teaches that we should be like Him, should have the same spirit. We should not grasp at every prize, every empty honor, that we may think rightfully belongs to us, and then grow angry because people do not shout our praises. There are people of that kind, sometimes even in the Church. They seem to think only of themselves, and when they do not receive every desired meed of praise, they are offended and want to forsake the Church and the work. Their very conduct proves that they have not the mind of Christ, who did not grasp at empty earthly honors, but became the servant of all. Oh! to have the mind of Christ — how it would solve all our troubles in the Church, in society, in the State, in the nation, and among the nations of the earth! It is pride, ambition, selfishness, that hurts the world, and causes all our woes.

More and more are we convinced that this matter of human pride, this unseemly strife for earthly honors, is the most specious and harmful thing in the Church and the world today. It creates by far the greater part of our divisions and strife. If people would, in lowliness of mind, prefer one another, they would heal all the hurts of the world. I do not believe that this is mere idealism and speculation. If all people possessed and practiced the mind of Christ, it would be a practical and possible program. There might be some inventions that would never see the light, but everything that is truly useful would be discovered, and civilization would be far more rapidly advanced than at present, with all our strikes, riots and Wars; for surely these evils handicap the progress of the race. Sin and selfishness also cloud the human intellect, which would be far clearer and keener if people were righteous; and therefore many more useful discoveries and inventions would be made than under the present sinful regime. Let us specify. Suppose that all the time and ingenuity that are now expended in making instruments of war and destruction were devoted to inventions that would promote the arts of peace and civilization, who will dare to say that the progress of the race would not be multiplied manyfold?

Let us look at the matter from another viewpoint. Who are the people in the history of the world who have won enduring fame? Surely not the rich, selfish and ambitious. Try to think of a single person of that kind who lived in Christ's day and who is remembered today with affection and praise. All of them have either been forgotten, or, if remembered, their names are con-

signed to obloquy. But. how about Christ Himself? He never did a selfish deed. He did not grasp at spoils and honor; He took on Him the form of a servant; He emptied and humbled Himself. He had nowhere to lay His head. He possessed no wealth nor prestige, and sought none. He craved not the praises of men, but sought only their good. Yet today who does not know about Jesus Christ? And what right-minded person does not honor Him? The text has been literally fulfilled: "Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." A noted infidel in days gone by was wont to scoff at "the mistakes of Moses" and jeer at Christian people and their ministers; but he never passed any criticisms on Jesus Christ. On the contrary, he declared that if Christ were living in his day, he would be glad to do Him honor and give Him homage.

The mind of Christ! the mind of Christ! How serenely it shines above the unseemly strife and unhallowed ambition of the world! If the time ever comes when all men will possess that mind, the millennium will be at hand and the earth will be re-Edenized.

"Ever patient, gentle, meek,  
Holy Saviour, was Thy mind;  
Vainly in myself I seek  
Likeness to my Lord to find;  
Yet that mind which was in Thee  
May be, must be formed in me.

"Days of toil, 'mid throngs of men,  
Vexed not, ruffled not Thy soul;  
Still, collected, calm, serene,  
Thou each feeling couldst control:  
Lord, that mind which was in Thee  
May be, must be formed in me.

"Though such griefs were Thine to bear,  
For each sufferer Thou couldst feel;  
Every mourner's burden share,  
Every wounded spirit heal:  
Saviour! let Thy grace in me  
Form that mind which was in Thee."

# 26. The Sacramental Feast. 1

## Cor. 11:23-32. Thursday In Holy Week.

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. (1 Corinthians 11:23-32)

ON THURSDAY EVENING of Holy Week Christ instituted the Lord's Supper, which is the sacramental feast of the Christian church. We Protestants recognize only two sacraments — Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In this observance the Protestant church is right, for these two sacraments are all that are necessary both as symbols and as means of grace; the one initiates the religious life, the other nourishes and sustains it. Thus the entire Christian life is fully provided for by this twofold sacramental arrangement, so that more sacraments would be superfluous. All other services of the Church which have any Biblical validity are only useful ordinances, but cannot claim the rank of sacraments.

It is eminently proper and suggestive to celebrate the Eucharist on the anniversary of its institution by our Lord, for it seems as if, at this particular moment, we were standing directly in His holy presence, and can almost see and hear Him as He distributes the sacred elements of bread and wine to His disciples.

The text is selected from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. He declares that he delivered to them the precise facts which he received from the Lord; then he proceeds to describe graphically and in detail the circumstances in which Christ ordained the sacrament. His narrative agrees in all essential particulars with the narratives which we find in the gospels by Matthew, Mark and Luke, each supplying some details that the others lack. Paul's testimony is important. How did he obtain the facts? He was not personally present at the institution of the sacrament in the upper room in Jerusalem. How, then, did he learn all the details of that solemn service? The synoptic gospels were not yet written when he penned his first epistle to the Corinthians; yet his record corresponds with theirs. How did he get the facts? Either they were directly revealed to him by the Lord, as he seems to teach in the text, or else Christ's immediate disciples, who were present with the Lord in the upper room, told them to him after his conversion. If they were divinely revealed to him, that very fact establishes the supernatural character of Christianity. If he repeated what the other apostles told him, we have their concurrent first-hand testimony, which is of too high a moral character to be impeached. In either case the historical fact that the blessed sacrament has come down to us intact from the days of the apostles furnishes irrefragable proof of the truth of the Christian system of doctrine.

So much for the apologetic element of the text. Paul wrote this passage to correct some errors in the church at Corinth, where the people had turned the simple sacramental supper into a great feast, into which a number of irregularities had found their way. Paul told them that, when they came together merely to gratify their bodily appetites, that was not celebrating the Lord's Supper, but was only an ordinary meal, and ministered only to the body. Then he told them distinctly that the Lord's Supper could be celebrated only with a small amount of bread and wine consecrated to a specifically spiritual purpose. If the people were hungry, let them eat at home, and not convert the church into a place of banqueting and revelry. Let us now attend to the specific doctrine of this holy and spiritual feast.

## **I. The Sacramental Element In The Lord's Supper.**

By the sacramental element we mean the gift that God bestows upon us, or, in other words, what God gives to us. In all acts of worship there are two elements — what God gives to the worshippers and what they render to Him. The latter consists of their praises and thanksgivings, and is called the sacrificial element, which we will deal with under the second division of our subject.

Now, according to the true Biblical doctrine, what is the precise sacramental element in the Eucharist? It is, as the text teaches, the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. “This is my body,” said Christ, “which was given for you; this is my blood of the new covenant, shed for the remission of sins.” We do not tamper with Christ’s solemn statements, made to His disciples so near the end of His life, and do not believe that He would have employed figures of speech at such a crucial time. We believe that He meant what He said — that in and with the bread and the wine He would give to His disciples the very blessing He names, His body and His blood. However, since this doctrine has often been both misunderstood and misrepresented, it will be in the interest of truth to make some discriminations. First, we will treat the subject negatively, then positively.

## **1. What the sacramental element is not.**

It is not what is known in Roman Catholic theology as transubstantiation. This view maintains that the bread and the wine are actually converted into the body and blood of Christ through the priestly consecration. There is no Biblical evidence for that doctrine. The natural elements remain what they are, for Christ calls them bread and wine, and says nothing about their undergoing any change. If any change took place, Christ surely would have indicated as much.

Neither is the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper the sacrifice of the mass. Protestants no longer call the sacrament by the term mass, though it was the current term in the days of the Reformation, and is sometimes used to mean the Lord’s Supper in the Confessions of the Protestant Church. However, the Romanists appropriated it, and we are willing that they shall have the exclusive use of it, for the terms sacrament, Lord’s Supper, and Eucharist are sufficiently explicit for us, and are in no danger of being misunderstood. By the sacrifice of the mass the Roman Catholics mean that in this service Christ is sacrificed afresh for the sins of the world. This doctrine is directly



opposed to the teaching of the Scripture, for Christ exclaimed on the cross, "It is finished," by which He must have meant that His sufferings and atoning work were completed. More than that, the apostles teach that He died once for all for the sins of mankind. "He made propitiation for our sins," not, "He will continue to make." No, my friends, Christ has already made ample and full atonement for our sins, so that now we need only to accept the gracious sacrifice He made in our behalf. This doctrine is also taught implicitly in the language of the institution: "This is my body, which was given for you; this is my blood, which was shed for you."

Another error is that of consubstantiation, which some illy-informed people have tried to fasten upon the Lutheran Church. Even a recent encyclopedia makes this absurd charge. Any one who will take the pains to read the confessions and theologies of the Lutheran Church from the earliest time to the last writer, will find that they never taught consubstantiation, but always expressly repudiated the doctrine, just as they have the other errors previously named. And what is the meaning of the long word "consubstantiation"? An analysis of the word will give its precise meaning: namely, that the body and blood of Jesus Christ are mingled with the bread and wine in such a way as to make a third substance, just as when hydrogen and oxygen are mingled in the right proportion, they form water. The Lutheran Church never even thought for one moment of holding so crass and materialistic a doctrine as that. There is no mixture of the natural and supernatural elements in the Lord's Supper any more than, when we say that God is present in nature, we mean that the divine substance is commingled with the material substance.

One more error regarding the Eucharist is that it is a mere memorial; that is, the elements merely symbolize the body and blood of Christ, broken and shed for us on the cross, but that Christ's humanity is not really present in the sacrament, but is absent somewhere in heaven. People who interpret Christ's language in this figurative way change His words thus: "Take and eat: this signifies my body; take and drink: this signifies my blood." But the trouble with this gloss is, Christ did not put it in that way, but used the direct method of speech, "This is my body and blood." We cannot help believing, and that most sincerely, that Christ meant to teach a deeper doctrine than that the holy sacrament is merely a symbolical rite. Had He meant something so superficial as that, He surely would not have said so positively, "This is." He could very easily have said, "This signifies or symbol-

izes.” Besides, this doctrine robs the sacrament of its blessed sacramental content as a means of grace, and makes it merely a service in which the worshipper does everything and Christ does nothing but act as an interested spectator. And still more, to think of Christ’s glorified humanity as far away in heaven and absent from the believer is to hold a very lame doctrine of Christ, for it divides His person, making His divinity present everywhere and His humanity present in only a certain limited locality. Surely then it is not Christ who is present, but only the unincarnate Logos of the Old Testament. No, we cannot accept this doctrine, and that for reasons which we shall now set forth:

## **2. What the sacramental element is.**

To our mind, the Bible teaches plainly that the true sacramental element is the “real presence” of Jesus Christ our Lord, or what the text calls the body and blood of Christ. Not only did Christ say, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and Paul, “This is my body; this is my blood,” but Paul also put the matter just as clearly as language could express it (1 Cor. 10:16): “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” The word “communion” here means participation.

However, we must avoid all crass and Capernaitish ideas of the body and blood of Christ which are communicated to us in the Lord’s Supper. Let us remember that, while our Lord’s human nature is the same in essence that it was while He was here in the state of humiliation, it does not subsist now in the same condition, just as any material substance can be changed in many ways. The beautiful flower or the luscious fruit may contain the same atoms and molecules that were taken up from the soil and the atmosphere, but how they have been changed and transfigured! So Christ’s body was raised from the dead, then borne to the right hand of God, and was completely changed and glorified, so that now it is called in the Scriptures “His glorious body,” and Paul even says that in Christ “dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” So Christ’s human nature, once in the state of humiliation, is now in the state of exaltation, and is glorified with all the fullness of God, the glorious attributes of the divine nature being communicated to it. So, since the human nature partakes of the glory of the divine nature, the human nature must be where the divine nature is by virtue of the personal union of

the divine and human. Therefore when we say that Christ's body and blood are truly present in the Lord's Supper, and are there communicated to those who partake of the natural elements, we mean His glorified humanity, and not His humanity as it was during the state of His humiliation. His presence therefore is a supernatural presence, and the eating and drinking are spiritual. The whole doctrine, stated in modern terms, is that Christ, in His whole undivided person, is present in the Lord's Supper in a special way, and holds precious personal communion with His believing people. We cannot entertain the thought that Christ's divinity is in one place and his humanity in another, for that would divide Christ, and then we today would be no better off than the people of the old covenant, who also had the divine Logos present with them. Nay, my brethren, it is the incarnate Logos who is with us today, the Christ who became man and dwelt among us; who died on the cross for our sins; who rose again for our justification; who ascended to the right hand of God, was glorified, and now is everywhere present with His people, just as He promised He would be.

Let us see whether this is not the Biblical doctrine. Jesus said: "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you" (John 14:20). The phrase, "in that day," refers to Pentecost. Again: "If a man love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (14:23). "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and I come unto you" (14:27, 28); "I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you" (verse 18); "And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20). Paul's teaching corroborates that of his Master: "Now this, 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things" (Eph. 4:9, 10). Nothing could be clearer: Christ ascended into the heavenly realm to be glorified with all the fullness of God to the very end that He might "fill all things" — that is, be ubiquitous, present everywhere. He became transcendent that He might be immanent. Is it not strange that any Biblical student should ever have misunderstood the teaching of the Holy Scriptures? Paul always speaks of Christ as really present with His people even while He is represented as in heaven. Of course, He is there, but He also is here with us, and therefore when we come to the Lord's table, it is very easy for Him to communicate

to us, in a special sacramental way, His glorified body and blood as the pledge and surety of the forgiveness of our sins. Paul says, “Christ in you, the hope of glory;” “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” It is all plain, if we will but accept the explicit and literal teaching of God’s holy Word.

So, my friends, when you come to the holy Supper, do not think of Christ as far away in the heavens somewhere as if He were bound to a locality, but think of Him as right here, coming into your hearts and holding personal communion with you. If you were to ask me, “What is the special blessing that we receive in the communication of the body and blood?” I would answer that, just as they were broken and shed for you and me on the cross, so now they are imparted to us as a most gracious pledge that, through His atoning agony, all our sins are forgiven and canceled. The Lutheran Confessions clearly teach this doctrine, and I hold it firmly, and find much comfort in my faith. In addition, I am convinced, though I would not impose my conception on others, that we receive spiritual nutriment and strength by virtue of the personal touch which we have with Christ in and through His human quality, by which He has been brought into such close and vital fellowship with our humanity. This thought seems to me to be clearly taught and beautifully expressed in the Lutheran “Order for Public Confession” (see the “Common Service Book,” page 266): “And to the end that we should the more confidently believe this, and be strengthened by our faith in cheerful obedience to His will, He hath instituted the Holy Sacrament of His Supper, in which He giveth us His body to eat and His blood to drink. Therefore, whoso eateth this Bread and drinketh this Cup, firmly believing the words of Christ, dwelleth in Christ and Christ in him, and hath eternal life.”

So let us not be repelled by this precious doctrine, but gladly accept it. Important as our next division is, we must wait for some future occasion to develop it more fully than our time will permit this evening.

## **II. The Sacrificial Element In The Lord’s Supper.**

By this element we mean what we do, and should do, for Christ when we come to the Lord’s table.

## **1. We remember Him.**

In the institution He said twice, “This do in remembrance of Me.” If you will refer to our sermon of last year for Holy Thursday (Vol. I, pages 161, 162), you will find the reasons why Jesus wanted His disciples to remember Him. First, He wanted to be remembered by His friends, just as you and I desire our friends to cherish and remember us; second, He knew that it would always prove a blessing and inspiration to His followers, to remember His pure life and His vicarious death.

## **2. We proclaim His death till He come.**

It is beautiful to think that every time we come to the sacrament of the altar, we look both backward and forward; backward to His atoning death on the cross, confessing that He and He alone won salvation for us; forward to His second coming when we shall receive the full fruition of His redemptive work and grace.

## **3. We should eat and drink worthily.**

How can this be done? In a very simple way. “Let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.” By looking into our hearts we can easily see whether we believe that Christ died for our sins, and now He comes to us in the Holy Supper and imparts to us His body and blood. If we believe this firmly, it will mean that we have repented of our sins and have accepted Christ by faith as our Redeemer; then we shall partake of the sacred elements both material and spiritual in a worthy manner, and shall not be guilty of doing despite to the cross of Christ or to His body and blood which He offers so graciously to us for our salvation and sustenance. As we approach the Lord’s table today, may the poet’s lines be our humble prayer:

"Be still, my soul, for God is near!  
The great High Priest is with thee now!  
The Lord of life Himself is here,  
Before whose face the angels bow.

“To make thy heart His lowly throne  
Thy Saviour God in love draws nigh;  
He gives Himself unto His own,  
For whom He once came down to die.”

# **27. The Atoning Savior In Prophecy. Isa. 52:13-53:12. Good Friday.**

Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12)

SOMEWHERE we have read of an unbeliever who was so powerfully impressed with the marvelous agreement of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah with the life and suffering of Jesus Christ that he became convinced of the divine inspiration of the Bible, came to Christ in repentance and faith, and was genuinely converted. It might almost be said that Isaiah 53 is a prophetic biography of our Lord and Savior. It is known as the greatest and most wonderful of the messianic prophecies. Of course, there are liberal critics who dispute its messianic character, as they dispute everything else that the evangelical Church holds precious; but, while they may negate, they surely can give no rational interpretation of the chapter, and therefore their work is destructive, not constructive. However, let us suppose that the passage is messianic, and is a true prophecy concerning Christ, and then all is plain; there is no difficulty about finding the correct interpretation, and every statement of the prophet becomes sensible and rational. Otherwise no key to the strange passage can be found. It is not likely that Isaiah would have written a prophecy that was merely wild and senseless raving.

With all evangelical scholars, we heartily believe that the passage selected as our Epistle for the day, Good Friday, refers to our Lord Jesus Christ. This conviction will grow clearer as we proceed to indicate the remarkable way in which the several statements were fulfilled in the life, passion and death of our Saviour. A part of the fifty-second chapter is included in the lesson for today. It is meet that, on Good Friday, the anniversary of our Lord's death on the cross, we should celebrate that event by gathering in our church and meditating on His wonderful person and passion.

As a good devotional book to read during this solemn time, and, indeed, during the whole Lenten season, I would recommend Dr. F. W. Krummacher's "The Suffering Saviour: Meditations on the Last Days of Christ." It has been gracefully done into English, and sets forth the plan of redeeming love in a deeply spiritual way. No one could have written such a work without a genuine experience of regeneration by the Holy Ghost through faith in the atoning Saviour.

Now let us gather up the several prophecies of the text, and note with what marvelous precision they had their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Such a meditation will, I feel sure, beget faith in His atoning work for the world. May I hope that it will cause some one to accept Christ, should there be any present who have not yet fallen in with the overtures of divine mercy. Our theme is, "The Atoning Saviour in Prophecy."



## I. His Wisdom And Exaltation.

Strangely enough, the passage begins with recounting the wisdom and greatness of "The Suffering" Servant of Jehovah," as the Messiah is called in some of the prophecies. The reason of this order is this: First, the prophet desires to indicate that the atoning Saviour is the real and true Divine One, great and glorious in Himself, in order that the people may have confidence in Him from the start. The order of the gospels is similar. Matthew and Luke depict our Lord's miraculous birth by the Holy Ghost long before they describe His sufferings for the sins of the world. Luke records among the first events, the announcement of the coming of "Christ, the Lord," to the shepherds. Mark tells us of the witness of John the Baptist to the Great One who was to follow him and whom he simply came to herald. And the apostle John gives this testimony concerning Christ in the first few verses of his gospel: "In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." All these evangelists begin with the supernatural and exalted character of the Messiah, and then proceed to describe His humiliation and sacrifice. Centuries prior the prophet followed the same order. Wonderful is the unity of the teaching of the Holy Scriptures! The Bible is an organism, not a mosaic. Concerning this messianic prophecy of Isaiah, Dr. Franz Delitzsch says, in his great commentary: "It forms the center of this wonderful book of consolation (chapters 40-66), and is the most central, the deepest, and the loftiest thing that the Old Testament prophecy, outstripping even itself, has ever achieved."

In giving our interpretation of this prophecy we shall follow, in some part, Dr. Delitzsch's translation. The first verse says: "My Servant will act wisely; He will come forth, and arise, and stand very high." How precisely that describes Christ! Observe the Wisdom that He displayed in all His conduct and teaching. The Sermon on the Mount contains more ethical and spiritual instruction than all the human philosophies and systems of ethics put together. The gospel says of Christ: "He grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."

The rest of the verse depicts a progressive rising or moving upward, as Dr. Delitzsch indicates by an analysis of the Hebrew text: "He will rise up,

He will raise Himself still higher, He will stand on high.” Then our commentator adds: “The three verbs... denote the commencement, the continuation, and the result or climax of the exaltation; and Stier is not wrong in recalling to mind the three principal steps of the exaltation in the historical fulfillment, viz., the resurrection, the ascension, and the session at the right hand of God.” How wonderfully the prediction was fulfilled in Christ!

The same is true of what follows, which we will translate in such a way as to give the interpretation at the same time: “Just as many people were astonished at Him (because His visage was marred more than that of any other man, and His form more than the sons of men), so will He cause many nations to tremble; kings shall shut their mouths because of Him, for they shall see what has never been told them, and shall hear what they have never heard.”

Is it not true, every word of it, in the fulfillment? In spite of the fact that He was beaten, tortured, wracked with pain, so that no other was ever so anguish-smitten, how many nations have trembled on account of the influence of, Christ, and how many kings have stood dumb before His moral and spiritual sway!

But how did He come to have so marvelous an influence?

Did He first appear as a mighty warrior and a great potentate? No! He did not reach His exalted position in that way, which would be the way of human ambition and lust for power. So we are brought to the next section of the text, which delineates:

## **II. His Lowliness And Shame.**

A change here takes place in the prophet’s description. Having shown who the Servant of Jehovah intrinsically was and what He ultimately attained, He now begins to indicate the remarkable way in which He achieved the heights of glory and distinction. It was by the road of humility, shame and vicarious suffering. One cannot help thinking at this point how Jesus refused the offer of Satan to give Him all the kingdoms of the world, and then chose the humble, sorrowful way of Gethsemane and Calvary. So the prophet now takes up the minor key: “Who hath believed our message? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?” Just so it was with Christ. Because He did not come with earthly pomp and glory, few people

believed on Him, and most of those who did accept His message belonged to the unlearned and humble classes. At one place it is said, “The common people heard Him gladly.” But others rejected Him. The gospel puts it in a pathetic way: “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.”

Note how exactly the prophet continues to delineate the lowly condition of the Servant of Jehovah, whom we identify with Jesus Christ: “For He grew up before Him like a tender plant, and like a root-sprout out of the dry ground; and He had no form or comeliness; and we looked, and there was no beauty such as we could have found pleasure in Him.” Does not all this correspond with the humble origin of our Lord? “He grew up like a tender plant” — Jesus was born a little child, and was just as tender and helpless as any other human infant. Had not God the Father watched over Him, He would have perished like many other children in the cruel persecution of Herod. He also grew up like a shoot “out of a dry ground.” When we consider the arid political, moral and spiritual condition of the people of Israel at the time of Christ’s birth, we see how apt the comparison is. As to His personal appearance, while He may have been winsome to those who had spiritual vision, he could not have been attractive to worldly and wicked eyes, or the people would never have accused, persecuted and crucified Him as they did. His real inner beauty must have been veiled from their coarse and wicked eyes.

The prophet goes on to draw a lifelike picture of our Saviour’s earthly state of humiliation: “He was despised and forsaken of men.” Think how the Pharisees and Scribes and many others treated Him with contempt, and how even His immediate disciples “all forsook Him and fled,” when the Roman soldiers arrested Him in the garden on the night of His betrayal! “A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” Reflect on Christ’s troubled life in bearing the sins of the world — how precise is the prophetic description of His condition! “And we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.” How could a delineation be more enact? How many people turned their faces away from Christ, ashamed to acknowledge Him! How few even of His immediate acquaintances really esteemed Him until after His death, resurrection and ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit! Still more follows: “Verily He hath borne our diseases and our pains: He hath laden them upon Himself; yet we regarded Him as one stricken and smitten of God, and afflicted.” Yes, the people of Christ’s time did not understand that Jesus was bearing their sins, actually

taking them upon Himself; but when they saw His agony, they thought it was a visitation of divine wrath upon 'Him for some terrible sin of His own. Could there be a more graphic and lifelike portrayal of the suffering Saviour?

### **III. His Atoning Sacrifice.**

And now comes another change in the text. In spite of all the misunderstanding on the part of the people of the sorrows of the Servant of Jehovah, the prophet, peering out into the future, and realizing what they really meant, gives us the true interpretation of His sufferings. He sees that they were vicarious; that He did not suffer for His own sins, but bore the penalty of the sins of others; so He says: "But He was wounded for our transgressions; bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep had gone astray; we had gone every, one unto his own way; and the Lord laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." Delitzsch's translation of the last sentence is more literal and graphic: "And Jehovah caused the iniquity of us all to fall upon Him."

If ever the doctrine of substitutionary suffering was taught, it is taught in that sublime and impressive passage. Every phrase teaches that the Servant of Jehovah made atonement for the sins of the people; that He suffered for others; that His sufferings were vicarious and expiatory. If it is applied to Jesus Christ and His doctrine as developed and explained by the apostles, the passage has been literally fulfilled, and is pregnant with meaning and beauty. Otherwise it has never been fulfilled, there is no prospect of its fulfillment, and so one of the most wonderful and beautiful passages of literature is robbed of all meaning, and is naught but the vagary of a deluded mind. In our opinion the former view is the only rational view; and it also agrees with the experiences of thousands and millions of Christian people who have put their trust in the merits of Christ as the atoning Saviour.

Moreover, the New Testament writers make frequent references to this Isaian passage, as can be seen by examining the parallel passages. For example, Peter (1 Pet. 2:24) quotes the phrase, "By whose stripes ye were healed," and applies them directly to the sufferings of Christ. In the eighth chapter of Acts is found the story of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. As he was driving along the Gaza road in his chariot, he was reading

this very chapter, the fifty-third of Isaiah, especially verses seven and eight: “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth,” etc. But the eunuch could not interpret the passage. So Philip, the evangelist, was directed by the Holy Spirit to instruct Him. And what did Philip do? The record says, “And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached unto him Jesus.” Then the eunuch was baptized and converted, and went on his way rejoicing. Therefore, we know that the New Testament writers applied this great Isaian passage to the Lord Jesus Christ. The critics who do not believe the passage to be messianic and applicable to Christ must settle their score with the New Testament records. For our part, we accept the interpretation of Christ’s apostles, to whom He promised the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In this connection we cite a relevant quotation from Dr. Delitzsch:

“The meaning is not merely that the Servant of God entered into the fellowship of our Sufferings, but that He took upon Him the sufferings which we had to bear, and deserved to bear, and therefore not only took them away (as Matt. 8:17 might make it appear), but bore them in His own person that He might deliver us from them. But when one person takes upon himself suffering which another would have to bear, and therefore not only endures it with him, but in his stead, this is called substitution or representation,” etc. On the latter part of verse five the same writer says: “The stripes and weals that were inflicted upon Him have made us sound and well... We were sick unto death because of our sins; but He, the Sinless One, took upon Himself a suffering unto death, which was, as it were, the concentration and essence of the woes that we had deserved; and this voluntary endurance, this submission to the justice of the Holy One, in accordance with the counsels of divine love, became the source of our healing.” For a deep and satisfactory discussion of the atoning merit and grace of the Suffering Servant in enduring the wrath of God in our stead, we refer now to the further discussion of these passages in Delitzsch’s profound commentary, especially pages 320-322.

Other verses of this chapter also teach the doctrine of placular atonement: “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief”; “And He shall bear their iniquities”; “He poured out His soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” All of these passages teach the same doctrine — that of vicarious expiation, and all of them find a most

marvelous detailed fulfillment in the sufferings and death of our Lord. Take this statement: “He was numbered with the transgressors,” and then remember that Jesus was crucified between two malefactors, indicating that He was regarded as the chief offender.

## **IV. His Uncomplaining Meekness.**

“He was oppressed, yet when He was oppressed, He opened not His mouth. As a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is dumb, so He Opened not His mouth.” Read the account of Christ’s trial before Pilate, and note that, in the midst of His wrathful accusers, He answered not a word. The time for Him to defend Himself had passed; He knew that His persecutors had determined to put Him to death.

Note again: “By oppression and judgment He was taken away.” Every one knows how unjust and illegal was His trial before the Sanhedrin and Pilate.

Observe once more: “And they made His grave with the, wicked, and with a rich man in His death; although He had done no violence, neither was there any deceit in His mouth.”

Here there is something really remarkable about the prophecy and its fulfillment in the most unexpected detail in the death and burial of Jesus. The Jews would have assigned Him His grave with the wicked, because He had been crucified with two malefactors; but for divine reasons it was not permitted to be so, even though He may have actually been buried in the midst of many wicked people, and thus the prophecy was fulfilled. However, as we know from the New Testament records, Joseph of Arimathea, a “rich man,” went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus; and then he and Nicodemus took down the body, and laid it in the new tomb of Joseph. Thus the prophecy, “He shall make His grave with a rich man in His death,” was literally fulfilled. On this most salient point, Dr. Delitzsch observes: “And if we reflect that the Jewish rulers would have given to Jesus the same dishonorable burial as to the two thieves, but that the Roman authorities handed over the body to Joseph, the Arimathean, a ‘rich man’ (Matt. 27:57), who placed it in the sepulcher in his own garden, we see an agreement at once between the gospel history and the prophetic words which could be only the work of the God of both the prophecy and its fulfillment, inasmuch as no

suspicion could possibly arise of there having been any human design of bringing the former into conformity with the latter.” Philippi has also a pertinent remark on this passage: “Of course, this was not a thorough compensation for the ignominy of having died the death of a criminal; but the honorable burial, granted to one who had been ignominiously put to death, showed that there must be something very remarkable about Him. It was the beginning of a glorification which commenced with His death.”

## **V. His Ultimate Triumph And Satisfaction.**

It surely is a remarkable prophecy. No human mind could have conceived the idea that the Servant of Jehovah, after passing through suffering, ignominy and death, would then go forth to triumph and glory. What does it mean? How can such contradictory statements and such improbable events ever be brought into harmony with one another and with the truth? Perhaps the prophet himself did not understand clearly his own predictions; but the Holy Spirit, who inspired the utterances, saw the end from the beginning. Let us note the marvel of the prophecy and its fulfillment: “When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in His hands. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. By the knowledge of Himself shall my righteous Servant justify many; and He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong.”

I call attention to only a few of the details. He shall die and be buried (verse nine), and yet He shall prolong His days (verse ten). How could that be? The death and the subsequent resurrection of Jesus explains the apparent paradox. Again, “the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in His hands,” and yet “He shall be numbered with the transgressors.” How could that be reconciled? Very readily When we remember how unjustly Christ was tried, condemned and crucified with thieves, and yet how God said ‘ from heaven, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,” and raised Him from the dead, and gave “Him a name which is above every name.” Note again: “Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great,” etc.; and yet “His soul was made an offering for sin.” It is all plain as the day when

we remember how Christ died for the sins of the world, and then was exalted to God's right hand above all the kings of the earth.

All these statements relate to the triumph of 'the Redeemer. There is another statement which is also going to be fulfilled: "And He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." That means that the results of Christ's sacrifice will be so great and glorious that He will not be disappointed. He will be satisfied with the character of those who shall be redeemed; for they shall be purified from sin, and made holy like Himself, and therefore shall be fitted by divine grace for eternal felicitous fellowship with Him. He will also be satisfied with the number of the redeemed, because there shall be a great multitude there "whom no man can number." Every mansion of the Father's house shall be occupied.

Our discourse today has been almost more of running commentary than a sermon. However, the lesson was so lengthy and important that this method of treatment could not be avoided. The practical benefit of the true exposition of this portion of Holy Scripture will be this, I hope: that the accurate fulfillment of predictions written over seven centuries before Christ ought to impress all of us so powerfully that the Holy Scriptures are true and that Christ is the Redeemer of the world, that we will accept Him heartily as our Saviour, and keep unfaltering faith in His holy Word to the end. May that be the result in all our lives. Amen.



# 28. How To Keep The Easter Festival. 1 Cor. 5:6-8. Easter Day. The Resurrection Of Our Lord.

Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:6-8)

NO SMALL AMOUNT of criticism has been passed in the Church on the selection of the pericope for today, the Easter festival. According to Dr. Jacobs' remarks in the Lutheran Commentary, Sommer regarded its choice as a mistake because it says nothing about the real event of Easter, the resurrection of our Lord. Ranke regarded it as unliturgical for an Epistle lesson for the high festival of Easter, to begin with the warning, "Your glorying is not good." Nitzsch suggested as the most appropriate Easter selection 1 Cor. 15:12-20, which treats directly of the resurrection of Christ. In some parts of the Church other appropriate selections have been made.

However, while we feel the force of these objections, and, would be favorable to the selection of a more relevant passage for this holy day, yet we will follow the time-honored custom of the Church and adapt the lesson to the occasion; and this can be done without doing violence to the text, or even putting an undue strain upon it. You might ask the question, Why is it that any section of the Holy Scripture can be applied to any part of the Christian life? The answer is: the whole system of Christian doctrine is an organism; therefore every part is livingly connected with every other part,

and doctrine and practice correlate everywhere. So we will proceed to the exposition of our lesson in the light of the Easter festival.

What does Paul mean in the opening sentence of the text: “Your glorying is not good?” He was writing to the Corinthians about a very gross iniquity which they were tolerating, the sin of fornication in one of its worst forms, that of incest. Now as long as they condoned that heinous vice, their glorying in anything else was not consistent; they should first cast out the adulterer, and then they would have a right to rejoice in their privileges and prosperity under divine guidance. Then Paul gives this warning: “Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” Let this, then, be our first Easter reflection:

## **I. The Pervasive Nature Of Leaven.**

Easter means a higher life. Just as Christ rose from the dead, and endued His resurrected body with higher and nobler qualities than it possessed during the time of His earthly humiliation, so we, who believe on Him and accept Him as our Redeemer and Lord, should “rise into newness of life.” For that very reason we should be on our guard against everything that would hinder our spiritual progress or dull our spiritual zeal. Any sin cherished in the church will act like leaven, which was the old English name for what we call yeast today. And all of us know how yeast operates. Just take a small quantity of it, put it into a lump of dough, and note how quickly it will begin to ferment and pervade the whole mass. So it is with sin in the Church: if tolerated, it will spread from individual to individual until the whole Church is more or less infected. Elsewhere Paul teaches that, if one member of the Church does evil, all the rest, at least to some degree, are involved. Sometimes people think they can isolate themselves, live their own lives apart from others, and thus relieve themselves of all responsibility for their fellowmen; but that is impossible; every person is a member of the social organism, and whatever he does, or does not, will have its influence on his fellowmen. Even if he betakes himself into solitude, “far from human neighborhood,” his conduct will affect the social organism, because then he fails to perform his part in human affairs.

It is also true in the individual life that “a little leaven leavens the whole lump.” Permit one sin, however small, to enter your life, and to remain

there, and it will speedily spread everywhere, and infect the entire character, causing it to become more and more corrupted until all faith, hope and love are lost. Let us make it one of our chief Easter lessons to beware of the leaven of sin, which will prevent our “rising into newness of life.”

## **II. The Old Leaven Should Be Purged Away.**

This thought follows logically from what precedes. Says the apostle in the text: “Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, thoroughly unleavened” — that is, thoroughly cleansed from the corruption of sin and filled with a new and holy power.

In interpreting this part of the text we should remember that leavening is a process of fermentation or decay, and therefore was regarded as a synonym of evil by the Jews under their ceremonial law. In the Bible, when leaven is used as a figure of speech, it is almost always employed in the bad sense as a symbol of the corrupting nature of sin. In the celebration of the Passover, therefore, no fermented food or drink of any kind was to be used. That is what is meant when the Passover is called “the feast of unleavened bread.” In our text leaven is used in the sense of sin. Here we may specify somewhat.

### **1. The old leaven of legalism should be purged away.**

You will observe that, after Paul enjoins, “Purge away the old leaven,” he adds: “For Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.” In much of his writing, the apostle felt himself bound to return again and again to the Judaizing tendencies in the churches, because they led the people to seek justification through the observance of the old ceremonial law. Some of them actually wanted to keep the Jewish Passover according to the Old Testament dispensation, instead of observing the Lord’s Supper, which required nothing but simple faith in Christ. His argument, therefore, is: Why do you want to go back to slaying the paschal lamb as was done of old? Do you not know that Christ is the true Paschal Lamb who was slain for us for the remission of sins? Oh! purge away the old legalistic and ceremonial leaven, and become a new lump through faith in Jesus Christ.

This is a noble injunction. Faith in Christ is the only means of justification. All other ways and devices have resulted in failure. Luther and many others tried the way of legalism only to be led into confusion and despair. The slogan of the Reformation was, "The just shall live by faith," and that should be the slogan today.

Nothing in my hands I bring;  
Simply to Thy cross 'I cling."

And what has this to do with Easter? The connection is close and vital. By His resurrection from the dead, Christ proved beyond a doubt that He was the Redeemer, the true Paschal Lamb, and that His sacrifice on the cross was efficacious in canceling sin through faith in His blood. If He had not risen from the dead, His apostles would not have known for a certainty that He was what He called Himself, the Ransom and Messiah of the world. Moreover, His resurrection also proved Him to be a living Lord and Saviour who would always be with His disciples and would endue them with His Spirit. So the old leaven of Jewish legalism was to be eliminated, and the new life and joy of the gospel were to take its place. And be it remembered that all attempts at salvation by works and human righteousness are simply the outbreaking of the old leaven of Jewish legalism put in the place of the freedom and fullness of salvation through the gospel of the Incarnate Son of God. They are only a recrudescence of an outworn dispensation.

## **2. The old leaven of malice and wickedness is also to be purged away.**

If Christians are to be purified from legalism, no less are they to be cleansed of all moral defilement. A legalism that tries to be saved by the law is evil enough, as it certainly is ineffective; but to live in malice and wickedness is many times worse. The former at least tries to keep the law, and thus shows it some respect; the latter tramples upon both the law and the gospel. "Christ our Passover was slain for us." But why? Simply to leave us groveling in our sins? Nay, nay! But to cancel our sins, and to save us from their power and defilement. Salvation is an ethical transaction. Christianity knows only one kind of salvation — salvation from sin.

This again is part of the Easter message. “Christ our Passover was slain for us” that He might free us from the condemnation of sin. Then He rose from the dead that He might be alive forevermore, and as a living personal power free us from the dominion and purify us from the corruption of sins. Both parts are necessary to a complete salvation. By the cross we secure the pardon of sin; by the resurrection cleansing from sin. Easter is the complement of Good Friday. Let us always remember that the purpose of the plan of redemption was to break the reigning power of sin and restore sinners to the righteousness of God. This thought leads us to the more positive part of our Easter meditation.

### **III. The Unleavened Bread Of The Easter Festival.**

Let us listen to Paul’s ringing message in the text: “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven (of legalism), neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” It should be borne in mind that Paul here uses the word “leaven” to signify the corrupting element in human life, While the unleavened bread stands for the life that is pure and undefiled. Two cardinal elements of the unleavened bread are named in the text.

#### **1. Sincerity.**

In the truly Christian life everything comes back to ethics; but remember it is true ethics; not mere worldly ethics; not mere outward and conventional ethics; not mere Confucian ethics, nor so-called “ethical culture.” No, it is ethics that flows from the redeeming and regenerating grace of God, from a divinely implanted ethical life in and through Jesus Christ. This inner conception is involved in the bright and good word “sincerity” in our text. In order that a person may be perfectly and pellucidly sincere, the inner springs of his life must be renovated of all admixture of evil. The Holy Spirit must come into his heart with renewing power and grace. This stands to reason; for, since man is inherently sinful, his very motives must be contaminated with evil; hence he can be pure in motive only by being “born from above.” The God who originally created man in His own image is the

only Being who can restore that image after it has been lost through disobedience.

By virtue of this very fact the resurrection of Christ was necessary; for only a living Christ could come to the sinner and beget a new and holy life within him. Oh! may the Spirit of the resurrected and glorified Christ purge away all selfishness and deceit, and breathe into our hearts the captivating grace of sincerity.

## **2. And truth.**

Ah! what an exhilaration we find in the moral qualities of the Christian life! “Let us keep the feast... with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” If we are sincere, we will want the truth, and only the truth. We will reject error, no matter how alluring, no matter how flattering to the natural man. Be assured that error is never salutary, even though sometimes for a while it may seem to be expedient and politic. The world is a rational economy at its base, and hence the truth is always best. The truth ever does good to the upright in heart.

And in this regard the Christian believer stands on secure ground. He not only cherishes the opinion that he has found the truth, but receives by an inner experience the assurance of eternal verity; so that he is able to say, “I know that I have found the truth in Christ Jesus.” This blessed assurance comes to him in a supernatural, but, nevertheless, a perfectly normal and rational way. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” So when Christ comes into our hearts He gives us the inner evidence of the truth. He also said of those who abide in His word, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Observe that Christ promised here to give a direct experience of the truth.

At another place in the gospel, Jesus called the Holy Spirit “the Spirit of truth.” So when the Spirit comes into our being, He impinges upon our consciousness a clear, unmistakable certitude of the truth. How inspiring, then, is the Easter message! The soul that feeds on eternal truth has food indeed. The life that is based on truth is a stable life. May all of us keep the Easter festival in sincerity and in truth! Amen.

# 29. The Victorious Life. 1 John 5:4-12. The First Sunday After Easter.

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.

He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. (1 John 5:4-12)

NOTHING COULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE for the first Sunday after Easter than the Epistle selected by the Church for today. It tells us about “The Victorious Life” which we may have through the living and abiding Christ, the Christ who was dead, and, behold, He liveth forevermore. No one likes defeat. Even a temporary defeat in a worldly game does not bring the most comforting feeling. How much more serious it would be to live a defeated life, and be compelled at last to acknowledge that life had been a failure! But since Christ died and rose again, it is not necessary for anyone to live a balked and nugatory life. All may, in the highest sense, achieve victory and success. It will be our privilege today to note the salient features of this life of triumph. The life referred to in the text is —

## I. A Divinely Begotten Life.

This doctrine is taught in the opening statement of the pericope: “For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world.” In the preceding verse the apostle said: “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous;” then He adds in explanation: “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world;” as much, as to say: The divine commandments are too difficult for unregenerate people to obey, because the world is too strong for them, and its allurements appeal to their carnal nature; but when men have been born of God, they can keep His commandments and overcome the world. The inspired writer was logical; the inspired writers always are logical.

The text announces no superficial and isolated doctrine, but one that belongs to the very structure of things. Let us see its divine reasonableness. In the beginning of human history the hearts of our first parents were centered on God, in whose image they had been created. While they loved the cosmos, because God had made it beautiful and had given it for their delight, yet they found their chief joy in God Himself, whom they placed first in their affections. However, the tempter came, and inveigled them into believing that they could find more wisdom and pleasure in making something in the world, rather than the Creator of the world, the supreme object of their desire. So they uncentered their lives by choosing the cosmical instead of the supra-cosmical. What was the result? They incorporated the worldly spirit into their natures, and hence began to love the world more than God. We are their posterity, and therefore have inherited from them this inordinate and unconquerable attachment to the world, and have lost the true center of our lives, which is the love and life of God.

In this sad congenital state we cannot disentangle ourselves. Our own disposition is enchained by inherited carnality, and the blandishments of the world are too strong for us. What can be done to emancipate us? Only one thing: God Himself, who is stronger than all the allurements of the world, must come to our help, must overcome the worldly temper within us, must breathe a new spiritual life and affection into us, and thus enable us to overcome the allurements that are otherwise too strong for us. The text prescribes the only specific: “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.” How rational! God, who created the world, is its only Sovereign;



therefore He alone can give us the power to triumph over it. Otherwise it will enslave us. God's way is the, only way, and to it we ought to submit.

Another feature of the victorious life is that it is —

## II. A Life Of Faith.

The note of triumph in the next two sentences is most uplifting: “And this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith. And who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” This part of the text follows in logical sequence the first part, which, as we have just seen, teaches the doctrine of the birth from God; that is, the new birth begets within the soul the ability to believe on Christ, which is a spiritual act, and therefore is impossible for the natural carnal mind; it must be begotten by the Holy Spirit. However, the ability of faith having been divinely begotten, it must be exercised or it will be ineffective. While God will impart to us the ability to believe, He will not do our believing for us, nor compel our belief, because the process of the order of salvation is ethical, not mechanical nor coercive. Then when the soul, thus divinely enabled, lays hold upon Jesus Christ by faith, all that Christ is and has done is counted over to its credit, bringing justification, and therefore peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Do you see the divinely beautiful order? The birth from above implants the power of faith; faith lays hold upon Christ, and thus faith comes out victorious over the world, the flesh and the devil.

The doctrine just enunciated is so inspiring that we must needs dwell upon it for a few moments. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” What strange language! Can victory overcome? Is not that a redundant expression? If so, was the apostle a good rhetorician? We reply, Yes! His language is precise, and his thought accurate. Faith is a victory in itself — an overcoming of doubt. Before faith is begotten, the sinner doubts whether Christ is the Redeemer; he doubts whether the Bible is the word of God; indeed, he is filled with doubt and uncertainty about many vital things. But when faith comes, it wins the victory over all these disconcerting doubts; and then — note the logical sequence — this victory leads to the next step in his triumphant course — to victory over the world. Thus the believer goes on his way from conquest to conquest; as the well-known

hymn puts it: “Each victory will help you some other to win.” And is it not one of the laws of life- — that one victory is apt to lead to others, making each succeeding one easier than its predecessor?

There is a clarion challenge in this text: “Who is he that overcometh the world but he who believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?” How are you going to prove that proposition? By history and experience. Take history. Call the roll of the men and women who have conquered the worldly spirit, and have lived the victorious spiritual life, and died the victorious death: who are they? Only those who have accepted Christ by faith. They have been “the heroes in the strife.” They are the only ones who have been able to shout with triumph at the close of life: “I have fought a good fight; I have kept the faith; I have finished my course; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that day, and not to me only, but to all them that have loved His appearing.” Where else in all literature can you find so exultant a note in the midst of trial and persecution? We have cited Paul in this passage. Was he able to overcome the world before he accepted Christ as the Son of God? You know his experience. So it has been in the whole course of history. There were Augustine, Luther, Knox, Bunyan, John Newton, Rowland Hill, Charles Spurgeon, Jerry McAulley, and many, many others — all of them were rescued from the wiles of the world only through faith in Jesus Christ. No matter how people try to explain these phenomena, they cannot deny that they are historical facts. On the other hand, the fact is just as plain and patent on the pages of history that no persons who have gone through life without faith in Christ have been able to unleash themselves from the bondage of the world. Of course, it is clear on the face of it why faith in Christ enables men and women to overcome the world — at least, it is clear to those who will look at the problem honestly. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Divine One, the Eternal One, the All-powerful One. Now surely if you and I will accept His grace and salvation by faith, He will empower us to overcome all temporalities, all finities, all cosmical allurements. What did He Himself say? “These things have I spoken unto you that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” There we have the secret of the victorious life of faith. Christ, the All-powerful One, came into the world, conquered its dominating spirit, and thus enables all believers to overcome as He overcame.

Still another characteristic of the victorious life of the believer is this: it is —

### **III. A Life Based On Atonement.**

And why do I lay emphasis on this doctrine? Because the life of Christian faith is a spiritually ethical life. The great enemy that is overcome by faith is the unethical spirit of this world — the spirit that enchains its votaries in sin. The doctrine of conquest through atonement is taught in this part of the text: “This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with water only, but with water and with blood.” It is not necessary to enter the controversy regarding the interpretation of this passage; we simply accept the only exegesis that is apropos if the writer was carrying on a logical sequence of thought. While Jesus hung on the cross, a Roman soldier pierced His side with his spear, and water and blood flowed out from His broken heart, proving that He was dead. The same apostle who records this fact in his gospel now refers to it here. He repeats for emphasis, so that no one would mistake his meaning: “not with water only, but with water and with blood.” The apostle desires to impress upon the minds of his readers the fact that Christ had really died on the cross to make propitiation for the sins of the world, and therefore their faith had to be based on that fact; for without the atonement wrought by the Redeemer, there could have been no new birth, no faith, no release from the sinful spirit of the world. The unethical obstructions had to be removed, and justice had to be satisfied, before loving mercy could come down to the rescue of men. Today we need not dwell on the doctrine of the vicarious atonement, for we have frequently shown how necessary it is in the divine and holy plan of redemption; but it ought never to be forgotten that Good Friday precedes Easter, and gives to Easter its true value and significance. John’s theology is consistent: in the first chapter of his epistle he says: “And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” In the midst of other doctrines, he does not forget the organism of the plan of salvation — he does not omit the blood of the atonement.

As might be expected, the apostle tells us that the victorious life is —

### **IV. A Life Of Inner Assurance.**

His language is most suggestive: “And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and the three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for the witness of God is this, that He hath borne witness concerning His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning His Son.”

It is well to note that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit agree in their witnessing. The Father bore witness twice while Jesus was here in the state of humiliation, once at His baptism, and afterward on the mount of transfiguration, saying from heaven, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.” At Christ’s baptism the Holy Spirit also descended upon Him in the form of a dove, and thus added His testimony to that of the Father’s voice from heaven. The Spirit also comes into the believer’s consciousness, and bears witness to him that Christ is the Redeemer of the world. So the testimony of the Father and the Holy Spirit regarding the Son is beautifully accordant. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one in essence, and therefore their witness always agrees.

What a bracing doctrine it is to know that the witnessing Spirit is the truth! So the text declares. That is what the believer wants — the assurance of truth. He rebels against the very idea of being led astray by error and falsehood. But just as we know that a mathematical axiom is true, because it fits the constitution of the mind, so the regenerated believer knows by spiritual intuition that the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit is true. That is a part — and a most vital part — of his experience. The same doctrine is taught in the passage which says, “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.” It is like this: When the Holy Spirit begets the ability of faith within us, and faith lays hold on Christ as the Saviour, the Holy Spirit continues to bear further witness that the believer’s faith is founded on truth. So faith imparts the stabilized life, because it removes all the uncertainties of doubt. No wonder Christian faith is a victorious power.

But, on the other hand, the evil of unbelief is pointed out in the text in contrast with the ethical and triumphant quality of faith: “He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar. because He hath not believed the record that God gave of His Son.” There may be skeptics who will think this a dogmatic assertion, and also an example of reasoning in a circle. But let us

soberly and without prejudice reflect on the seriousness of the situation. Is it not true that, if God did bear witness to Christ as His beloved Son in whom men are to trust, and any man refuses to believe that testimony, he is making God a liar? I would not speak dogmatically nor harshly to any one, but I do want all men to bear in mind how serious a thing it is to reject Christ; that it is not an act that anyone should do without much thought and investigation; that he ought to settle the question, "Who is Christ?" before he lives another day, in view of the tremendous issues involved. Let me assure every skeptic that there is a way by which his doubts may be resolved, namely, by seeking for the experience of truth and salvation in the way the Bible directs. I have never known the experiment to fail. And if there is a simple way to gain assurance of truth, will not the unbeliever be without excuse if he refuses to pursue that way? It is a time for solemn reflection.

## **V. A Life That Comes Only Through Christ.**

This is the last mark of the victorious life to which attention can be called today: "And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

Whenever the Holy Scriptures speak of "life" and "eternal life" in this way, they mean the true spiritual life that begins in this world and continues forever. They do not mean that sinners will sink into oblivion, or will be annihilated, or will lose their conscious existence; but they will not know true spiritual life and felicity. The life of the impenitent in the next world will not be worthy of being called life; it will be a mere miserable existence; but those who have received life from the eternal Son of God, the very ground and source of all true life, will have life and have it more and more abundantly.

Again, we have here a most beautifully rational doctrine. Jesus Christ is both God and man; therefore if we receive our life from Him it will be both divine and human; or perhaps we might say, it will be the divine life infused in the human life and functioning through it; and that will be the perfect life, the life in God. It is reasonable that, since Christ in the beginning was with God and was God, He alone can impart to His rational creatures the truly complete life. The Scripture also teaches that "by Him were all things

made, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” So only the Creator of men and the universe that was made for him can give to him that fullness of life that will comport with his nature. Christ also lived the truly ethical and spiritual life, and therefore His was the only human life that was perfectly holy; therefore again He alone can bestow upon us the real eternal life.

The discussion of the text forms its own application. Let us try to secure and live the complete life, the victorious life — the only life that is truly worth living — the life that comes to us through faith in the atoning, risen and living Christ — the life that will never end. Amen.

## 30. Christ's Example In Suffering. 1 Peter 2:21-25. The Second Sunday After Easter.

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. (1 Peter 2:21-25)

ALL OF LAST YEAR we were following “in the Redeemer’s footsteps” through the Gospels. We are still following Him this year in the Epistles. Last year, for the most part, we followed Him in His teaching and doctrine; this year we are, in a large measure, trying to follow His inspiring example. A few weeks ago — it was the third “Sunday in Lent — we chose as our theme,” “The Divine Pattern,” in which we endeavored to point out a number of ways in which we are exhorted to imitate our Master. Today the Epistle enjoins us to follow in the Redeemer’s footsteps in the way of patient endurance. Christ set us an example in bearing trial and temptation. It is another lesson on “the mind of Christ,” which we also considered some Sundays ago. Then we were enjoined to cultivate His mind of humility; today we are taught to cultivate His mind in the patient bearing of trial.

The context of the lesson leads up naturally to the lesson itself. The apostle was urging upon servants the duty of patience in suffering. If they suffered for wrongdoing, their suffering would not be acceptable to God; but if they bore suffering patiently for doing the will of God, that kind of endurance would be pleasing to Him because it would prove that they had the patient, uncomplaining spirit of Christ. Then he goes on to say in the text: “You were called for this very purpose; for Christ, your Master, also

suffered for you, giving you an example, so that you might follow in His footsteps.” After which he proceeds to indicate a number of ways in which His example should be followed. While this is no new or novel theme, it is all-important. The question of human suffering is always a question that troubles many people, and often stirs serious doubts in their minds. It was a live question even in the days of Job; since his day it has been the theme of many a labored discussion; some taking the pessimistic view, while others looked on the brighter side, and, like Milton, tried to “justify the ways of God to man.” So recently as 1917 Principal P. T. Forsyth wrote a worthy book entitled “The Justification of God,” in which he tried to show that the great world war was no contradiction of the doctrine of the divine goodness and power. The Christian view of sorrow and suffering is the only view that affords both the intellect and the heart any satisfaction. May we learn today from our Lord Jesus Christ how to bear the trials of life! We will note —

## **I. His Moral Purity.**

The text says, “He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.” No historical fact is more wonderful than the sinlessness of Christ. There are some liberal theologians who are very inconsistent in their reasoning on this doctrine. They wish to eliminate the supernatural element from the person of Christ, holding that He was only a man, and at the same time they seem to regard Him as having been sinless. But why was Christ, among all the sons of men, the only one who was without sin? Was not His stainless character in itself a miracle? Was it not even a greater moral miracle if He was only human than it would have been if He was also divine? Is not His divinity the only adequate explanation of His perfect humanity? If He was God as well as man, then we can understand how it was possible for Him to live an immaculate life. Otherwise the marvel has no adequate explanation.

That Christ was sinless is taught both explicitly and implicitly in many places in the Holy Scriptures. He Himself challenged His accusers by saying, “Which of you convicteth me of sin?” He insisted on repentance for all men. He, Himself never repented. He exposed the errors of others but never made any correction of His own statements. The apostles again and again teach that He was without sin. The text says, “Who did no sin, neither was



guile found in His mouth.” He is called “the spotless Lamb of God.” Paul calls Him “Him who knew no sin.”

This is a beautiful statement regarding Jesus: “Neither was guile found in His mouth,” When we think of the teachings of Jesus, how true and genuine they were! No dissembling, no double-dealing, no equivocal expressions that might be interpreted in almost any way, as was the case with the ambiguous Delphic oracles. This intrepid and uncompromising honesty in his conduct and doctrine is one of the most winsome elements in His character, and it binds all honorable men to Him.

Now, comes the practical thought for us. Peter tells us that Christ gave us “an example, that we should follow in His footsteps.” Therefore we should try to follow Him as closely as we can in purity of life. He lived without sin and guile. Let us try to get His spirit, so that we, too, may eschew sin and speak without deception. Even though we may not be able always to live up to our Model, yet if we strive to imitate Him, we shall come nearer the perfect standard than we would if we set our aim lower. Whatever may be our attainment of ethical and spiritual character, we shall still see Him above us, beckoning us onward lovingly, and saying, “Follow Me.”

## **II. His Patient Endurance.**

If we could only follow in the Redeemer’s footsteps in this respect, how different would be our lives! How much greater would be our joy! How much more potent our influence! And what was the great virtue in which our Divine Exemplar excelled? “When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed His cause to Him that judgeth righteously.”

This is a life-like portrayal. Let us remember that Peter, who was with Christ in all His trials and persecutions, even to the time of His death, wrote these throbbing lines; he seems to linger over them lovingly, as if recalling vividly to mind how he had seen the Lord’s meek, uncomplaining, and forgiving conduct. No matter how much He was reviled by the mob and the Scribes and Pharisees, He did not answer in kind, but bore all their abuse without a word of resentment. On the cross He was mocked, insulted, and tortured with excruciating pain; yet He simply lifted His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!” With

what uncomplaining meekness He bore all His grief and obloquy! And to all we must add that His sufferings were vicarious; that He deserved none of them; that He did not endure them for Himself but for others. We must remember, too, that He was the God-man, and was therefore capable of enduring infinite pain, of which we can have no adequate conception.

In the spirit in which He bore His anguish, we, as His followers, should endeavor to imitate His example. And here is where we so often fail. Instead of bearing our trials patiently, we are prone to murmur at every hardship. Even if we do not have every luxury for the appetite, every material amenity and convenience, how often bitterness fills our hearts and complaint rises to our lips! And then, when we are wronged, we are apt to grow resentful, and to return evil for evil. When some one insults us, we want to pay him back in the same coin, and, if possible, even outdo him in the use of invective. Nothing is more common among people than the desire to “get even.” Many persons assert that they believe in “tit for tat.” In all these ways we fail to follow in the footsteps of our Redeemer, who never reviled again when He was maltreated. Oh, may we learn the lesson of patient endurance from our divine Model!

"Oh, who like Thee, so calm, so bright,  
So pure, so made to live in light?  
Oh, 'who like Thee did ever go  
So patient through a world of woe?"

"E'en death, which sets the prisoner free,  
Was pang, and scoff, and scorn to Thee;  
Yet love through all Thy torture glowed,  
And mercy with Thy life-blood flowed.

"Oh, in Thy light be mine to go,  
Illumine all my way of woe!  
And give me ever on the road  
To trace Thy footsteps, Son of God!"

### **III. His Unselfish Suffering.**

It becomes necessary here to pause to make a distinction. While we are to follow Christ as our example in the loving and forgiving spirit in which He

wrought and suffered, yet we must not think that we can duplicate everything that He did. He was unique in His person, being both divine and human; therefore He was able to do many things that are beyond mere human achievement and that were peculiar to His vocation. For example, He could perform miracles in His own name and by His own power. He could heal the sick by a word of command, because He knew all the resources of the remedial realm. He could raise the dead, because He was the resurrection and the life. He could give the world direct knowledge about the kingdom of heaven, because He came down from heaven and eternity, and therefore knew all about them. Some years ago the question, "What would Jesus do?" was widely discussed pro and con, and became a practical motto for a good many earnest Christian people. With proper qualifications, the question was a good one. Of course, where it would be necessary for Jesus to exert supernatural power, we could not make the question stated above our maxim; but in our ethical human life, in our temper and spirit and our conduct toward our fellowmen, it certainly would help us if we should stop now and then to put the question, "What would Jesus do if He were in these circumstances?" For instance, if He were insulted and maligned, what would He do? Well, we know what He would do because the gospels tell us of His temper and demeanor while He was here in the state of humiliation. So we must go to the inspired records to learn what Jesus would do.

These remarks have been made to prepare the way for the consideration of the next statement in our text, which is: "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died unto sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes we were healed."

Here we have the doctrine of the atonement again brought to the fore. But we know that we cannot make expiation for sin, either for our own or that of others. There is only one Mediator between God and man, and that is Jesus Christ. In this respect He is unique, sole, alone. The doctrine that any man by dying the death of a martyr or a patriot can make atonement for His sins, and thus earn salvation, is an utter heresy. It is a Mohammedan error and superstition, not a Christian doctrine. Take all the Christian martyrs, who died so heroically for their faith, and not one of them ever claimed that He was making satisfaction for His sins; but all of them proclaimed that they were dying for the sake of Him who had redeemed them with His own precious blood. If any person ever did enter heaven by His own merits, he could never join in the universal chorus of ascription of praise to "Him that

sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever.” Indeed, he would not understand the language of heaven. He would strut about and brag of his own deserts. Paul laid down his life for his faith when he was beheaded on the Capitoline Hill. Did he ever claim that such martyrdom would win for him the crown of life as a reward of merit? Indeed, no! On the other hand, he always proclaimed salvation by grace alone. He said, “We are justified freely by His grace.”

The doctrine of atonement receives a special emphasis and interpretation in the peculiar wording of the text. “He bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” The tree here, of course, refers to the cross. Note, the apostle does not say that He bore His own sins, but “our” sins. The very words used prove that Christ’s sufferings on the cross were substitutional. Why did he bear the sins of the world? Surely for no other purpose than to make expiation for them. No other exegesis of the passage is possible. If He simply went to the cross to display His love to mankind, then He did not bear their sins. The quarrel of the heresiarch is with the Bible, not with orthodox theology.

And why does the text say, “He bore our sins in His own body?” To show that it was the divine person suffering and dying through the human nature. This is a great and vital doctrine of theology. The two natures in Christ are so intimately joined by means of the personal union that both share in every mediatorial act. So in the atonement the divine nature endured the suffering in and through the human nature, because it was humanity that had sinned and whose sins were to be expiated. Had Christ been only human, His death could not have been efficacious for the sins of all the millions of the race. His divinity had to share in the atoning act to give it infinite value and efficacy. Had He been only divine, He could not have endured the suffering as man suffers, and therefore He could not have been man’s real substitute and representative. Depend upon it, God chose the right and rational way in devising and executing the plan of salvation.

The text teaches that the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross canceled sin, for it says, “that we, having died unto sins, should live unto righteousness.” The same doctrine is simply repeated in the next phrase, “By whose stripes ye were healed.” The meaning is certainly this: Since Christ took our place, and made expiation for our sins, if we accept His sacrifice in our behalf, we will die to our sins by having them pardoned and removed, and will live unto righteousness by virtue of the new life breathed into us by the Holy

Spirit. Thus we cannot accept Christ as our Saviour, and still live in sin. That would foil the very purpose of the death of Christ on the cross. The stripes that should have fallen upon us on account of our transgressions, come down upon Him, because He put Himself between us and the punishment that divine justice would have visited upon us. It is a beautiful, ethical and rational method of redemption.

Now, if we cannot follow Christ's example by making atonement for our own and others' sins, in What way can we follow in His steps? In being unselfish, as He was. We can emulate His spirit. If we must endure suffering, we can be like Him in our desire that our affliction may be of benefit to others. Did He die for the world? We surely can work for the world, and live to make it better and happier. In this way we shall help to "prove the doctrine all divine." If we display the unselfish spirit of Christ, the people of the world will know that we have been saved by His atoning death, and have received the power of His resurrection life. "O Lord, with sorrow and with shame, Before Thee we confess How little we, who bear Thy name, ThyI mind, Thy ways express. Give us Thy meek, Thy lowly mind; We would obedient be, And all our rest and pleasure find In learning, Lord, of Thee."

## **IV. His Enabling Grace And Power.**

To Peter there must have been something particularly winsome about Christ's vicarious sacrifice; for he bases the recovery of the Christians to whom he was writing upon that fact. No doubt he remembered Christ's saying: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Christ's unselfish abnegation has done more than anything else to win devoted followers. "The love of Christ constraineth us." "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." So Peter reminds his fellow-believers of what Christ's sacrifice on the tree had done for them; he says: "For ye were as sheep going astray (a paraphrase of Isa. 53:6), but are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." Before they had learned of Christ and His unselfish sacrifice for them, they had wandered away into sin like foolish sheep straying from the fold; but Christ's love had brought them back, so that now they were attached to Christ, and could follow Him as their "Shepherd and Overseer.

We learn this important concluding lesson. It is vain to think that we can stray away into sin and follow sinful pleasures, and at the same time have the Christ-like mind. The law must show us that we are sinners, and Christ by His sacrifice must show us the way of deliverance, and thus we must be led to repentance and faith; then, and then only, will we receive the ability to imitate the example of Christ. Let us not try to follow Christ afar off; let us join arms and hearts with Him, and then following in His footsteps will be a delight instead of a burden.

Long years ago Thomas à Kempis wrote a book called “The Imitation of Christ.” It is an inspiring book, giving a vivid portrayal of the beautiful spirit of Christ, and containing many reasons for modeling after Him. It seems to be breathed through and through with the mind of Christ, as a Kempis apprehended it. However, it lacks a solid basis of doctrine in several respects; it fails to do justice to the atonement as the basis of reconciliation with God, to union with Christ, called in theology the “mystical union,” to the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, and to the historical gospels as the only record of the life of the Saviour. Besides, it was written from the viewpoint of the cloister rather than from that of the practical person who must live in the world even while he is not of the world.

A better book, one better suited to modern life and its needs, is Dr. James Stalker’s “Imago Christi,” which means the imitation of Christ. In order to show the thoroughgoing character of this work, I will quote from it: “The death of Christ is ours, and we rest in it our hopes of acceptance with God in time and in eternity. This is what we begin with; but we do not end with it. We will go on from His death to His life, and, with the love begotten by being redeemed, try to reproduce that life in our own. In the same way, while glorying in His divinity, we will allow none to rob us of the attraction and the example of His humanity; for, indeed, the perfection of His humanity, with what this implies as to the value of His testimony about Himself, is the strongest bulwark of our faith that He was more than man.” Then Dr. Stalker, in a most impressive way, sets forth the value of Christ’s example in the many situations and exigencies of our diversified human life — in the home, the state, the Church, as a friend, in society, as a man of prayer, as a student of Scripture, as a worker, a sufferer, a philanthropist, a soul-winner, a preacher, a teacher, a controversialist, a man of feeling, and as an influence.

In all these ways Christ is our Model. Let us study His life carefully, accept His atoning sacrifice, imbibe His Spirit, and try to reproduce in our lives His spiritual and ethical qualities.

"Behold where in a mortal form  
Appears each grace divine!  
The virtues, all in Jesus met,  
With mildest radiance shine...

"Be Christ our Pattern and our Guide!  
His image may we bear!  
O may we tread His holy steps,  
His joys and glory share!"

# **31. More Practical Directions For Christian Living. 1 Pet. 2:11 — 20. The Third Sunday After Easter.**

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. (1 Peter 2:11-20)

THE OTHER DAY we were told of an incident which proves the practical value of the arrangement of lessons for the Christian Year by the Church. An aged woman, now too feeble to go to church services, reads the Psalm, the Collect and the Lesson for the day every morning. In that way she receives much comfort and help. How beautiful it is that the Church has thus provided for the comfort and edification of simple Christian people, who might otherwise find it difficult to select for their daily reading the choicest and most edifying portions of the Bible! A good plan for daily family worship would be to read the lessons selected for morning and evening, followed by an extemporized prayer or one of the devout prayers in the Common Service Book. On Sunday morning the appropriate Introit, Collect, Epistle,



Gradual and Gospel might be read. Such family worship would afford constant variety, and would surely heighten the spirit of devotion.

As an example, take the Epistle for today — what could be of greater practical value to all the members of the family than these pertinent directions for Christian living! Long before this time you have observed how practical the Epistles are. People who are afraid that the pericopes of the Church Year are too doctrinal, and contain too little of the practical, will certainly have their minds disabused of that error, if they will undertake to study them carefully and practice them in their lives. Today we will reflect together on some very practical maxims.

## **I. Abstinence From Fleshly Lusts.**

Peter prefaces his first exhortation with a significant address and statement. He says: “Beloved, I exhort you as strangers and pilgrims,” etc. He addresses the people of the churches affectionately. He does not try to “lord it over” them. It is a good example for preachers, who should address their people with both the feeling and the language of love, avoiding, of course, all display of gush and sentimentality. Sometimes a minister is tempted to deal harshly with his people, and even to exhibit some irascibility of temper. Then he excuses himself on the ground that the minister must speak plainly. Ah! but, in speaking plainly, he should always speak in the language of affection, never of anger and irritation; for, if he uses the latter, he will simply stir ill-will in his people instead of leading them to correct their ways. Read over the pericope for today, and find an example of how to speak plainly and yet graciously and without irritation or offense.

Note, again: Peter gives the motive for abstinence from fleshly lusts: “I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims.” The great commentator, Dr. J. P. Lange, says that the first word means “one who lives as a stranger or denizen in a country or community”; while the second refers to “one who stays in a place for a short time, like travelers on a journey.” Dr. F. W. Weidner in the Lutheran Commentary says: “The word sojourner emphasizes the idea that the home of the believer is in heaven; the word pilgrim that on earth he is a stranger.”

Now, my friends, you know that I do not preach a religion that is too other-worldly; that, in contemplating the future, forgets the practical

present; that dreams about coming bliss and neglects present duty. Indeed, that is not the religion of the Bible, for Paul expressly says that “godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” The Bible is full of exhortations to live well, nobly and practically in this world. Even while Christians are not to be of the world, they still are to be in the world. Christ put this apt petition into one of His prayers: “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from evil.” Thus Christian people are faithfully to perform their practical duties in the world and in the present life.

And yet is it not a fact, and not a mere matter of sentimentality, that we are only sojourners and pilgrims in this world? Nothing is clearer than that our residence here on earth is comparatively brief. Even though some of us should live to an old age, yet what is that compared with eternity? Think, for example, of Peter, who wrote this selection, even if he lived until he was seventy years old, how short that time was compared with the eighteen centuries and more that he has been dwelling with God in heaven! The same is true of all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs and saints. The like is true of ourselves. I am not appealing to you on the ground of sentimentality, but am stating a simple, everyday, unvarnished fact when I say that we are only strangers and pilgrims in this earthly life, and that our stay here is a very brief one.

This being true, do you wonder that the inspired apostle exhorted his fellow-travelers to “abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul?” The argument is irrefragable, as much as to say: Since life is so short and eternity so long, and since the soul must live forever, is it wise to indulge the fleshly lusts for a little temporary gratification, and so endanger the welfare of the soul throughout eternity? Nay, nay, that is absurdly foolish. Surely we ought to be able to resist temptation and deny ourselves the pleasures of sin for a little season for the sake of an eternal reward of bliss and glory. Said Calovius: “We are in body and soul expatriated; nothing is permanent on earth.” Therefore we should remember that lasting joys and riches are to be found only in our true home, which is the eternal city of God.

For our edification I shall give a few quotations from Lange’s great commentary. Here are several from Starke: “Pilgrim, how long dost thou stay at the inn? Yonder is thy fatherland. Away with the voluptuous joys of the vil-

lage through which thou art journeying. He that would be free from the breaking out of the lusts of the flesh must seize them by the root, and choke them in the beginning. Fleshly lusts, though they begin sweetly and are soothing to the heart, are the soul's inveterate enemies, and bring forth sin." From Leighton we select the following: "It was the high speech of a heathen that he was greater, and born to greater things, than to be a servant to his body; how much more ought he that is born again to say so, being born to bear the 'crown that fadeth not away!' Fleshly lusts: they war against the soul; and their war is made up of stratagem and sleight, for they cannot hurt the soul but by itself. They promise it some contentment, and so gain its consent to serve them and undo itself; they embrace the soul that they may strangle it."

Is it any wonder that the Bible so often warns us against the lusts of the flesh? Hear Paul: "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh; for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other." Again he says: "Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and religiously in this present world." To Timothy he wrote: "But flee youthful lusts, and follow after righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." John gives this admonition: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

Most wholesome is the next rule that our text lays down:

## **II. Seemly Behavior Among The Pagans.**

Both the authorized and the revised versions say "Gentiles." But the original word is "nations," and of course refers to the heathen people by whom the Christians were surrounded. The word "conversation" is not the best word; the original means "manner of life," hence behavior. And the word which we have translated "seemly" is good or beautiful, used here, as it is so often in the Holy Scriptures, in the ethical sense. Therefore the exhortation is that Christians should deport themselves in a becoming way before their pagan neighbors. They should walk worthy of their vocation as Christians. Their conduct should be befitting to their Christian profession. They should do nothing that would bring scandal on their holy religion. How of-

ten this entreaty occurs in the Word of God! Christians are to “have a good report of them that are without.” They must act so that “their good will not be evil-spoken of.” “Since they are the representatives of Christ, they should represent Him worthily. They should be careful never to misrepresent Him.

Then the reason for such consistent conduct is given: “So that, in the very things which they speak against you as evil-doers, they may, from the good works which they witness, glorify God in the day of your trial.” Surely that is salutary counsel. The pagans around them, like many people outside of the Church today, sought every occasion to find some slander against the Christians, thinking that, in that way, they would find an excuse for their own godless living; but Christians should circumvent their vile accusations by behaving all the more becomingly, and thus exemplify the holy and uplifting principles of their religion.

In the early days much obloquy was heaped upon the Christians. People often say, “Where there is so much smoke there must be some fire.” By that they mean that when so many evil things are said about people, there must be some basis of truth in it. But that is a faulty adage, and cannot be trusted. Many a lie “has been made out of whole cloth.” Some of you have been basely slandered when you were absolutely innocent of the evil charged against you. Tertullian informs us of the unfounded slanders that were circulated against the early Christians: “If the Tiber rises to the walls of the city, if the Nile does not irrigate the fields, if an earthquake takes place, if famine or pestilence arises, they cry forthwith: ‘Away with the Christians to the lions!’”

But many of the Christians must have lived down the aspersions that were heaped upon them; for many of the heathen people around them were converted, and the cause of Christ spread so rapidly that in three centuries it had to be tolerated throughout the Roman empire, and shortly afterward became the chief religion of the times. Justin the Martyr, according to Lange’s commentary, supplies an illustration of the effect of the good conduct of Christian people. “He confesses that, while he was still a heathen, he deemed it impossible that the Christians could be addicted to the unnatural vices of which they were accused, because they were so ready to die for Christ.” Perhaps it was this fact, as much as anything else, that brought about Justin Martyr’s conversion, and made him the staunch apologist of the Christian faith in the early days of Christianity. Thus Christian people

may, “by their good works, glorify their Father in heaven.” Again we quote some apt sayings from Starke: “The pious have always to endure slander; yet their best defense is not in their mouth or pen, but in their works and deeds. Calumnies are best contradicted if we prove by a holy conversation that they are untrue.”

### **III. Obedience To Constituted Authority.**

This part of the text may be divided into tWO sections: First, obedience to the authority of the government; second, obedience of servants to their masters.

#### **1. Obedience to the State.**

Says the text: “Be subject to every human institution for the Lord’s sake; whether to the king as supreme, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers and for praise to them that do well.”

Human governments are divine institutions, although the particular form of the government is of human devising. The New Testament nowhere prescribes a particular form of political government; but it does inculcate the doctrine that some form of government is necessary, and that, whatever that form is, Christians are to be obedient and law-abiding citizens. We must remember the peculiar situation in which the early Christians were placed in the Roman empire. It was a common slander against them (see Lange’s commentary) that they were dangerous to the State, and aimed at the overthrow of all laws; therefore it was all the more necessary for the inspired apostle to exhort the Christians of his day to be submissive to the secular authority, and not to abuse their “Christian liberty. They were to do this” for the Lord’s sake” — not merely because they were compelled; but much more because they desired to honor their Lord and Master. “For this is the will of God,” says Peter, “that with well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.” If they were obedient to the statutes, they would close the mouths of those pagans who ignorantly accused them of being seditionists.

At this point Peter makes an acute ethical distinction. He says that Christians are to “live as free men, and yet must not use their freedom as a cloak

of wickedness, but as servants of God.” That is a fine discrimination that many men even today, wise as they think themselves, are unable to make or understand. They boast of their freedom, but do not know how to use it. They mistake liberty for lawlessness and license, which means the right to do as one pleases, whether it is beneficial to himself and others, or harmful. The so-called liberty of anarchism is the veriest bondage, the most galling thralldom. Only the liberty that is regulated by wise laws is worthy of the name. Let any country once lose its regard for law, and give itself up to anarchy, and see how much freedom there will be left. Then the good people will be at the mercy of the lawless and unprincipled, while the wicked will be bound in the chains of their own lawless passions. No; good laws are the only guarantee of both civil and religious liberty.

We have frequently dwelt, in these discourses, on the law-abiding and patriotic qualities of true Christian people. This thought was especially expanded in Sermon 24 of Volume II [No. 61. Man’s Civil and Religious Obligations in *In the Redeemer’s Footsteps* — Ed.]; so we need not tarry here, save to say that Christ never lent Himself to sedition. Even when He was brought before Pilate and the Sanhedrin, His enemies could prove nothing against Him, but had to suborn witnesses to testify falsely against Him. Those who have studied the legal phases of His trial know that it was technically and morally a mis-trial; that even according to the laws of the state at the time, He was illegally sentenced and executed. It was a miscarriage of justice. Even then Jesus submitted, used no force, forbade His servants to resort to the sword in His behalf, and would not pray, as He might have done, for a legion of angels to intervene. So He set us an example of patient endurance.

Peter closes this part of the lesson with sundry wholesome directions: “Do honor to all, love the brotherhood, reverence God, honor the emperor” (Moffat’s translation). What good citizens of both the State and the Church Christian people would be if they would heed these injunctions!

## **2. Obedience to masters.**

“Servants, be subject to your masters in all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward; for this is acceptable, if anyone through conscience toward God endures griefs, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is

it, if in sinning and being buffeted, ye endure? But if, in doing good and suffering, ye endure — this is acceptable with God.”

Very important directions these — but we have not the time to dwell upon them. They speak for themselves. In other places in the Scriptures the duties of masters are pointed out, and thus the proper balance between servants and masters is kept. As long as society is so constituted that there must be employers and employees, that long Christians belonging to both classes must treat one another with love and fidelity. You can easily see that, if this Christian regime were carried out, there would be no clashes among the various segments of society. Indeed, all would take an interest in the rest, and there would be neither oppression on the one side, nor envy on the other. Meanwhile, as long as there are wicked and unmerciful people in the world, Christians must be patient and forbearing, and must try to win even their enemies and abusers to Christ. These are high ideals, and some people may think they impose hard duties; but the Christian must not be daunted by difficult tasks. He must “be a hero in the strife.” Remembering “the great cloud of witnesses” who compass us about and who have been faithful in trial, we Christians must “run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.”

"My soul, be on thy guard;  
Ten thousand foes arise;  
The hosts of sin are pressing hard  
To draw thee from the skies.

"Oh, watch, and fight, and pray:  
The battle ne'er give o'er;  
Renew it boldly every day,  
And help divine implore.

"Ne'er think the victory won,  
Nor lay thine armor down;  
Thine arduous task will not be done  
Till thou obtain thy crown.

“Fight on, my soul, till death  
Shall bring thee to thy God;  
He'll take thee at thy parting breath  
To His divine abode.”

# 32. Whence Come All Good Things? James 1:16-21. The Fourth Sunday After Easter.

Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:16-21)

OUR LESSON for today is found in the epistle of James. Many people think that James was wholly practical, while Paul was very doctrinal. So they affect to prefer James to Paul. But this is an error. A study of the epistle of James proves that he enunciated very profound doctrines, and based his practical conclusions and counsels upon them just as Paul did.

The text introduces us to a most vital Christian doctrine at the very start. It says: "Be not misled, my beloved brethren." In what respect? On the doctrine of the origin of sin, on the one hand, and of the source of the good, on the other. In the preceding verses the apostle said: "Let no one, being tempted, say, I am tempted from God; for God is not tempted by evil, and He himself tempts no one. But each one is tempted by his own lust, being drawn away and allured; then lust, having been conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin having been finished, brings forth death." Is not that a statement of doctrine? Yes; and the doctrine of the origin of evil is one of the profoundest doctrines of Christian theology; and it has a most practical bearing on character. One's whole life will be affected by his conception of the gen-



esis of sin. On this doctrine James was very anxious that there should be no mistake. He taught that, so far from being the author of evil —

## **I. God Is The Source Of All Good Things.**

### **1. The good things described.**

There has been some difference of opinion as to the interpretation of the first part of the text; but the simple words give their own interpretation. James had said that no evil comes from God; now he teaches that all good things come from Him. This is the way he puts it: “All good giving and every perfect gift are from above, coming down. from the Father of lights.” The first phrase teaches that God is the source of all good giving, whether it be divine or human. In Him is the original and eternal disposition to give what is good, and hence He inspires every inclination to beneficence in His rational creatures. Do you and I desire to do good to our fellowmen? We must not think that that disposition comes from ourselves; no, it comes from God, who put it into our hearts. Yes, all altruistic impulses come from the original source of all good, for God is a benevolent God. This is proved in all the gifts of His providence, and more especially in the gift of His Son for the redemption of the world.

But out of this loving disposition come the perfect gifts — life, joy, peace, freedom, faith, hope, love. How this fact binds us to God! If you sincerely believe and experience that no evil comes from Him, but only good, you will love, serve and trust Him, and give Him the uppermost place in your life. Thus you observe how practical is the doctrine of the text.

### **2. The Giver described.**

The Giver of all good giving and every perfect gift is graphically described in the text. He is called “the Father of lights.” This is an unexpected turn of thought, but it is also most inspiring. What could be more germane than to call the author of all good “the Father of lights”? That is, He is the source of all light, whether it be the beautiful light of nature or the gracious light of moral and spiritual truth. He dwelleth in the pure light which no man can approach. In Him there is no darkness. Hence whatever light we have

comes from Him. In the spiritual realm light is used as a figure of speech to designate knowledge and truth. If we walk in that kind of light, as Jesus said, we shall not stumble nor fall. It is the people who live in uncertainty and doubt who are always stumbling over difficulties — difficulties in nature, in the ways of providence, in the Bible, in the plan of salvation.

The text also describes the heavenly Giver as being without “variation or shadow of turning.” That means that God is immutable; there is in His character not even the shadow of turning from one thing to another; He is “the same yesterday, today and forever.” Therefore we can rely upon His constancy in the giving of good gifts.

### **3. One of His best gifts.**

What is one of the best gifts that God has bestowed upon us as His children? It is the gift of the new birth. Therefore James says in the next sentence of the text: “Of His own will He begat us by the Word of truth, to the end that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” Whatever temporal and even spiritual blessings God might bestow upon us, all would be valueless if He did not breathe His Spirit into us and make us new creatures, so that we can appreciate Him and the kindness He shows, and so that we may be like Him in character. The fact is, all other good gifts are wrapped up in that gift. The new birth was, brought about by an act of His own will, not by our act. Man, who is dead in trespasses and sins, cannot put life into his own soul.

But the Holy Spirit uses means to accomplish the new birth; the text says, “by the Word of truth.” That Word we now have in the Holy Scriptures. Thus the Holy Spirit uses the Word as His chief instrument by which to reach and regenerate the soul. We may well mistrust the genuineness of any conversion, or any professed conversion, that is not brought about through the Word of God. And that Word’s regenerating power consists in the very fact that it is “the truth.” Error blights, but truth blesses, the soul.

And what does the apostle mean when he says that those who have been born again are “the firstfruits of His creatures?” He means that regenerated people are the beginning of the redemption of His whole creation. As is taught in the eighth chapter of Romans, the whole creation is awaiting and groaning until the time comes that it can be redeemed with the children of God and into the liberty that they enjoy. Every regenerated man is a

prophecy of the glorification which the physical cosmos shall itself receive in “the restitution of all things,” when “there shall be new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

## **II. Some Practical Inductions From The Foregoing Facts.**

James goes on to say, “Ye know this, my beloved brethren” — that is, that God is the Giver of all good; therefore you should conduct yourselves in such a way as to prove yourselves His true children. What are some of the elements of such behavior?

### **1. We should be swift to hear.**

Certainly if God gives us His Spirit through the Word of truth, we should be swift and anxious to hear. That is just the trouble with many people; they are such poor listeners. Often they want to talk so much themselves that they will not let God speak through His Word to their souls. The Psalmist said, “While I mused the fire burned,” meaning that while he sat quietly and meditated on the Word of God, the Holy Spirit was performing His sanctifying work in his soul. Ah, yes! it is good sometimes to heed the divine precept, “Be still, and know that I am God.” There is a place for silent meditation in God’s house, when we may hear the gracious words: “The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him.” Soul, be still before God sometimes, and let Him speak to thee.

### **2. We should be slow to speak.**

Excellent advice! In view of the vast amount of chatter and gossip, of idle and frivolous talk, and of mere talking for the sake of talking, when people have nothing profitable to say, this precept is particularly germane. “Slow to speak” here does not mean to be slow of speech, but to wait until you have thought sufficiently on a subject to master it, so that when you open your mouth, you will be able to say something profitable. In his epigrammatic way, Luther said: “Blessed is the man whose mouth is in his heart, and

whose heart is not in his mouth.” In the former case he will wait till he has something worth saying; in the latter case he will babble about the first thing, no matter how trifling, that comes to his mind.

### **3. We should also be slow to wrath.**

“For,” says the text, “the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” How true it is that man’s anger does not promote God’s righteous rule in the world! Because men do not control their angry passions we have all kinds of strife in the world, jealousies, bickerings and wars. Says some one pithily: “It is impossible that the bitter root of wrath can produce the sweet fruit of righteousness.”

### **4. We should put away all sin.**

The apostle here uses one of his logical “wherefores.” In view of the facts previously recited, he says: “Wherefore, laying aside all pollution and superabundance of wickedness, with meekness receive the ingrafted Word.” Dean Alford’s interpretation of this passage is that whatever pollutes and chokes the soil should be removed, so that the seed of God’s Word can be planted and given a chance to grow. God’s Word cannot thrive in the heart that cherishes the corrupting and preoccupying weeds, thorns and thistles of sin. This reference makes us think of Christ’s parable of the sower, in which He represents some of the seed as falling among thorns and thistles, which grew up and choked it. My brethren, if the word of God is to purify and fertilize our hearts, it must have the right of way. Therefore —

### **5. We should humbly receive the divine word.**

Having cleared away the weeds of sin, let us receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls. This is a very suggestive precept. Every word is valuable. We should receive the Word; our minds should be open to its reception, just as soil should be mellow in order to receive the seed into its very substance. We should receive it with meekness. That means with a docile or teachable spirit. It is right to be critical, and to avoid credulity; but it is also a fact, proven again and again in the history of the world, that those people who humbly permit God’s Word to come into

their souls are the ones who are regenerated and sanctified by it and who receive the absolute assurance of its truth. It is called the Word. We agree with Dr. Lange that the Word here “means the objective gospel, not the inner light of the mystics.” The very word used for receive proves that it is something that must be received from without before it can become subjective. Luther says that it is neither “innate nor connate reason.” No; it is not something in the natural heart; it must be divinely given. It is called the implanted or ingrafted Word. The objective gospel must be put into the heart just as seed must be planted in the soil. That is what God promises to those who are receptive of His truth (Heb. 8:10): “I will put my’ laws into their mind, and on their heart also will I write them.” Said one of the prophets: “Thy word have I hidden in my heart that I might not sin against Thee.”

Now the apostle says of the implanted word that it “is able to save your souls.” This is a wonderful Word. Do you know of any other word that has such power? Many human words may stimulate and inform the intellect, stir the emotions, and incite the will, but none of them can save the soul. And how is it that this effect is the sole function of the Word of God? The explanation is not far to seek: The Holy Scriptures are the inspired Word of God; they are breathed through and through with His Spirit; hence, when that Word comes into the soul, it is not like an ordinary human word; it is a divinely empowered Word, a living Word, which is able to banish sin and impart a new life of holiness.

Perhaps the words of our text were addressed to regenerate persons — those who, as the text says, had been “begotten by the Word of truth.” Still the exhortation to receive with meekness the ingrafted Word was impressed upon them. Yes, Christian people need more and more of the Word of God. In conversion we receive only the beginning of the Christian life. That life must be developed. We must grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. Leaving the first principles, or the rudiments, we must go on to perfection. “The development of spiritual life is ever conditioned on the use of the means of grace. The preaching of the gospel is a constant watering of the seed of regeneration already planted in us.”

Now let us sum up what we have learned today: God is the author of all good and of no evil; He is unchangeable, so that we can always rely on Him to give good things to them that ask Him (Matt. 7:9 — 11, Luke 11:11-13); one of His greatest gifts is regeneration through the Word of truth; therefore we ought to be swift to hear His word, careful in speech, slow to grow an-

gry, anxious to lay aside all wickedness, and lastly glad to receive His precious Word into our hearts like good seed to the saving and enrichment of our souls. May the Holy Spirit enable us to heed all these vital injunctions. Amen.

# **33. Hearing And Doing. James 1:22-27. The Fifth Sunday After Easter.**

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. (James 1:22-27)

SOME ONE has given an apt analysis of the text for today, which relates to hearing and doing the Word of truth of which we spoke last Sunday. There are "three classes of men," says this writer: "1. Those who neither hear nor do the Word; 2. Those who hear it, but do it not; 3. Those who both hear and do it." We hope that all of us belong to the last-named class. Our lesson today is very practical, and connects directly with last Sunday's lesson. After the apostle had said, "Receive with meekness the engrafted Word," he added the first verse of today's selection: "But be ye doers of the Word, and not only hearers, deluding your own selves." This will introduce us to our theme, "Hearing and Doing."

## **I. The Importance Of Hearing.**

In last Sunday's lesson, James laid emphasis on hearing. He said in reference to the Word of truth, "Let every one be swift to hear." Afterward he said, "Receive ye with meekness the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls." To receive the Word into the mind and heart requires attentive

hearing. In the text today he puts it, “and not hearers only,” implying that hearing is also necessary. In this teaching, James agrees with Christ, who said, “Take heed how ye hear;” “Take heed what ye hear;” “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Paul also said: “How shall they believe on Him of whom they have not heard? ...So faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ.” One of the prophets spoke thus to Israel, “Hear, O house of Israel, and your soul shall live.”

We lay emphasis on this point, because some persons might think that hearing is of little value, and that doing is the only important matter. Some one might say: “I will let others go to church and listen to the preaching, while I do good works.” Some time ago we heard of a woman who said: “I am kind to the poor; that is my religion instead of going to church.” All such talk is narrow and one-sided. This woman should have said: “I try to live a complete Christian life; therefore I go to church to hear God’s Word and worship Him, and then I try to practice it by being kind to the poor.” In her one-sided way she did only a part of her religious duty, and then bragged about it, and, like a Pharisee, tried to make out that she was better than other people. Is it not true that the people who go to church services faithfully and listen attentively to the gospel, are as a rule kind to the poor? Are they not the ones who, for the most part, keep up our benevolent institutions? When a needy cause is to be promoted, where do its advocates usually go for help? To the church people. The fact is, so many appeals for help come to the church constantly that, if church-going people did not exercise care and common sense in their giving, they would soon be so impoverished that others would have to help them.

Besides, how do people learn the principles of our holy religion? By reading and hearing the gospel. So let everything be placed in its order. The religion of Christ is not a hodge-podge affair; it is an ordered system. Therefore hearing goes first, and is all-important; then comes doing, which is no less important. Christ, after teaching His disciples, said: “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”

## **II. The Importance Of Doing.**

While last Sunday the chief emphasis was laid upon hearing and receiving the Word of truth, today the chief stress is laid upon the practice of the



Word.

## **1. The delusion of mere hearing.**

“Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves.” The word for “deluding” is a strong word in the original, and means “ensnaring.”

Is there any danger that people may think that hearing God’s Word is sufficient, and thus may deceive themselves? I am afraid it is only too true that some do this very thing. They go to the church service and listen to the sermons, but really do nothing to extend God’s kingdom. There is such a thing as becoming quite expert in listening to sermons and criticizing them, without even trying to perform the duties urged in the Scriptures. This is a very subtle species of self-delusion. Christ compares the person who hears His sayings without doing them, to a person who builds his house upon the sand, only to see it blown down by the storms and undermined by the floods; while the person who both hears and performs is like a person who builds on a rock foundation, which the storms and floods cannot destroy.

## **2. The folly of mere hearing.**

Here the apostle uses a telling simile. He compares the non-doing hearer to a person who looks at his face in a mirror, then goes away and forgets what kind of a looking man he was. Perhaps the mirrors in those days — at least the ones to which St. James referred — were very poor reflectors, and would distort a man’s visage, so that in a short time he forgot how he appeared. Just so, when a man hears the truth with a careless, distorting mind, in a short time he forgets all about the duties that were enjoined. Many people are good forgetters. The priest and Levite who “passed by on the other side” must have forgotten the lessons that they had just conned in the services of the temple.

## **3. The vanity of mere hearing.**

The text here points out a specific case: “If any man seems to be religious among you, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his heart, the religion of that one is vain.” This may be applied this way: If a person goes to

church services, listens to the reading and preaching of the Word of God, and yet fails to control his speech, and is harsh, gossiping, angry or profane, that man's religion goes for naught; he either deceives himself, or tries to deceive others. The Word of God has much to say about the sins of the tongue. James says that if a man is able to control the tongue, it is likely he will have complete mastery of himself. He calls the tongue an "unruly member." All these injunctions ought not only to be heard, but also heeded.

So we can see from the foregoing what is to be our relation to the sermons we hear. Some people seem to think the chief object of church-going is to be pleased and entertained, to have the ears tickled with sweet, honeyed and eloquent speech. Others set themselves up as critics, feeling quite competent to tear a sermon to pieces. True, there are some poor sermons. But, with all their faults, let it be remembered that the chief object of sermons is to produce the right kind of practice. There is not too much preaching, but too little practice in proportion to the amount of preaching that is done.

### **III. The Blessedness Of Both Hearing And Doing.**

#### **1. Another Kind of Mirror**

The apostle had spoken about the man who glances into a poor mirror in a careless way, and soon forgets how he looked, and compares him to the non-doing hearer. But now he thinks of another kind of mirror — a good kind, one that gives a vivid and perfect reflection. This mirror is the Word of God, which he calls "the perfect law of liberty." The Word, which in last Sunday's lesson he called the "Word of truth" and the "implanted Word," is here called "the law of liberty," because God's Word is the truth, and the truth makes men free. Now if a person heedfully looks into this mirror, and keeps on looking, he will soon see himself as he is; then, if he needs repentance, he will go to God with contrition; if he needs faith, he will ask God to confer it; if he ought to do any special work for Christ and His cause, he will find his duty clearly set forth, and will perform it.

Yes, the Bible is a wonderful looking-glass. It neither flatters nor distorts our moral condition, but represents us just as we are. No wonder it trans-

forms character and renews life. A man, in company with his wife, began to read the Bible at the evening hour. The first evening's reading made him uneasy, and he said: "Wife, if this book is true, we are sinners." The next evening he read further, and his conviction was intensified, so that he exclaimed: "Wife, if this book is true, we are lost sinners." The following evening he continued his reading; but presently he cried joyfully: "Wife, if this book is true, we may be saved!" And the couple knelt down, and committed themselves to a loving and forgiving Saviour. Oh! the good old Book is a wonderful mirror. How wholesome it is to see ourselves therein just as we are, and then go to God to make us just what we ought to be!

## **2. The Beauty of Activity in Religion**

In still another way the text points out the beauty of activity in religion: "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their tribulation, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." We do not see how the inspired writer could have put it more forcefully and rhythmically.

To visit orphans and widows in their tribulation is one of the choicest modes of expressing or exemplifying "pure and undefiled religion." It is not religion itself, for religion in its essence is not an outward act, but an inner principle. However, to do good to the poor and needy — orphans and widows here stand for all kinds of needy people — proves that the religion of Him who "went about doing good" has really taken possession of the doer's heart, and impels him by its inner force of love.

But outward acts of beneficence, good as they are as indices, are not the whole of the Christian religion. No; there must also be ethical purity; therefore the apostle adds, "and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." That is the true character of the teaching of the Bible; it is never partial, fragmentary and one-sided. In this text, as everywhere else, the Holy Book requires the inward ethics as well as the outward expression of it. We may readily imagine a man who, having a naturally kind disposition, is generous to the poor, and yet who is otherwise corrupt. In days gone by, highwaymen would sometimes rob the rich, and then give a part of their booty to the poor. Were they Christians? Perhaps they tried to salve their consciences by their gifts; but all such devices are in vain. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." People cannot play off one Christian virtue against another. The

virtues are all marked “non-transferable.” Christian people must be “unspotted from the world” as well as kind to orphans and widows. Then, and then only, will their religion be acceptable to God. The first commandment is to love God; but no one can love Him while his garments are polluted with the filth of sin. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Let us remember this fundamental fact of the Christian religion — that no number of outwardly good deeds can make amends for a life that is defiled by sin.

But when one is unspotted from the world, purified from its pollution by the blood of the atonement and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, and then, out of love for God and humanity, freely gives aid to suffering people, then indeed does he have a religion that is acceptable to God. May all of us strive after such a life! Amen.

# 34. By The Right Hand Of God Exalted. Acts 1:1-11. The Ascension Of Our Lord.

The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. (Acts 1:1-11)

WISELY does the Church invite her people to come together to celebrate the Ascension of our Lord. As we pointed out last year (see Sermon 35, “The Ascended Lord at Work” in *In the Redeemer’s Footsteps* ), this event was just as vital a link in the plan of salvation as any other event in the redemptive history. Later, we shall call attention again to its essential character and meaning.

The Epistle for the day is written in the first chapter of the Acts, the first eleven verses. It is an appropriate selection, for it tells us of some important pre-ascension facts, then of the ascension itself, and lastly of the post-ascension promise. These points we shall unfold in their proper order.

# I. The Pre-Ascension Facts.

## 1. The initial nature of Jesus' earthly work.

All of us know who wrote the Acts of the Apostles. It was Luke. He also wrote the gospel which is known by his name. He refers to this fact in the opening sentence of the Acts: "The first account I gave, indeed, O Theophilus, concerning all the things which Jesus began to do and to teach." Now turn to the opening verses of the gospel according to Luke, and you will find that it is addressed to the same person, Theophilus. It is important for the doctrine of the inspiration and authority of the Bible to know that Luke was the writer of the Acts, but we need not go into that discussion this morning. We are concerned especially with Luke's expression, "Which Jesus began to do and to teach." In that word "began" an important doctrine is implied. It means that Jesus during His earthly career only began His great work and teaching. He wrought out a perfect righteousness and made a perfect atonement for us by His active and passive obedience, so that we might have pardon and reconciliation with God. But, vital and foundational as that work was, it was only part of His plan. He also arose from the dead, ascended to the right hand of God and was glorified with all the divine fullness, so that He could be present everywhere in His whole divine-human person, and thus work directly and by the Holy Spirit in applying redemption and carrying on the progress of His kingdom. It is said in Mark 16:20: "And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them," etc. So Christ, being present with them, as He had promised, wrought with and through them. In Acts 2:47 we read, "And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved." Thus we see that the ascended Lord was still at work continuing what He had begun in the state of humiliation. So with His teaching: during His earthly life He taught the fundamental things; then through the Holy Spirit He continued to teach and guide His apostles, so that they gave us the whole body of Christ's doctrine as we have it in the New Testament. The text says clearly that, until the day of His ascension, He gave "commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen." That is, He commanded them to preach and teach the gospel message, and then added reassuringly: "And, lo, I am with you

always, even unto the end of the world.” And, thanks be to His name, He is still with His people, working side by side with them and in their hearts!

## **2. The infallible proofs of His resurrection.**

To his apostles “He showed Himself alive after His passion by many proofs, appearing unto them during forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God.” You see, Jesus was never idle. Even during the period of His burial He “descended into hell” to proclaim His victory over the devils there, and render them less powerful in injuring His saints. Then during those forty days, the interim between His resurrection and ascension, He appeared again and again to His apostles to assure them that He was the Messiah. Had He not thus appeared to them, they could not have been sure that He was the true Saviour, who would always be present with them. So we today, having the sure testimony of faithful and competent eye-witnesses, who were willing to die for their doctrines, may be absolutely assured by the historical fact of the resurrection that Jesus is the world’s Messiah.

## **3. The promise of the Holy Spirit.**

Before Christ ascended into the invisible realm, He told His disciples to tarry at Jerusalem for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Twice in this wonderful interview He gave them this promise. Note that even then they were looking for something else, something more worldly; for they asked Him: “Lord, dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” How crass and unspiritual they were! Though John the Baptist and Christ Himself had promised them the Holy Spirit’s baptism, yet they were thinking of an earthly kingdom. Their very ignorance and lack of faith make their subsequent conduct and spiritual power all the more wonderful, and furnish all the stronger proof that their religion came from God and not from their own devising.

Replying to their irrelevant question, Christ said: “It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath placed in His own authority.” Yet there are people today who are ever trying to figure out the times and the seasons! How much precious time they waste! Would it not be better to have more concern about what Jesus said next? “But ye shall receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you.”

That was what they needed, spiritual power, not ability to untangle curious questions, nor a part in some great earthly establishment. And, my brethren, that is what the Church needs today, just as much as the apostolic Church did — the baptism of the Holy Spirit. She needs it to save her from worldliness, to keep her from becoming a mere instrument of social, economical and civic propaganda. Let the prayer of each and all of us be this:

“Holy Ghost, with light divine  
Shine upon this heart of mine;  
Chase the shades of night away,  
Turn the darkness into day.”

## **II. The Ascension Itself.**

“And when He had said these things, as they were looking, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight.”

### **1. The meaning of the cloud.**

Every event in the career of Christ had a significance, a divine reason. There were no mere episodes in the history of redemption. What, then, was the meaning of the cloud into which our ascending Lord disappeared? Did it come floating along on the air at that particular moment by mere accident? Why were not the apostles permitted to see the Lord ascend all the way to heaven and up to the right hand of God? Our reply is: to have drawn aside the veil that separates between the visible and invisible realms would have served no practical purpose, but would simply have gratified human curiosity. God knows that it is better for men to wait until they enter the spiritual sphere before they are introduced to its mysteries. While we are here in the flesh, we have practical work to do, and therefore we should not waste our time in looking up into heaven and beholding its marvels. Shall we not have ample opportunity throughout eternity to contemplate them? Do we want to know all about heaven before we get there?

More than that, the sudden disappearance of Christ in the cloud corresponds with God's dealing with us in many other ways, so far as regards insoluble mysteries. Take our knowledge of matter. We can know a great deal about its phenomena, but when we seek to penetrate into its inner essence,



suddenly an obstruction intervenes, and we can see no further. So with mind. We study its phenomena, and know a good deal about its faculties or functioning powers, the intellect, the feeling, the will; but when we ask, “What is mind?” again our vision is abruptly shut off — a case of the intervening curtain of cloud again. Thus we are led to believe that God has not thus far intended us to look into mysterious depths in a gradual perspective, but rather to have our vision suddenly cut off. Why? So that we will not spend too much time in speculation, in gazing up into heaven, but will keep our eyes on the practical work of life. It is better to receive the Holy Spirit’s baptism, then go forth to bear witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth, than to have beatific visions and indulge in theosophical flights.

## **2. Meaning of the ascension.**

Briefly, the ascension of Christ meant that He was exalted above the limitations of mere earthly life and time and space to the transcendent realm, so that, instead of being in only one place at one time, He could be everywhere present with His people at all times. “He ascended,” says Paul, “far above all the heavens that He might fill all things.” That is, He became transcendent that He might be immanent. He ascended to the right hand of God, and the right hand of God is everywhere. Thus by virtue of the ascension of Christ’s person, His human nature partaking of the glorification, He is able to be with us “alway, even unto the end of the world.” We have a present, living, abiding Christ, who constantly sheds upon us the Holy Spirit and comforts us in our sorrows. It is Christ Himself, the incarnate Son of God, who is present, not merely His deity. What a comfort to know that He who “dwelt in mortal clay,” and experienced all our infirmities, and hence knows just how we feel under all circumstances, is our constant Companion along the way of life, saying to us, “Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God and believe in Me!”

The ascension was also paramount in the plan of salvation because, until Christ was lifted out of His state of humiliation and the limitations of space and time, and exalted to the fullness of divine power and glory, He could not pour forth upon His Church all the plenitude of divine grace and power. After Christ ascended, the Holy Spirit took of the things of the glorified Christ, and communicated them to His disciples. That is the reason their

preaching on and after Pentecost was fraught with so much evangelical efficacy. God's whole redemptive plan is integral, and all parts are vital to it.

### III. The Post-Ascension Promise.

We do not wonder that the disciples stood in rapture on the summit of Mount Olivet, gazing up into the heavens whence their Lord had disappeared. We would have done the same. But they could not remain there. Work was to be done, and their contemplations had to be broken. Presently two men in white apparel stood by them. No doubt they were angels who assumed human form in order that the disciples might see them and understand their speech. The angels said: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in like manner as ye beheld Him going into heaven."

So the ascension is not the end. Had we not the assurance of the angels, we might think that the dispensation of the Holy Spirit is the final dispensation. But not so. The Holy Spirit will continue His work until once more "the fullness of time" shall come, and then Jesus will again appear in time and space and in visible form to judge the world. Then, however, He will not appear in the lowly guise of a servant, but in His exalted and glorified form; then "we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

And that, my brethren, is the practical lesson for Ascension Day. Christ was exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high for the very purpose of preparing us by His power, grace and Spirit, for eternal communion and residence with Him in His glory. Having all authority both in heaven and on earth, He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

"Hark! ten thousand harps and voices  
Sound the note of praise above;  
Jesus reigns and heaven rejoices;  
Jesus reigns, the God of love.  
See! He sits on yonder throne;  
Jesus rules the world alone.

“Saviour, hasten Thine appearing;  
Bring, O bring the glorious day,  
When, the awful summons hearing,  
Heaven and earth shall pass away;  
Then, with golden harps, we’ll sing,  
‘Glory, glory to our king.’”

# **35. Stewards Of The Manifold Grace Of God. 1 Pet. 4:7-11. The Sunday After The Ascension.**

But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:7-11)

THIS IS A BEAUTIFUL EXPRESSION, “Stewards of the Manifold Grace of God,” taken from the midst of the lesson for today. Around it we can assemble the chief thoughts of the passage. The grace of God is indeed “manifold.” How diverse are the gifts of the Spirit and the virtues of the Christian life! A few Sundays ago we learned that all good things “come from above, from the Father of lights.” So all our gifts and enduements are derived, not from ourselves, nor from any other earthly source, but from God. “What hast thou that thou didst not receive?” Now of all this manifold divine grace we are honored as stewards. You may say that this fact involves a good deal of responsibility. And so it does. But that is God’s tribute to us as His disciples, and we should bravely perform our part, and never be daunted or dismayed.

Our subject may be divided into a “How” and a “Why.” Let us reflect, on the “How” first.

## **I. How The Lord’s Stewards Should Deport Themselves.**

### **1. They should be sober-minded.**

In beginning this paragraph Peter said: “The end of all things has drawn near: therefore be sober-minded.” It might be translated, “Be of a sound mind.” I wish to direct your attention to this trait of character in true stewards of God — that is, the followers of Christ. They are sober-minded people, not wild, fanatical, fantastical, superstitious, apt to follow every vagary, and to be carried away “with every wind of doctrine.” They are people who think. They are not gullible, not easily deceived. They require clear and satisfactory proof of every proposition before accepting it. In a good sense, they are conservative. They do not run after every new fashion in dress, or pleasure, or thought. A new scientific hypothesis must prove itself factual and rational before they will accept it. Their motto is announced by Paul: “Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good.” They remember also the caution of the Master: “Beware of false prophets.” Also the advice of John: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God.” When Paul stood before Festus, who accused him of being mad, the apostle replied: “I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.” In one place Paul exhorts Christ’s disciples to be “of a sound mind.” Whenever you know of people becoming fanatical, and losing their moderation, depend upon it, they are departing from the soberness of the Christian faith.

## **2. They should be watchful unto prayer.**

The true steward often consults his employer. In the vital matter of his eternal well-being, how important it is for the Christian to go to his divine Employer frequently to ask direction in the conduct of his affairs! “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”

## **3. They should love one another.**

Peter is very emphatic in regard to this matter, for he says: “But before all things, have fervent love among yourselves, because love will cover a multitude of sins.” You see, it is this way: we Christians are stewards of the manifold grace of God; but suppose we cannot agree among ourselves, but engage in unseemly wrangling, do you think that we will succeed in promoting His cause? Instead of working for Him faithfully, how unbecoming and wicked it is to spend our time and energy in fighting one another! Oh!

there is nothing that so handicaps the progress of religion as strife among the professed stewards of God. On the other hand, where fervent love prevails, there will be unity of plan and concert of effort, and the cause will go forward rapidly.

And what “a multitude of sins” true Christian charity will cover? First, it will not publish to the world every wrong thing that a brother does, but will seek to save him from shame, and bring him back to the right way as soon as possible. Second, it will prevent much evil, for when Christians quarrel, they themselves commit sin, and give outsiders an excuse for sinning. Oh! let us cover as much sin as possible by our peaceful and harmonious living and working.

#### **4. Christian stewards should be hospitable.**

The Christian grace of hospitality is not passing away. People have so often been imposed upon, it is true, that they have become somewhat wary of receiving every applicant into their homes, and you cannot blame them for that; but many of them are ready and glad to open their homes to the true ministers of Christ and other Christian workers, and often go to more trouble than is necessary to entertain them. As a minister of the gospel, and one who for some years has been called to visit many different congregations, the speaker desires to bear testimony to the unselfish hospitality of many church people. Some of them keep what they call a “prophet’s room,” and always give the prophet a cordial welcome.

Besides, it is not always convenient to entertain strangers, and always causes the good housewife some extra work and trouble; but we do not believe the grace has gone out of practice. And all who are kind in this way will not fail of receiving commendation from Him who said: “I was a stranger, and ye took me in.”

#### **5. They should use their gifts faithfully.**

The text indicates that men have received various gifts (charismata), which should be administered as good stewards. These talents are divine gifts. It is true, all our gifts of nature and grace must be cultivated and developed, but we should remember that they are divinely given, and therefore, instead of

being vain of them, we should be thankful for them, and should employ them to help one another and further Christ's kingdom.

Among the gifts mentioned in the text is the gift of speech. It is very important. The special advice given is that he who speaks in public should speak "as the oracles of God." We take this to mean that he should proclaim a God-given message. This is especially true of the preacher, though it may also apply to the lecturer. It is not his vocation to aver merely his own thoughts and speculations, but to find out from God's Holy Word what his Lord wants him to say, and then say it kindly and firmly, never "holding back the truth in unrighteousness." There is too much disposition in this rationalistic age to depart from the revealed truth, and proclaim all kinds of human speculations. Moreover, too many ministers seek for sensational themes, and try to deliver them in a sensational way. We have known men to announce what they supposed to be a "catchy" subject, and then, when the crowds came out to hear the discussion, they had to listen to a very commonplace discourse. We believe that the best plan for the minister is to be a diligent and prayerful student of "the oracles of God," derive his text from the pure, inspired Word, and then give a faithful exposition and application of the text. In that way he will be a Biblical preacher, which is a title of which no minister needs to be ashamed. The Word of God is so varied, so Versatile, so perennial in teaching and suggestion, that the minister of even ordinary ability who studies it faithfully will always be an instructive and interesting preacher. At the same time, if he is a true pastor, moving among the people of his church and community, and thus finding out their real needs, he will always discover practical ways to apply the gospel, which has gracious words of comfort and help for all conditions and classes of people. The minister who depends on his own wisdom, will sooner or later exhaust his resources, and will grow weary of his continuous mental strain. Not so the minister who delves deeply and constantly into the inexhaustible treasures of God's inspired truth.

Another gift named in the text is that of ministry or service, which is to be done "from the strength that God supplies." This is needed advice regarding that much-talked-of activity of the day, "service." This is the favorite theme of many advocates. But so much service today is merely human and material. Many people seem to think that, if they minister to poor people's physical needs, they have done their full duty. But our text connects God with our ministry to our fellowmen; that is, our service should be

made a religious act. We should ask God's help and direction, and should give people both material and spiritual help. In this respect inner missions is worthy of all commendation, because its primary purpose is to minister to the soul, to the religious need, while at the same time it aims to improve the physical condition of the poor and distressed. Sometimes you must feed the hungry people before you can give them effectual religious counsel. Body and soul are so closely united that, in some cases, it would be worse than useless to try to minister to the one while the other was in dire distress. So the wise Christian worker will study each case, and will adapt his ministry accordingly. However, his ultimate purpose always should be to lead the soul to Christ as the divine Healer of every malady. Paul's motto, "I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means win some," surely is the best motto for those who serve their fellowmen.

## **II. Why Stewards Should Perform Their Work In The Way Indicated.**

The inspired writers always deal with the motives of conduct. As we say in the study of ethics, it is the motive that makes the actor fine, or unfine, as the case may be. One of the old Roman deities was Janus, who had two faces looking in opposite directions. So we say of a person who is deceitful, who speaks or acts in one way while his motive is the contrary, that he is Janus-faced. Such double-dealing is not consistent with the pure ethics of the Christian religion.

What is the motive by which "stewards of the manifold grace of God" should be actuated? It is not their renown or glory. The world and the Church have suffered enough through this self-seeking spirit, the spirit that leads the nations into jealousy and war. No; to seek self-glorification is not consistent with discipleship in the school of Christ. The text puts the matter correctly, for it says: "That in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ: to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen." Do you ask why it is that Peter insists upon glorifying God as the only proper motive?

[1] God is the supreme excellence in Himself, and therefore it is right, indeed, it is highly ethical, to ascribe the glory to Him to whom it is intrinsically due.



[2] God is the source of all good. As we learned some Sundays ago in our discussion of a lesson from St. James, He is “the Giver of every good and perfect gift.” For that reason, too, it is right to ascribe the praise to Him, and give Him the credit for all good things.

[3] It makes for our own ethical and spiritual advancement to glorify God, because He is most glorified in the wellbeing and felicity of His rational creatures, whom He loved beyond verbal expression, and therefore sent His only begotten Son to rescue and redeem them. He is not glorified by the moral wreckage of His people, but by their salvation. We may know, therefore, that to give Him the glory is to promote our own highest well-being.

[4] To do all things for the glory of God is wholesome ethically, because it draws our attention away from ourselves to God Himself, who is the Highest Good. God is the true center of our lives and purposes. The trouble is, we are disposed to be too much self-centered and egotistical, and that spells the death of true spirituality. Besides, if all our ambitions revolve around ourselves, they swing in a very small orbit; but if they find their center in the God of all good, how great is their orbital range!

The text teaches an important doctrine, at least implicitly. It says that God is to be glorified, “through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever.” It is the doctrine that is taught everywhere in the New Testament- — that men must come to God through Christ; just as Jesus Himself taught: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” So Paul also taught: “God Was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.” Let us remember that no one can find God truly except through the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at all the human speculations about God in the whole history of the world — how inchoate, unsatisfactory and mutable! Compare them with the rich, clear, satisfying assurance that men receive when they come to God through the only Mediator, Jesus Christ. And surely “stewards of the manifold grace of God” ought to know Him whom they serve, and know Him beyond a peradventure. May that be the happy experience of all who are here this morning! Amen.

# **36. The Baptism Of Spiritual Power. Acts 2:1-13. The Festival Of Pentecost. Whitsunday.**

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. (Acts 2:1-13)

**AFTER ASCENSION, PENTECOST!** That was the sacred order of events in the divine plan of redemption. No other sequence would have been right, rational and effectual. Let us remember that God's way of doing things lies in the very structure and constitution of the universe.

All the Church Festivals are important. None is more important than the Festival of Pentecost, which we are celebrating today- Our text is most apropos, for it contains the graphic narrative of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. In order to set forth the holy doctrine of this great epoch in the world's history, we must first point out the meaning of the event.

# **I. The Meaning Of Pentecost.**

## **1. The word Pentecost.**

Why is this festival known by the name Pentecost? Because the term is derived from the Greek word *pentekonta*, which means fifty. This important Jewish festival was so called because it occurred fifty days, or seven weeks, after the second day of the Passover, which fell on the sixteenth day of the Jewish month, Nisan. It was also called the Feast of Weeks. At this feast the first fruits of the Jewish harvest were given as a thank-offering to God. “By the. later Jews it was generally regarded as commemorative of the gift of the law fifty days after the departure from Egypt.”

God chose this Jewish festival as the most appropriate time for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, thus signifying the first fruits of the Spirit’s dispensation. In this way the new dispensation was organically connected with the old. It was also a wise choice, because many people had then gathered at Jerusalem, and they carried the good news to the most distant parts of the earth.

## **2. The word Whitsunday.**

The derivation of the word Whitsunday is uncertain. However, the original English word was White-Sunday (though spelled in a different way); therefore it is thought by some that the day was so called because the catechumens who came to the church to be confirmed on that day were dressed in white.

## **3. Why Pentecost was necessary.**

In order to appreciate the “sweet reasonableness of the gospel,” it is entirely proper to ask and answer that question. As the Son of God came into the world and became incarnate, wrought out a perfect righteousness for sinful man, made complete atonement for sin, rose from the dead, ascended to the right hand of God to be glorified, and is now everywhere present with His people to save them — in view of all these things, some people might think

that nothing more was necessary, and that the additional gift and baptism of the Holy Spirit were superfluous.

But such reasoning is not sound. Christ indeed made an objective atonement for sin, and is present in His whole glorified person with all His people. But let us remember that His work for us was a spiritual work, and therefore appeals to the deepest spiritual faculties. Ah! but there is precisely the difficulty: man in his natural state is unspiritual, carnal, sold under sin, even “dead in trespasses and sins.” In this condition he cannot understand, appreciate and accept spiritual verities and blessings. The story of Christ’s loving sacrifice is only an idle tale to him. So it is evident that a work within him must be done before Christ’s redemption can be made available to him. In order to come to Christ by the spiritual act of faith, he must be spiritually awakened and recreated.

Now, the impartation of this new spiritual birth in the heart of man is the function of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. For that very reason He is called the Holy Spirit: He is the inmost and most deeply psychical divine person who completes the circle of self-consciousness in the Holy Trinity; therefore, it is His special office to enter into the psychical depths of men’s being, and recreate and spiritualize his powers so that he can freely accept the salvation wrought and purchased for him by Jesus Christ. Do you not see how organic and structural this method is? In any other way God could not save men ethically: if He saved man at all, He would have to impose salvation upon him by force; and that would not be true salvation. God’s way is always the right way.

#### **4. Why Pentecost came after the Ascension of Christ.**

This is also a proper and pertinent question. It must not be thought that the Holy Spirit was idle before Pentecost. Even in the Old Testament times He was operative, for He moved the prophets to speak and the writers to write (2 Pet. 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17). But note this difference: before Pentecost His work was preparatory for redemption; after Pentecost it was applicatory of redemption. Before Christ had accomplished His redemptive work the Holy Spirit could not bear witness regarding its completion. Let us specify: the Holy Spirit could bring to remembrance the full teaching of Christ only after that teaching was finished; the Holy Spirit could bear witness of the perfect righteousness of Christ only after Christ had fully lived out His im-

maculate life; the Holy Spirit could offer to awakened sinners the atoning merits of Christ only after the atonement had been made; He could assure believers of the glory, divine power and ubiquity of Christ only after Christ had ascended to God's right hand and had been glorified. Only after such glorification could the Holy Spirit take the things of the exalted Christ, which are the things of God, and bring them to men. For that reason Christ said (John 16:7): "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you." Paul also taught the same doctrine (Eph. 4:8): "Wherefore He saith, when He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

## **5. What the Holy Spirit adds to human nature.**

The work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration is a power and grace super-added to the natural man. It is not merely the evolution of human powers under stimulating influences. We remember — this was quite a number of years ago — a young minister just fresh from Union Theological Seminary, New York, who objected to the word "supernatural;" he said it was "meta-physical." He declared that nothing new was added to man's powers in regeneration; it was only an unfolding of man's natural faculties.

This is not Biblical. The Spirit adds something to man's powers that was not there before. The Holy Spirit by actual contact With the spiritually dead soul of man breathes into it a new spiritual life which it did not have before. True, He does not add any new faculties, but He does revive the dead spiritual faculties which are slain by sin. Yes, my friends, Pentecost means a supernatural creation, not a natural evolution.

## **II. Some Of The Important Results Of Pentecost**

The scene on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem is graphically described by St. Luke in the lesson for today. It was ten days after the ascension of Christ. During that period much of the time of the disciples was spent in prayer and supplication. They were carrying out their Master's instructions to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. It is

needless to try to imagine the solemn expectancy with which they awaited the fulfillment of their Lord's promise. They were all together in one place. "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." The special miraculous phenomena were peculiar to the epoch, and are not now repeated; but the facts of spiritual baptism and experience still continue.

## **1. The disciples spoke with other tongues.**

The narrative says that all the various foreign peoples there heard the gospel that day in their own vernaculars, so that they were struck with wonder. Some of them mocked, and accused the disciples of being filled with new wine; but many of them afterward were compelled to believe. They could not deny the evidence of their own sight and hearing.

As to the miracle of speaking with other tongues, we have no doubt that it was a supernatural ability conferred upon the disciples for the time being, for there were people of many languages there, and it was necessary that they should understand, the preaching of Christ's followers, so that they could carry the message to their own countries. The miracle of Pentecost helps to explain how it was possible for Christianity to conquer the Roman empire in three centuries, in spite of all opposition, obloquy and persecution. It was a prophecy of the fact that, since that day to this, the Christian religion has been a polyglot religion. Into how many tongues has the Bible been translated? In this respect no other book is to be compared with it.

The gift of speaking in other tongues may have a spiritual application. Whenever the Holy Spirit converts a man, he speaks with another tongue. From a philological viewpoint he may not speak another language, but his speech will be purified and spiritualized. If he was profane before conversion, now his language is that of worship. If he loved worldly talk before, now he uses the language of religion. The tongue that formerly spoke harshly and angrily, speaks now with gentleness and grace. Nothing so changes a man's vocabulary as a thorough-going conversion.

## **2, The disciples witnessed with spiritual power.**

That was why they had been commanded to tarry at Jerusalem. Before the enduement of the Spirit, their testimony was weak; but now they spoke with so much spiritual verve that on the first day three thousand persons were brought to their knees, and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Yes, it makes a great deal of difference today whether the preacher has acquaintanceship with the Holy Spirit. Without a spiritual baptism he may please the ear, soothe the senses, and tickle the aesthetic susceptibilities, but no one will be convicted or converted. Pentecost marks the difference between Peter denying Christ and Peter boldly proclaiming Him.

### **3. After Pentecost the disciples gave the right kind of testimony.**

Notice the sound Biblical theology of Peter's sermon. He gave clear, unequivocal testimony to the Old Testament. He accused the Jews of their sins in rejecting and crucifying Christ, but he never criticized their sacred writings. On the contrary, he bore positive testimony to their veracity and divine authority, and proved that Jesus was the fulfillment of their prophecies. That is always the result of the visitation of the Holy Spirit. He who inspired the Scriptures will surely verify them to the hearts of those whom He regenerates. Every true revival has meant a return to the Holy Scriptures. Every time of spiritual drought is marked by a critical attitude toward the Bible.

Again, the Holy Spirit corrected and established the Christology of the apostles. Note how Peter held up Christ on that epochal day. He called Him Lord. He proclaimed the resurrection of Christ.- He declared that Christ was "by the right hand of God exalted." He attributed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to the exalted Christ. That is always the Holy Spirit's way. He testifies of Christ. Every truly converted person ascribes the power and the glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing straightens out a person's theology like the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

No; we need not be afraid of the Holy Spirit. He is loving and good and companionable. He is the person of the Holy Trinity who illumines our minds, speaks to our hearts, and "bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God." May the whole Church receive the baptism of Pentecostal power, and so go forth into the uttermost parts of the earth with a testimony that cannot be withstood!

"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!

"The Spirit by His heavenly breath  
Creates new life within;  
He quickens sinners from the death  
Of trespasses and sin.  
All hail the day of Pentecost,  
The coming of the Holy Ghost!

"The things of Christ the Spirit takes,  
And to our hearts reveals;  
Our body He His temple makes,  
And our redemption seals.  
All hail the day of Pentecost,  
The coming of the Holy Ghost!"



# 37. Depths That Cannot Be Fathomed. Rom. 11:33-36. The Festival Of The Holy Trinity.

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. (Romans 11:33-36)

IN THE GOOD PROVIDENCE of God we have come again to the Festival of the Holy Trinity. If we were at liberty to select a free text, we should choose one that would treat of the doctrine of the Trinity. At some other time, however, we shall undertake to explain the Biblical basis and rational character of that great and holy doctrine. Just for the present we have engaged to confine our sermons to the Epistles of the Christian Year, and therefore we must follow whither they lead our thoughts.

The Epistle for today does not relate to the doctrine of the Trinity, and so it would not be treating the Holy Scriptures fairly to force into them something that they do not teach. That would be selecting a text only as a “pre-text,” which to our mind would be irreverent, albeit that very thing is done far too often by sensational and un-Biblical preachers. We will not follow their example even to attract a crowd of curiosity mongers to our church services. If people will not come to God’s house to hear the gospel preached in its purity and simplicity, we cannot help it. Our conscience will-not permit us to cater to idle curiosity and the prevalent desire for sensation.

Let us now attend to our text: “O, the depths of the riches of both the wisdom and the knowledge of God!”

The context shows that this passage of Scripture, instead of relating to the doctrine of the Trinity, refers to the doctrine of God’s elective grace, especially to the election of Israel and of the Gentiles. The essence of the ar-

gument in the preceding sections is this: When Israel, through lack of faith (see verses 19-24 preceding), rejected Christ, God commissioned Paul to carry the gospel to the Gentiles, who accepted it in large numbers. A hardening of Israel in part and for a time took place on account of their stubbornness; but the time would come when, by the conversion of the Gentiles, the Jews would be moved to accept the redeeming grace of God, and then Israel, too, would be saved. Because all men are sinful and unbelieving, God shuts up all unto disobedience, permitting them to prove, by being given up to their own devices, that they are vile and undone sinners, who can be saved only by the divine mercy and grace. Thus all who are saved will be saved by grace through faith, and so boasting of all kinds will be eliminated, and the universal chorus of the redeemed will be, "Saved by grace! saved by grace!"

Now, it is after Paul has conducted his readers through this argument at considerable length, that he exclaims, in the language of the text: "O, the depths of both the knowledge and the wisdom of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" While this text refers specifically to the doctrine of God's eternal decrees, or foreordination, it may properly be given a wider general application, and may incidentally include some reflections on the doctrine of the Trinity. We will treat the text under two main heads: 1. A great statement; 2. A great conclusion.

## **I. A Great Statement.**

The statement is in the form of a twofold exclamation, the parts of which we will consider in the proper order.

### **1. The fathomless wealth of the divine wisdom and knowledge.**

"Oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" says Paul, after he has amplified on the divine method of predestination regarding the Jews and the Gentiles. Instead of stumbling over the inscrutable character of the ways of God, he extols the divine wisdom. He trusts the Judge of all the earth to do right because of His omniscience. His is a good example for us to follow. Surely the power that made this vast universe and

the wisdom that devised it can be trusted. You and I can neither make nor understand an atom of matter nor a cell of life. How much less the great and complicated universe! Let me ask you this question, my friends: If we cannot trust the Almighty Being who made the world, whom or what can we trust? Rather than to fall into the despair of skepticism, it is better a thousand times, to have the faith of Paul, who declared: "For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God; to them that are the called according to His purpose."

Let us note that the apostle's exclamation of wonder and admiration of the divine knowledge and wisdom so far as regards foreordination was well founded. In Rom. 8:29, 30 he says: "For whom He foreknew He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. And whom He predestinated, these he also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; but whom He justified, these He also glorified."

Here surely are depths of divine wisdom and knowledge that human sagacity cannot fathom. How could God foreknow from eternity those persons who would believe on His Son, in order that He might decree that they should be saved, in spite of all the efforts of Satan and wicked people to thwart their salvation? How could God foreknow contingent events? How could He foreknow that man, whom He intended to create as a free moral agent, would fall into sin, and would therefore have to be rescued or perish forever? We do not understand the depth and riches of the divine foresight. Yet God must foreknow all events, else He could not provide for every exigency that might arise in so complicated a system as the world is, with its uncounted millions of free agents. Indeed, if He had not perfect foreknowledge, some unlooked-for catastrophe might occur that would hurl His universe to ruin, and perhaps involve the downfall of His own Being. Moreover, if He did not have perfect foreknowledge of those who would accept Christ by faith, so that He could make provision for their safety, Satan might even thwart the salvation of sincere believers.. However, His wisdom and knowledge are infinite, and so is His power, and therefore we know that nothing can prevent the salvation of His elect people. He holds them in the hollow of His hand. Since they trust in Him, His decree for their salvation will be carried out. Hence Paul says: "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His."

The depth of the divine wisdom may also be seen in the doctrine of the Trinity. If God were a solid monad, He would be a procrustean, immobile Being like the God of the Mohammedans or like the inflexible fate of the Hindus; but since He is a triune Being, He is eternal love, for from eternity the Father loved the Son through the Holy Spirit; and thus we know that He loves us, and is moved by compassion for our miseries and with mercy toward our sins. Such a God is not hard and unyielding, but is mobile and sensitive to man's need. Besides, because He is triune, one person of the Trinity can come down to the earth, assume our poor human nature, and make propitiation for our sins; and this great and merciful enterprise can be achieved without the vacation of the throne and sovereignty of the universe. How could this have been done if God were not triune? "O, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

## **2. The unsearchable character of the divine judgments and ways.**

The language in the original Greek is very direct: "How unsearchable His judgments and untraceable His ways!" Is it not true that many times we cannot understand the ways of God? Perhaps you and I have often thought that, if we had had the making of the world, we would have made it very different. Everywhere the question, "Why?" rises before the inquiring mind. No one must ever imagine that skeptics and agnostics are the only persons who think of these mysterious matters. Job, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and David marveled at the inscrutable ways of God. David says that his "feet had almost stumbled" when he noted some of God's mysterious ways. It was a Christian poet, not an infidel philosopher, who wrote the lines, "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform."

In respect to the divine election of the Jews, their rejection, the consequent election of the Gentiles, and at last the election of the Jews when the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled, we may well pause and wonder why God pursued and continues to pursue this method, apparently so roundabout and long-drawn-out, when you and I think He might do everything at once by the exercise of His omnipotence. And so we sometimes cry, "Why thus, O Lord?" or in the language of the Psalmist, "How long, O Lord? how long?"

However, we may depend upon it that God's ways are the best ways and the right ways. If He were dealing only with inanimate things or mere automata, He might mold everything according to His power; but He is dealing with free agents and ethical beings, and so He must bring about His ultimate purpose without trenching on their liberty. His ways are past finding out, but we may depend upon it that He will bring about, in His own good time, "that far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves." It may take much longer to achieve ethical and spiritual results than mere physical results, but they shall at last be accomplished according to righteous principles and in righteous ways.

The same exclamation of the text may be applied to the doctrine of the Trinity. Who can understand the eternal movements of the three persons of the Godhead by which they decided that the Father should send the Son to redeem the world, and that the Holy Spirit should proceed from the Father and the Son to apply the work of redemption to the human race? Yet this is the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, which call the Son "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Will anyone say why it was the Son, and not the Father or the Holy Spirit, who should become incarnate and make atonement for sin? It seems reasonable, now that the plan has been revealed, that this method should be employed; but nothing save divine wisdom could have devised such a plan — a plan that is ethical in conception and execution; a plan whereby God "could be just, and yet the justifier of every one that believeth on His Son." "How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!"

Having considered the great statement of the text, we come next to —

## **II. A Great Conclusion.**

This conclusion is introduced by one of Paul's logical "for's," which he was so fond of using. This conjunction pertains to all the rest of the text, which divides itself into several questions and one direct assertion. These we must examine in their order.

### **1. Who knew the mind of the Lord?**

In eternity there was no other Being than God to predetermine His elections. He alone could decree what should be and what should not be. No angels existed then, and no human intelligences. So no one but God could know His thoughts and counsels. He alone could decide whether a universe was to be created or not; whether there should be free intelligences like angels and men. No one besides Him could foreordain who should be saved and who should not be saved, or whether any sinners should be saved.

What follows from this fact? Surely that the eternal God was the only one who could make a decree that would be right and just and good, and that no finite creature would be wise enough to criticize His predeterminations. The finite can never equal the infinite. Therefore the creature should trust the Creator. As Paul puts it, “The clay cannot say to the potter, Why dost thou make me thus?” It stands to reason that, if the potter, even though finite, knows better than the clay what is its best use, God, who is infinite, knows what is best for His creatures. Why not simply take God’s goodness and wisdom for granted, and believe that “He doeth all things well?” “Nay, who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?” So it is not necessary for us to understand all the eternal divine counsels, for if we “knew the mind of the Lord,” we would ourselves be infinite. When God assures us “that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose,” that ought to satisfy us, and we ought to hear Him when He says, “Be still, and know that I am God.”

It would be well for all people to remember in times of distress and doubt what God says in Isa. 55:8,9: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

## **2. Who was His counselor?**

This is another challenge of the apostle in view of the depth of the ’divine wisdom. In eternity there was no one to give God advice. He who “was from everlasting to everlasting” had to act on His own initiative and to decide on all His plans. Not even an arch-angel existed to instruct Him, much less any man. Therefore if God, in planning the universe and in carrying out, His plan, had to act on His own wisdom alone, we poor finite creatures of time and space may well “keep silence before Him.” Who are we that we

should find fault with His economy? May we not take it for granted that the Supreme Being does all things wisely and well? What He does ought to be done and what He permits ought to be permitted. The Bible teaches that even the highest angels, the cherubim and seraphim, veil their faces with their wings before His supreme majesty. How much more should we fear and reverence Him and submit to His decisions? The prophet Isaiah (40:12-17) has some marvelous statements regarding the greatness and wisdom of God: “Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of Jehovah, or, being His counselor, hath taught Him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of justice, and taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop in the bucket, and are accounted as the small dust of the balance: behold He taketh up the isles as a very little thing... All the nations are as nothing before Him; they are accounted by Him as less than nothing and as vanity.” Note also verse 22: “It is He that sitteth above the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.” In the latter part of the book of Job, Jehovah speaks, and this is His challenge: “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding. Who determined the measures thereof, if thou knowest? Or who stretched the line upon it? Whereupon were the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner-stone thereof, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” Yes, we admit that God had no counselor when He created the heavens and the earth. Therefore we may rest assured that He needs none now.

### **3. Who can contribute anything to the divine fullness?**

The text puts it in this way: “Who first gave to Him and it shall be repaid Him?” The meaning is, Who can give anything to God that will make Him his debtor? God has no need of anything from us. He is complete in His own perfections. In our relations to Him, we are the beneficiaries, He is the bountiful Giver. All that we receive comes from His mercy and His grace, and is not a debt that He is discharging. “For,” as the text continues, “of

Him and through Him and to Him are all things.” That is, God is the source, the means, and the ultimate end of everything.

And now what is the conclusion and application of the whole matter? It is summed up in the closing sentence of the text: “To Whom be glory forever. Amen.” On account of the depths and riches of His wisdom and knowledge and the unsearchable character of His judgments and ways, we should praise and worship Him. Since we could not know His mind, nor give Him counsel in eternity, nor contribute anything to His fullness, we should trust Him, and should not question the wisdom of His decrees. Rather, when He teaches us that the way of salvation is through faith in His incarnate Son, we should believe Him, and fall in with His plan of redeeming love. Experience through all the Christian centuries proves that His way of grace is the true way, the only way that gives assurance of truth and salvation. What human knowledge and reason fail to achieve, that is won by simple and childlike faith.

We should remember that the same God who issued the eternal fiat also so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son for its redemption. Therefore we know that He is not only a God of might and knowledge, but also a God of love. A forceful recent writer (Ralph Tyler Flewelling in “Christ and the Dramas of Doubt”) says beautifully: “I think I see love and goodness in its highest human expression in the face that once bent above my cradle. But even in that face, now glorified by memory and the years, there was not a perfect patience nor perfect holiness. It is not enough. I must find that human face which is also the face of God before I can know of a very truth that God is love. And this I have in Christ. Any picture of God that contrasts with the love of Christ I instantly reject as spurious. No man can confuse me on that point. What was blind to Aeschylus to me is certain — my God is eternal love, because I have seen. His image in the face of Christ.”

Yes, my friends, the best interpretation of the eternal divine decrees is the revelation of the eternal divine love in the gift of His Son. May we trust in the election of God because we trust in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer! Amen.



# **38. Divine And Human Love. 1 John 4:16-21. The First Sunday After Trinity.**

And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also. (1 John 4:16-21)

TODAY OUR TEXT is a wonderful passage on divine and human love. What is its connection with the Trinity season and the Trinity doctrine? It is this: Because God is an eternal Trinity, He is eternal love. In love the Father eternally begets the Son; in love the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son. Throughout eternity the Father loves the Son and the Son the Father, while they are united in love by the most inner psychical member of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. Had God been merely a solid monad or unity', His love would have been only self-love in the eternity before the creation, and therefore He never could have felt love for anyone else; He never could have had an alter ego; but since each member of the Trinity has had from eternity others to love, therefore God is pure unselfish love, and hence possesses a love that will lead Him to create a rational cosmos upon which He can lavish His benevolent affection. Rely upon it that all the Biblical doctrines are founded in the very nature of things. They are not arbitrary and unrational.

A convenient division of the material of the text will be the following: 1. The divine love; 2. The human love it begets.

## **I. The Divine Love.**

The chapter from which our lesson is selected is fairly surcharged with the doctrine of the divine love. In verses 8-10 we read: "He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Verse 16: "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us: God is love." Verse 19: "We love Him because He first loved us."

If we do so in the right way, it is important that we emphasize the love of God in these days. And why do we qualify by saying, "If we do so in the right way?" Because now-a-days there are certain classes of people who represent God's love as merely a kind of sentiment; as if He were too tender to deal justly with sin and punish impenitent sinners. They treat God as if He were not just as well as merciful. They seem to think that His love sets aside His justice. Hence God will not punish sinners, but will eventually save all. This is not the Biblical view, which never teaches that there is a contradiction between the love and justice of God, but that He is both merciful and just. His love is shown in many ways, and especially in that He devised from eternity a plan whereby the Godhead Himself in the person of the Son should suffer atoningly for the redemption of the world. This was unspeakable love. "But God commendeth His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Thus the whole plan of redemption flows from the eternal and self-sacrificing love of God. However, the same gracious plan also reveals the righteousness of God, in that He would not and could not forgive sin without requiring satisfaction to the eternal principle of justice in inflicting the penalty of sin upon the sinner's divinely appointed and voluntary Substitute, namely, the eternal Son of God. Thus divine love and wisdom devised a plan whereby justice could be upheld and mercy could save the undeserving sinner.

Another present-day error, or, rather, misrepresentation, should be corrected. Some of the "liberal" thinkers of the day allege the orthodox view to

be that God the Father is very stern and harsh, and, Shylock-like, demands the last ounce of flesh, but that the Son is very loving and kind, and therefore came into the world and died to placate the Father's resentment. Orthodox people cannot disclaim this absurd doctrine too explicitly and vigorously. The fact is, true orthodoxy never held or taught it. Nor is it the Biblical doctrine; and it is the Biblical teaching that orthodoxy has ever tried to promulgate. The Bible teaches that the Father is both merciful and just (John 3:16; Rom. 11:22); that the Son is both merciful and just (John 15:9; Eph. 5:25; Matt. 23:13-33; John 2:13-17); that the Holy Spirit is both merciful and just (John 14:16-18, 26, 27; 16:8-11). Christ did not come into the world and suffer and die to placate the wrath of anyone member of the Trinity, but to satisfy and uphold the eternal principle of justice inherent in the whole Godhead. Loving and self-sacrificing as Christ was (note how He wept over Jerusalem), yet no one ever castigated sin more mercilessly than did He; no one ever pronounced more terrible penalties upon the hypocritical and impenitent and unbelieving than He. So God's love is not soft and sentimental affection, but a pure, strong and holy principle.

Having now corrected a couple of errors respecting the divine love, we must proceed to treat it positively. All God's attributes are absolute, perfect and infinite; and yet, according to the apostle John, His love seems to have the primacy. With no other quality is God's very nature identified. The Bible nowhere says that God is justice, or holiness, or mightiness, but it does say concretely, "God is love." That would mean that His-very essence is surcharged with love, that all His "other attributes are pervaded by His love; whatever He does or does not, He is impelled by love.

It is well to preach to men, sinners though they are, that God loves them. We should never say that God hates them. We may properly say, and should say, that God hates sin, but that He loves the sinner, and desires to save him from the sin that would ruin him forever. It is true that the Bible sometimes represents God as angry with sinners, and that is as it should be; but note, He is angry with them only because they identify themselves with iniquity, and thus are swayed by the very thing that will accomplish their eternal destruction. Nowhere does the Bible represent God as unwilling to rescue 'men from their sinful estate.' On the contrary, He is represented as standing all the day long with outstretched hand to a gainsaying people (Isa. 65:2; Rom. 10:21). He implores them to choose life, not death (Deut. 19:20). He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to

repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). Thus we should say to the sinner, however deep-dyed; "God loves you, and desires to save you from your sins and bring you back to purity of life and felicitous fellowship with Him." If that kind of teaching will not bring the sinner to repentance, we fear nothing will. The terrors of the law may frighten him, but before he can truly repent and come to God, the love of God must win his confidence and gratitude.

Moreover, it is this very fact that makes sin such a grievous offense. It is rejection of the infinite love of God, which desires to save men from ruin and woe. Yes, to reject God's overture of salvation is to trample upon divine love. Hence it is the one sin that dooms sinners to everlasting punishment. When rejection of Christ is persisted in, it will finally lead to the irremissible sin, the sin against the Holy Ghost, who is constantly striving to bring men to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ.

No religion but that of the Bible teaches this Winsome doctrine, "God is love." Mohammedanism knows only a God of might and sternness, who must always be placated. Hinduism is pantheistic, and so denies that God is a personal being; such a God cannot love men. Buddhism at its foundation is atheistic, and hence knows no God of love. Confucianism scarcely refers to God, speaking only of "heaven," but never with any distinct teaching of the divine personality. In this doctrine Christianity is unique; it teaches that God is a person, and that His predominant characteristic is love. Why should vain men seek elsewhere for religious satisfaction? "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

The doctrine that God is love begets trust in Him and in the friendliness of all His laws and operations. Many things occur in the world that might create doubt. Often we cannot understand the severity of nature's ways and the inexorableness of her laws; we marvel that a great calamity like the recent war should have been permitted to come upon the world; but when we are assured in the inspired Word that God is love, then we recover from our despair, and are ready to say, even though we do not comprehend His ways: "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose." Then we almost hear Him saying: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Jesus' voice also sounds sweet and reassuring: "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God and believe in Me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you." Yes, to know that God is love is the solution of all our troubling problems; for then we know that both His wis-

dom and power will be exerted in His own good time for the redemption of all who truly believe. But suppose we should give up our trust in His love and goodness, whither shall we go in our despair? Then indeed all hope has passed away. Thanks be to God for the overcoming faith which His love begets within our hearts!

Let us speak and sing much about the love of God — that love which He has manifested toward us in so many Ways. especially in the unspeakable gift of His Son. Mr. Moody used to say something like this: “When I hear a man talking about his love for God, I tremble for his spiritual safety; but when I hear a man speaking of God’s love for him, then I know that he is on safe ground.”

"All nature owns His guardian care;  
In Him we live and move;  
But nobler benefits declare  
The wonders of His love.

“He gave His Son, His only Son,  
To ransom us from sin:  
'Tis thus He makes His goodness known —  
Where shall His praise begin?”

Let us next consider —

## **II. The Human Love Which Divine Love Begets.**

On this theme the text speaks very beautifully: “We love,” it says, “because He first loved us.” That means that God’s love wins us, and creates a responding affection in our hearts. Paul teaches the same doctrine: “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom He hath given unto us.” Thus we see how it is that love dwells in the divine Trinity: the Holy Spirit begets the love of God within our hearts. According to the text, the love thus begotten manifests itself in two ways.

### **1. Man’s love of God.**

Note how beautifully this is phrased: “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.” It is a sure sign that a man is united with God when he lives in an atmosphere of love. Let us translate and interpret what the text says in the next sentence: “In this way love has been perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we also in this world.” What does this mean? Simply this: If God’s love dwells in our hearts, we have no need to fear the day of judgment, for in this world we have and display the same temper of love that God Himself has and displays. Since we are like God in love, We can dwell in peace. The text carries out this comforting thought in this way: “There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear has punishment; and he that feareth hath not been made perfect in love.”

Of course “fear” in this place means slavish or servile fear, not that “fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom.” Just as long as a person is afraid of God and His judgments, the love of God has not taken complete possession of his heart. He knows that he is not right with God; that there is disharmony between his life and the divine life. He is not like God in this world. “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? If thou doest not well, sin croucheth at the door” (Gen. 4:7). Oh! there is no need to live in dread of God. God is benign toward us, for “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.” Thus all we need is to be reconciled to Him. Let us simply accept by faith the peace compact that He has made with us in the gift of His Son. Of course, out of Christ “God is a consuming fire;” but in Christ He is all love. If God so loved us as to give His only begotten Son for our salvation, surely we need not shrink back in affright from Him.

"There is no place where earth's sorrows  
Are more felt than up in heaven;  
There is no place where earth's failings  
Have such kindly judgment given.

“For the love of God is broader  
Than the measure of man’s mind;  
And the heart of the eternal,  
Is most wonderfully kind.”

## **2. Man’s love to his fellowmen.**

According to the text, love for God and love for man go together. Where the one is absent the other is absent. Listen to the apostle: “We love because God first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and yet hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we received from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.”

Let us look a little closely into this passage. “We love because He first loved us.” That means, as we have said before, that love has its source in God. If God were not love, if love were not in the very foundation and structure of the universe, we would have no impulses of love of any kind; we could not love God nor our fellowmen. But now, since the basis of all things is love, we are capable of love. However, if we are filled with the love of God, we will love all men, just as He does. Like Him, we will disapprove of their evil ways, but we will love them, and will desire their highest well-being. For as He is, so are we in this world. Therefore it follows logically that, if a man professes to love God, and yet hates his brother, he speaks falsely, because if He truly loved God, he would love his brother, whom God also loves.

Then John gives another reason why such a man speaks untruthfully: “He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen cannot love God whom he hath not seen.” Here John goes down into the very nature of things and gives a fundamental reason. God is invisible; He is a Spirit, uncreated and perfect. The natural man cannot receive and discern spiritual things. He can apprehend only the things of sense, the things that are material. Therefore he cannot love God without the new birth, the birth from above. God must impinge His love and grace upon his consciousness by the Holy Spirit. Therefore he cannot love God whom he hath not seen; and if he hates his brother, it is a sure sign that he has never been converted, because, if he were, the love of God would be shed abroad in his heart, and that would elide all hatred from his nature. Love to God is the first thing, as the Bible teaches again and again; then love to man will follow as the logical consequence. One may profess love to God without having love to man, but he cannot possess it.

That love to God begets love to humanity is evidenced throughout Christian history. Paul was full of hatred toward many of his fellowmen until he was brought to Christ; then his heart overflowed with love toward all mankind, friends and foes, Jews and Gentiles, Greeks and Barbarians. Then

he was willing to “spend and be spent” for his fellow beings. What a difference the love of God made between Saul, the Pharisee, and Paul, the apostle!

How often has the experience of Paul been duplicated in Christian history! There was Justin Martyr, who, after his conversion, gave himself to the service of his fellowmen, and desired all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. Augustine was another notable example; though a great defender of the faith after his conversion, yet he was also a great lover of his race. What was it that inspired Oberlin to sacrifice himself in lowly service for the poor people of his province instead of seeking for fame and ease and riches? It was nothing but the love of God shed abroad in his heart. What made Wesley and Whitefield the flaming evangelists they were, giving themselves wholly to the uplift of their fellowmen? It was the love of Christ that constrained them. So the love of God is all-inclusive. He first loved us; hence we love Him and the people of our race whom He loves. “For as He is, so are we in this world.” May this ever be our happy experience!



# **39. The Contrast Between Love And Hate. 1 John 3:13-18. The Second Sunday After Trinity.**

Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. (1 John 3:13-18)

ONE OF THE HIGHEST MARKS of the Christian religion is that it enjoins love and condemns hate: nay, it does much more than that: it creates love in the heart, and casts out hate. There are other religions in the world, ethnic religions, founded by human design or desire; but none of them possess this predominant characteristic that they are based on love and can beget it in the human soul.

Our text today is much like that of last Sunday, which dealt with divine and human love and their mutual relation. Today we are led to consider the deep and sharp contrast between love and hatred. How different they are! The material of the text may be assembled in this way: 1. The hurtful qualities of hatred; 2. The helpful qualities of love. By considering these qualities in their order, we shall see the fundamental difference between them, and may be led to shun the one and embrace the other.

## **I. The Hurtful Qualities Of Hatred.**

## 1. It causes the world to hate Christians.

The text says: “Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hates you.” Why should not such hatred create wonder in our minds? Because it is a natural consequence, a logical result. The righteous life of the Christian is a constant rebuke to the people of the world, and that in itself stirs the world’s enmity. More than that, the Christian cannot condone the sinful lives of worldly people, but must often rebuke them. He cannot sanction their frivolity, spiritual indifference and positive violations of the divine law; he must especially reprove them for rejecting God’s plan of salvation and His means of grace. No wonder they do not, as a rule, love the earnest Christian. Whenever a professed Christian is praised too much by worldly people, there is room for suspecting the real earnestness of the former. Christ Himself spoke some searching words on this thought: “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they kept my word, they would keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not Him that sent me” (John 15:18-21). “I have given them Thy word,” Jesus prays to the Father; “and the world hateth them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14). It is little wonder that the proud and worldly people of Christ’s day were filled with venom toward Him, for He had to rebuke them most severely. It is little wonder if people of the same selfish temper today despise the followers of Christ.

Yet how unreasonable is such hatred! One would think that all people would be only too thankful to Christ and His faithful disciples who warn them of their peril, and show them the plain way to escape to eternal joy. But the hatred of the world to its best friends is one of the ethical paradoxes created by sin. “Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.” You cannot go “cheek by jowl” with the world, and at the same time be a true Christian. This does not mean that you and I are to provoke worldly people purposely; but it does mean that we cannot condone their offenses, nor follow in their footsteps. One of the most specious adages in the world is this: “When you are in Rome, you must do as the Romans do.” It is a maxim of

the compromiser and the opportunist, and that spells the ugly word cowardice.

## **2. Hatred is an index of spiritual death.**

This trenchant truth is taught in verse 14 of the text: “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren; he that loveth not, abideth in death.”

In this pertinent passage we have one of the clearest evidences of a person’s status before God. Sometimes people feel uncertain as to whether they have been converted or not, because, perhaps, they have not had the same kind of an experience that some other people describe. We believe that the text furnishes a sure test. Do you love the brethren? Do you love Christian people? Would you rather be associated with them than with the people of the world? Do you cherish being in the house of God where you meet with God’s people? If so, you may be sure that you “have passed from death unto life;” for, if you had not had this experience, you would prefer the association of worldly people, because they would be the people of your own kind. “The world loves its own.” As “the homely old adage goes,” “Birds of a feather flock together.” However, if you do not love God’s people and God’s house, you may well doubt whether you have ever been born of God; indeed, you may be certain that you have not experienced his saving love and grace in your heart.

Yes, my friend, the inspired writer says very explicitly, “He that loveth not abideth in death.” This is a solemn truth. If you and I do not love the brethren, we may know that the true life of God has never entered our souls; we still remain “dead in trespasses and sins.” We may be very much alive to hatred and contempt — but that is not true life: indeed, it is death in life; death to the good and true; life in sin, which is death in the deepest and most destructive sense of the term. You remember what Paul says of the woman who gives herself up to worldly pleasure: “She is dead while she liveth.” The Scriptural idea of death is to live in sin, and hatred of God and His people. What a death it is! What a sad state to be in! It is worse than a state of unconsciousness; yes, a thousand times worse.

I think I hear God saying to all of us this morning what He said many centuries ago to His people on the plains of Moab: “I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death,

blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed; to love the Lord thy God, to obey His voice, and to cleave unto Him; for He is thy life and the length of thy days” (Deut. 30:19, 20).

This idea of spiritual death for the man who hates his brother leads to the next thought of the text:

### **3. Hatred involves the principles of murder.**

Remember that John was the apostle of love; yet it was he who wrote the terrible indictment of the next sentence of the text: “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” Is that an over-statement — a hyperbole, used merely to make the assertion more vivid and impressive? No; it is a deep, fundamental truth. Hatred is the seminal principle of murder. All it needs is to be cherished in the heart, and it will grow and develop until at last it leads to the overt act of slaying a brother. If it does not, the reason will be that the would-be murderer is afraid to commit the outward act; therefore he is still a murderer in his heart, in his intention. Why did Cain slay Abel? Do you suppose he slew him on the first impulse? No, indeed! He nourished the seeds of hatred and jealousy in his heart, until they became so strong within him that he lifted up his hand and slew his brother. This is the secret of every homicide. We may think that sometimes people kill others on a sudden impulse, or as the result of a sudden provocation; but in reality, if we go back to the root of the crime, we will find that the perpetrator was in the habit of harboring hatred and yielding to its mandates, and that the sudden provocation was only the occasion that brought out the inner wickedness of his heart. Therefore it is unsafe for any of us to cherish resentment; we know not when it may break out in the overt act of a heinous crime. Oh, what a vicious and destructive thing is hatred!

## **II. The Helpful Qualities Of Love.**

We shall turn to the obverse side of our text — the more pleasing and stimulating part. Here we have the attributes of Christian love most pertinently and attractively set forth. What are some of these rare qualities?

## **1. Love gives proof of the regenerate heart.**

We have already adverted to this thought, but it is worth repeating. The text says: “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” You might have thought that John would say here, “Because we have the testimony of the Holy spirit within our hearts.” But, no, he gives another test of the reality of a religious experience. Paul speaks of the witness of the Spirit with our spirits, and that is, indeed, a valid evidence of the new birth. John also says elsewhere, “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.” Yes, these are good tests of a true conversion; but there must also be another verification of the new birth: “Because we love the brethren.” Sometimes, when we cannot clearly feel in our hearts the witness of the Holy Spirit (perhaps for some unknown psychological reason), we can test the reality of our religious status by asking ourselves the questions: “Do I love the brethren? Do I prefer the companionship of Christian people to that of wicked and worldly people?” Let us cherish all the verifications of regeneration that we can, so that we may not lose our precious experience of God’s love within our hearts.

## **2. Love perceives the love of Christ.**

Love has sharp and discerning eyes. Says the text (we translate literally): “By this we have known love, because He laid down His life for us.” How is it, then, that love is begotten within our hearts? By our knowing that Christ came into the world and died for our sins. He made the great immolation of Himself. That is what creates love within us. “We love, because He first loved us.” The love of God in Christ is the source of all high and holy affections in us. Do we love God? It is because He gave Himself for us. Do we love the universe? It is because it is God’s universe, and God loves us. Do we love our fellowmen? It is because God so loved us as to give His Son in our behalf. Everything good finds its source and root in the being and nature of God. “All our resources are in Him.” “In Him we live and move and have our being.” Love perceives, and love appreciates. It is no dullard, no ingrate.

### **3. Again, love includes willingness to sacrifice for others.**

Christian love is no quasi-virtue, no half-way quality. It is thorough-going. It stops at no small cost. Listen to the whole-hearted statement of the apostle in the text: “And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” Now, is not that going too far? Is it not an ultra-statement? No, it is not. It was especially necessary to say this in John’s day; it might be necessary now; and the time may yet come before the end of this dispensation when such a sacrifice of life may be necessary for the preservation of our faith. Suppose that, in John’s day, the martyrs would not have been willing to lay down their lives for their brethren, what would have become of the Christian religion? Many a leader of the Christian disciples was regarded as a “shining mark” by the Roman government and its agents, who thought that, by putting to death some of the leaders, they might crush the Christian religion in its infancy. Thus these leaders, like Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr and Perpetua, laid down their lives for their brethren, showing them an example of Christian courage and fortitude that helped them either to live or to die for Christ and His cause. If ever a time of persecution unto death should come in the world again, Christian disciples will greatly need this positive command of the apostle: “And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” Meanwhile let us prove our Willingness to die for them by living for them, and thus promoting their welfare in time and eternity.

### **4. Christian love leads to benevolent action.**

Very direct and incisive are the words of the text: “But whoso hath this world’s goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?” This passage proves again that God’s love in the heart is the source of love to one’s fellowmen. There is no use in saying that men can love God truly and at the same time disregard mankind. This principle lies in the very nature of things. God loves the world with a supreme and self-sacrificing affection; and therefore, if the Spirit of God dwells within us, we will love what God loves. So for a person to have plenty of this world’s goods, and yet refuse to share with the needy persons around him, is proof that he is steeped in selfishness, and hence does not have the love of God abiding in his soul. This is

a most searching truth of Holy Scriptures, and ought to lead you and me to look well into our hearts. At this particular time there are so many people in dire distress even for the necessities of life — how can one live in selfish luxury, and fail to give something to relieve these suffering people? Oh! let us give ourselves to God's service first, and then all we have will be dedicated to Him and His needy ones.

“Not what we give, but what we share, —  
For the gift without the giver is bare;  
Whoso gives himself with his alms feeds three:  
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and Me.”

## **5. Christian love is factual and sincere.**

This truth could not be more pointedly expressed than it is in the text: “Little children, let us love, not in word, neither with the tongue, but in deed and in truth.” How the Bible searches out all hidden pretenses and disguises! It is much easier to profess love than to practice it. So some people are loud in their protestations of love and concern for the human family, but how often all their affection ends there! For example, there is today a kind of oratorical effusiveness in expressing philanthropic feeling. You may hear men on the platform and in the pulpit talking eloquently about unselfish service to humanity; yet they themselves live in luxury and style, in the midst of show and festivity, that belie all their euphonious rhetoric. What we need today is this fine oratory translated into deed. Men in high places who talk glibly about love for humanity ought to set the rest of the people an example of plain living and self-sacrificing service. Let us have done with camouflage! Let us do away with mere professionalism in philanthropy. One ounce of action' is worth a million pounds of mere rhetoric.

And we should remember, too, that kindness does not always consist in relieving material distress; sometimes people need tokens of sympathy and interest more than material help. To show a person who has lost confidence in himself that you still believe he can succeed in being noble and true with God's help, is the best kind of beneficence. A cordial recognition and handshake to one who feels disheartened and friendless is real kindness, and full of possibilities for good. May all of us make it the chief business of life to shed sunshine on the pathway of our fellowmen!

“If any little word of mine  
    May make a life the brighter;  
If any little song of mine  
    May make a heart the lighter —  
God help me speak the little word,  
    And take my bit of singing,  
And drop it in some lonely vale,  
    And set the echoes ringing.”

May we not only say helpful words and sing cheering songs, but may we also love in deed and in truth!



# 40. Graces That Are Enhanced By Grace. 1 Pet. 5:6-11. The Third Sunday After Trinity.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 5:6-11)

THE EPISTLE FOR TODAY contains a logical sequence in the spiritual realm. Its chief teaching is that, if we practice the Christian graces, they will be perfected, strengthened and established by divine grace. No matter what we do according to God's will, He will cooperate with us, and thus enlarge the capacities of our hearts and the work of our hands. For that reason we think that the theme of our lesson is this: "Graces that are Enhanced by Divine Grace." Let us treat the text in an orderly way, for then we will best remember its sublime teaching.

## I. The Graces Described.

### 1. The grace of humility.

In the verse preceding the text the apostle Peter says: "Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another: for God resisteth the proud,

but giveth grace to the humble.” Then he adds, in the first verse of the text: “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.”

We have often spoken to you about the beautiful garment of humility. This grace is different from what is known in Roman Catholic theology and practice as “voluntary humility,” which is one of show and ceremony for the purpose of meriting God’s favor. The assumed humble guise of the mendicant orders was mostly rather a matter of pride than of real lowliness of mind. The Augsburg Confession rightly condemns all such practices (Article XXVII): “For the righteousness of faith in Christ, which chiefly ought to be in the Church, is obscured when this wonderful worshiping of angels, with its show of poverty, humility and chastity, is cast before the eyes of men.” Yes, when people think that they can deserve God’s favor by any service they can perform, so that He becomes their debtor, their very motive is surcharged with pride. The best kind of humility is that which claims no desert for itself, but casts itself solely upon the merit of Jesus Christ, exclaiming: “We are saved by grace through faith; and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.” Hence the text puts it solemnly: “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God.” That is, do not claim any merit before God, who is the source of all majesty, power and goodness. The more humility of this kind men can have, the better for themselves, the world and the kingdom of God; for it is real humility, not assumed, not a covering for pride in the heart. The whole system of human works of merit ministers to pride; and it is the most dangerous kind of pride, and the most insidious, namely, moral and spiritual pride. Men can readily see mere worldly vanity, for it is out on the surface; but who save God can see the pride that struts around and boasts in the secret places of the heart? Even the possessor himself may sometimes be deceived.

According to the text, God gives grace to the humble, and will exalt them in due time. He will bring pride low, but “he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” Let it be borne in mind, he does not exalt himself, but God exalts him. When we see how men quarrel for honors in the political, military, social and even ecclesiastical spheres, we cannot help wondering why they reverse Christ’s rule; for He said: “He that exalteth himself shall be abased.” We wonder whether there will not be many people who will

have occasion to hang their heads in shame on the great day when they shall be exposed before the judgment-seat of Christ.

“When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.”

## **2. The grace of trust.**

Note the beautiful and comforting statement of the text: “Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.” A more literal translation would be: “Casting all your anxiety upon Him, for with Him is concern about you.” The meaning is that, since God has real solicitude for you, you need have no hesitancy in throwing off your troubles upon Him. There is much comfort in believing in a God who is really interested in us, who is concerned for our welfare. You cannot cast your care upon mere blind Fate, nor on the impersonal something of pantheism. If that were the true doctrine, Buddhism would be right in saying that the chief end of man is to get rid of the desire for existence, and so he should try to think himself into extinction. But, thanks be to God! we have a better religion, the religion of the Holy Bible, which teaches us that God and His angels rejoice over every sinner that repents, and care for every person, no matter how humble and unworthy. Hear the sweet counsel of the Psalmist (55:22): “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain thee; He will never suffer the righteous to be moved.” When trials come to you, therefore, do not hesitate to “cast your care upon God, for He careth for you.”

## 3. The graces of sobriety and vigilance.

We may treat these qualities together, as the text does, because those who are sober are likely to be watchful, while those who are drunken with liquor, worldly pleasure or fleshly lust will lose their vigilance, and think there is no danger. The solemn admonition of the text is needed today as much as it was in the time of the apostle: “Be sober, be watchful: your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom He may devour; whom withstand, being steadfast in your faith, knowing that the same sufferings are being accomplished in your brotherhood which is in the world.”

Well are we aware that some people today want to get rid of our arch-adversary, the personal devil. Any person who thinks that all the wickedness and malevolence in the world can be accounted for on the ground of mere accident, lapse, imperfection, or even an evil principle, can surely be satisfied with a very inadequate philosophy. How could a mere blunder of some kind cause moral evil, or what we call sin and guilt? At best it could have brought only physical and mental suffering into the world, but never sin and malignancy.

No! wherever there is sin, there must be personality; and therefore the sin of the world must have had its source in a wicked and rancorous personal being, who plotted the ruin of the creation with malice prepense.

The apostolic theology is sounder, safer, more adequate, and hence more scientific than the would-be "liberal" theology of the present day. Since the devil exists, and since he has so malevolent a disposition, the exhortation to "be sober and vigilant" is very necessary and pertinent. One of his chief and most insidious subterfuges is to try to make people believe that he is non-existent, and thus throw them off their guard; for people are always least sober and watchful when they think there is no danger. But let us not be deceived. Let us keep vigilant, and we will soon hear the lion's roar in the wickedness of the world, and then we may know that he is prowling about, seeking whom he may devour. Let us withstand him, and thrust out the shield of faith against all his darts and wiles, and thus stand fast in the faith with the great brotherhood of Christians the world over who are resisting him successfully. It is a glorious fellowship in which we fight, including all the heroes of faith.

"Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty!" exclaimed one of the greatest patriots and orators of our country. We know that the statement is true, for there are those today who seem to forget the lessons of the past, and are willing to barter away the liberty and independence of the Union, won and preserved by the blood of our soldiers in all our wars. Hence we must say to the American people, "Be sober, be vigilant." However, the same warning is needed for the preservation of our religious liberty and security. Let no false prophets lull you to sleep, my hearers, and make you think there is no Satan, and therefore nothing to imperil your salvation.

## **5. The grace of steadfastness.**

“Whom resist, steadfast in the faith,” exhorts our text. In these days of ethical and religious fads, when so many people are “tossed about with every wind of doctrine,” this earnest exhortation by the apostle is demanded. If one may judge from the output of “liberal” books within the last two years, there are many people today who are wandering in doctrinal fogland, and do not know what they believe; or, if they think they have any real convictions, they have pared them down to what they call “the irreducible minimum.” Many people of the so-called “modern mind” have very small and short creeds. They are determined to accept as little on faith as is possible, and yet continue to have any faith at all. A young man once said to your speaker, “You can put all I believe in a very small measure.” We could not help replying in the language of rebuke. “Young friend,” we said, “have you ever known a man who believed small things to do great things?” He had no rejoinder. His knowledge of history proved to him that our criticism was true and our reproof deserved. For our part, we are glad to say that we have a large creed — a large number of great and inspiring doctrines to which we hold with all our might. We believe the whole Bible, with all its body of doctrines taken at their face value, and that does not make a meager and emasculated creed. Some people today have pared down their creeds until there is nothing left but the worm-eaten core. More than that, the more indeterminately they can express their beliefs, the profounder they think they are; but so far from being deep, they are only muddy in their thinking, on the principle that muddy water looks deep, let it be never so shallow. Be it remembered that the Christian life cannot be maintained in vigor and healthfulness in the atmosphere of obscurantism. What does the rest of the Bible say about being “steadfast in the faith?” Does it agree with the Petrine theology? We reply, Yes! Says Paul: “I have fought a good fight; I have kept the faith.” To the Corinthians he wrote: “Now I praise you that ye remember me in all things, and that ye hold fast the traditions even as I delivered them unto you.” This was his advice to Timothy: “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee guard through the Holy Spirit who dwelleth in us.” And again: “But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them, and that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired of God, and is profitable

for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, completely furnished unto all good works.”

Thus our text inculcates the fine Christian graces of humility, trust, sobriety, vigilance and constancy. What will be the result of the cultivation of these virtues? The apostle promises more grace. Thus we are led to reflect on —

## **II. The Grace That Enhances The Christian Graces.**

The Biblical way is the best way, the true way. What shall be the reward of practicing the Christian graces just enumerated and depicted? Not worldly honor and riches — but this: “And the God of all grace, who called you unto His eternal glory in Christ after ye had suffered a little while, shall Himself perfect, establish and strengthen you.”

Note that He is “the God of all grace.” Those Christian virtues that are so highly extolled and are so acceptable to God — after all, He is the source of all of them. They do not grow up out of the natural man, who cannot be truly humble, trustful, sober, vigilant and steadfast; they pertain only to the regenerate man, who has been transformed by the renewing of his mind by the Holy Spirit. Thus all the graces flow from the God of grace. If He were to leave us alone, we would still be dead in trespasses and sins, and would have to say, “In us dwelleth no good thing.” The initiative came from God, not from our natural “sub-conscious mind.” God first comes to us. Otherwise we would have no aspirations toward Him. Said Christ: “No man cometh unto Me except the Father draw him,” and, “Without Me ye can do nothing.”

Note again: God does not call His people to small and meager blessings, but “to His eternal glory in Christ.” What a calling is that! What grace is added to grace! Jesus said: “Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own glory, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.” And now we, His redeemed people are invited to partake of His glorious estate in eternity. Again Jesus prayed thus: “Father, I desire that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.” The apostle John was also thrilled by the prospect of the glory to

which God's people are called: "Beloved, it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." How inspiring was Paul's outlook for those who believe and practice the Christian graces: "For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself." All of which means that the glory which now appertains to the Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of the Majesty on high is sometime to be shared by His faithful people. We once heard a bold unbeliever declare that the Christian's hope of a blessed eternal future was "only an irredescent dream." Our reply was that, if it is "an irredescent dream," we hoped we should never awake from it. He himself admitted that he had no prospect for the future except annihilation. What a contrast with the Christian's hope of glory!'

The text says that, "after ye have suffered a little While," God shall perfect you. Yes, we know that for a time we must endure some trials; but the apostle Paul declares that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward." For this reason Christian people can endure their trials bravely and uncomplainingly; they know that their "afflictions, which are only for the time being, shall work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

And now all this anticipates the real enhancement that divine grace shall bestow upon those who faithfully cultivate the Christian graces: "The God of grace shall perfect, establish and strengthen you." How vitally this great blessing follows the first part of the text! If we have the graces of humility, trust, sobriety, vigilance and steadfastness, the God of grace will perfect, establish and strengthen us in all of them. He will add grace to grace, thereby fitting us more and more to partake of His glory. In this life the more we cultivate humility, the more we shall be perfected in the grace — that is, the less admixture of egotistical motive there shall be in it. There is always danger of being half proud even of our humble mien and demeanor. God's grace shall help us more and more to attain true Christian lowliness of mind, and thus qualify us better to sing the heavenly chorus, "Saved by grace," in the life to come. The same is true of all the graces: they shall be perfected and brought to true fruition by the continuous addition of divine grace. What an order of salvation is that which is set forth in the Holy

Scriptures! The more grace we develop, the more grace is bestowed; and the more grace is enhanced, the more glory will follow in the eternal future of the people of God.

"Oh, that the Lord would guide my ways  
To keep His statutes still!  
Oh, that my God would grant me grace  
To know and do His will!

"Order my footsteps by Thy Word,  
And make my heart sincere;  
Let sin have no dominion, Lord,  
But keep my conscience clear.

"Assist my soul, too apt to stray,  
A stricter watch to keep;  
And, should I e'er forget Thy way,  
Restore Thy wandering sheep.

"Make me to walk in Thy commands;  
'Tis a delightful road:  
Nor let my lips or heart or hands  
Offend against my God."



# 41. Redemption For Nature And For Man. Rom. 8:18-23. He Fourth Sunday After Trinity.

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. (Romans 8:18-23)

ACCORDING TO THE INSPIRED SCRIPTURES, God's plans for the future of His creation, including nature and man, are not small and meager. Paul, though filled by the Holy Spirit, seems to labor for words to describe the great and glorious destiny that God has in store. Conscious of our limitations in this life, he says that "the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory about to be revealed to us." The Biblical teaching is that the Golden Age is still to come; that the present is only a time of probation and discipline, in which we are to be made ready, both ethically and spiritually, for the glorious destiny that awaits us. Whatever else may be said of this doctrine, it surely is bracing to faith and inciting to heroic endeavor. While other religions are depleting and enervating, the Christian religion always buoys the heart with cheer and courage.

Our text for today is doctrinal; but even then it is just as practical as the previous lessons from the Epistles have been. Doctrine and practice should never be divorced. Any doctrine that does not have a wholesome and uplifting effect upon life is hardly worth contending for. The doctrine of our text relates to the future destiny of man and the natural cosmos, and therefore ought to inspire us to stronger faith and more courageous action. Note that,

according to the text, God's plan includes the restoration of nature, as well as the Complete redemption of man. Let us meditate on these topics in the order named.

## **I. The Future Glory Of The Natural Creation.**

This part of the text divides itself into two sections: 1. The present status of nature; 2. The future destiny of nature.

### **1. The present status of nature.**

This is vividly described in the text (Moffatt's translation): "Even the creation waits with eager longing for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was not rendered futile by its own choice, but by the will of Him who thus made it subject, the hope being that the creation, as well as man, would one day be freed from its thralldom to decay, and would gain the glorious freedom of the children of God. To this day, we know, the entire creation sighs and throbs with pain."

Where could be found a more graphic portrayal of the travail we see in the natural world around us? However men may explain it, all can see that there is something wrong with the natural cosmos. There are many things about it that are unspeakably wonderful and beautiful; yet how many things, too, that are otherwise! How much suffering there is in the animal world! How many casualties are constantly occurring over which man, with all his ingenuity, has no control! Even when men do the best they know, they are often overtaken by dire calamities that no one can foresee or prevent. There is the blight of frost and drought; there are cyclones, earthquakes and floods; there are noxious weeds, insects and reptiles; in the animal world the poet says that "nature is red in tooth and claw." One theologian (Dr. James Orr) says that nature is in a state of "arrested development"; hence its many imperfections. The text says, it "is subject to vanity," or as Dr. Moffatt phrases it, "rendered futile." The lover of nature is, right in admiring her and investigating her wonderful phenomena; but he should never idealize her and rhapsodize over her; he should see her as she is — "groaning and travailing in pain until now."

But the question arises: How came nature to be in this state of imperfection? To answer this question, we must turn to the Bible, as we must for the solution of most of our puzzling problems. Says our text: "The creation was not rendered futile by its own choice, but by the will of Him who thus made it subject." The antecedent of "Him" is God. And where do we learn that God placed this blight upon the natural creation? In the third chapter of Genesis, which describes the fall of man. After our first parents had sinned, God pronounced upon each of them a peculiar judgment; and this is what he said to the man (Gen. 3:17-19): "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: therefore cursed is the ground for thy sake: in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground: for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and to dust shalt thou return."

In this stern but luminous passage we find the explanation of what Paul teaches in the text: "The creation was not rendered futile by its own choice, but by the will of Him who thus made it subject." That is, unconscious nature did nothing to bring on its condition of imperfection, but God made it so on account of the sin of man. Remember that the first and second chapters of Genesis teach that God made all things, and pronounced them "good" and "very good." Then He made man a free moral agent, and placed him in the midst of and over the creation as its head and crown. He was to multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it — that is, mold it into forms of greater use and beauty, for God did not make nature at first in her fully developed form, but ordained that man should have useful and pleasant work to do. Placed in a garden, he still was to "dress" it; he was not to be an idler. All nature was good and beautiful, and plastic to the touch of its deputed master, who was to "have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." But when man, nature's head and crown, fell into sin and corrupted his nature, the creation fell with him: it suffered a blight of some kind; for a sinful being could not have been permitted to dwell in the midst of a perfect world. As the original cosmos was perfect like its head in the creation, so the cosmos had to be made to correspond to the sinful estate of its head when he fell. We do not see

how it could have been otherwise. A corrupt being would naturally corrupt his environment.

Thus we perceive the present decadent and arrested state of the natural cosmos. But is it God's plan to leave it in this imperfect condition? No; according to the Holy Scriptures, He has better things in store for the creation. This brings us to consider —

## **2. The future destiny of nature.**

Most beautifully does the text set forth God's redemptive plan: "The hope being that the creation, as well as man, would some day be freed from its thralldom to decay, and would gain the glorious freedom of the children of God." "For even the creation waits with eager longing for the sons of God to be revealed."

The promise of God is that sometime the blight will be removed from the natural world; then she will be altogether lovely, a fit environment for man when he shall have been completely redeemed both in soul and body. And when shall this "far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves" take place? The last two verses of the text make it plain. We will give them as clear a translation as possible: "For we know that the whole creation groans and throbs up to this time; and not only that, but even we ourselves, though we have the first-fruit of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for our complete adoption — that is, the redemption of our body."

This passage teaches that nature will be restored at the time of the resurrection of the human body, when man's redemption shall be Complete. For a time man's soul and body shall be separated; the soul shall dwell with God; the body shall molder back to dust. But on the morning of the resurrection, when man shall need a new body to be a fit dwelling place for his purified soul, God shall restore nature to more than her pristine beauty and glory, and from it shall give to man the glorified body he needs. Then once again man will fit perfectly into his environment. With his redeemed soul he shall have perfect communion with God; with his resurrected body he shall have perfect organic connection with the glorified cosmos. Perhaps the whole wonderful universe, immense as it is, shall then be his home, and he shall be permitted to study its wonders and gaze upon its beauties forever.

Does the Bible teach elsewhere that there is to be such a marvelous “restitution of all things” (Acts 3:21)? Yes, there are clear indications here and there throughout the Holy Book. Isaiah certainly had a vision of an era when there would be nothing hurtful in the realm of nature (11:6-9): “And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, and their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.”

What is the meaning of this prophecy? That there is coming a time when nature shall be subdued and transfigured, with no venomous insects and reptiles and no carnivorous beasts. Has that time come? Has it ever been fulfilled in history? We know it has not been. Therefore it is one of those inspired predictions that are still awaiting fulfillment — that is, as the text teaches, “the creation is waiting for the sons of God to be revealed.”

St. Peter in his second epistle (3:8-13) has a classical passage on this doctrine: “But forget not this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering toward you, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be discovered (R. V., margin). Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? But, according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

This wonderful passage teaches one of two doctrines: either the present material world shall be annihilated and another shall be created for the residence of God’s children (which is hardly probable); or else the present universe shall be destroyed as to its present imperfect form, its constituents shall be dissolved into their original elements, and then shall be brought to-

gether in a new way that will be perfect, beautiful and most glorious. To our mind, the latter doctrine is the more likely to be the true one. It would seem to be useless for God to create so great a universe, and then destroy it and create another, when He might reinstate and glorify the present one. If the refining fire of His judgment should dissolve the present form and arrangement of the world, all disease germs and noxious creatures would be destroyed, and then the electrons, aions, atoms and molecules could be brought together in a subliminal way and with a beauty that is beyond the powers of human imagination to conceive.

In St. John's Revelation we have further teaching that is quite clear on this doctrine of the restitution of nature (21:1-5): "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God: and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more: the first things are passed away. And He that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." Verse 10 also says: "And He carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God." Then the marvellous beauty of the city is described, proving that when the new Jerusalem descends from heaven, it shall re-Edenize and glorify the earth, making it a new sphere where nothing sinful and hurtful will ever dwell; for the last verses of this same chapter tell us about its immaculate purity: "And the gates shall in nowise be shut by day; for there shall be no night there; and they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it: and there shall in nowise enter into it anything unclean, or anything that worketh abomination or maketh a lie; but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life."

But this great doctrine of a re-imparadised world is not for its own sake. A glorified universe without a rational inhabitant to find felicity in it would be a machine without a purpose — a mere work of wonder and idle curiosity. So we are brought to the second part of our theme:

## **II. The Future Glory Of God's People.**

Our text connects the waiting of the creation with the final revelation and redemption of the sons of God. Before depicting the ultimate destiny of man, it has something to say about —

### **1. Man's present status.**

In the first verse the apostle speaks about “the sufferings of the present time.” In a later verse he says that “we groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption.” Thus, like the creation itself in which we live, we are in a state of imperfection and trial. Job put it correctly: “Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward.” We may have some joy, but it is often succeeded by sorrow. Even our joys are far from satisfying. We are all oppressed with an “unsatisfied longing” of some kind. Do we achieve one desired object? Behold, another want comes with it, and we are still discontented. In youth we are full of anticipation, and are ambitious to attain and conquer; but as we grow older, we sigh for our lost youth, and imagine that then we had our greatest happiness. Many of our aspirations are never achieved, and even those that are attained do not satisfy our throbbing and yearning hearts. Yes, it is only too true that here we have no abiding place; we are pilgrims and strangers here below. But shall the children of God repine? Shall we be like worldlings who build house to house and add barn to barn, and never are content, and have no hope for the present or the future? No; God has better things in store for His elect. Let us note —

### **2. Their future bliss.**

Well does the apostle phrase it in the text: “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed to us.” Think of your sufferings, my friend. Sometimes even a day of them seems never-ending, and you cry out with the Psalmist: “How long, O Lord, how long?” But what are a few days compared with the eternal years, yea, the never-ending cycles of glory and blessedness which shall be yours, if you are a child of God? Do you think that Paul, who wrote this sublime passage many centuries ago, regrets today that he bore his afflic-

tions patiently in the fear of God, fought the good fight of faith, and finished his course? When you and I enter upon the glory that shall be revealed to us, we shall even be able to speak lightly of the sufferings we had to endure for a little while down here on this earth. So let us be brave and faithful. Let us remember that “godliness with contentment is great gain.” “Having food and raiment, let us learn therewith to be content.”

The glory of our eternal estate is aptly described by a few capital words in the text. One of them is “deliverance.” That means the same as “the glorious ’liberty of the children of God.” It means perfect freedom from evil, from the thrall of sinful habit.

Our estate is also called “adoption.” The true children of God, we shall be in happy fellowship with Him forever, and shall be His heirs and joint-heirs with His only-begotten Son.

Last comes “resurrection,” when our redemption shall be complete, and we shall enter upon all the possibilities of our destiny in both the physical and spiritual universes of our God and Father. Surely our present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with our coming glory.



# **42. Zealous For The Good. 1 Pet. 3:8-15. The Fifth Sunday After Trinity.**

Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: (1 Peter 3:8-15)

“WHO IS HE THAT WILL HARM YOU, if ye be zealous for that which is good?” This verse, which is verse 13 of the text, seems to be the central or pivotal thought of our Epistle for today. At all events, we may gather all the teaching of the text around this verse in an orderly way, and thus give unity to the passage. The comforting, the up-buoying thought of 'our text is this: No one will be able to do us any real harm if we are followers of the good, or, as a better text puts it, “if we are zealous of the good.” Certain characteristics of such zealous people are set forth in the first part of the text, and these we shall point out and meditate upon first, thus leading up to the chief and central idea.

## **I. Characteristics Of Those Who Are Zealous For The Good**

### **1. They are to be like-minded.**

Peter was very emphatic in his insistence upon this quality among Christian people. After he had given many other instructions, he said, “Finally, brethren, be ye all like-minded” (literally, homo-minded). Can it be said that those who are zealous for the good are always of one mind? What Shall be said, then, about all the divisions of Christendom, all the quarrels that have marred the history of the Christian Church? Our reply is this: The Bible always sets up the ideal standard, and teaches that God’s people Shall strive to attain it. Nowhere is it said, however, that they achieve this ideal; indeed, the constant inference is that they fall far below it. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” Christ said to His disciples: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.” But while that is the absolute standard, and we should continue to strive toward it, no one is able to attain it in this world. Yet it is right that the perfect criterion should be held up before us at all times.

So when the inspired apostle bids Christians to be “like-minded,” he holds up before them the perfect standard. Just as far as they fail to measure up to it, that far they are not fully surcharged with zeal for the absolute good; that far some human element of imperfection still dwells in them; that far there is still room for progress. However, when the, real and earnest followers of the good are considered, you will find that fundamentally they come very near being “homo-minded,” as the text commands. There is not that foundationally destructive difference among them that obtains among other people. The true evangelical Church is a wonderful solidarity compared with the essential antitheses that prevail among worldly savants, scientists and philosophers, whose theories actually undermine one another. True, there are minor differences among earnest Christians, but they are not of so deep a character as to be mutually destructive. It is to be hoped that more and more our zeal for that which is good will lead us to see eye to eye. When that time comes, no power will be able to harm the Church of God.

## **2. They are to be sympathetic.**

This word “sympathetic” will include several expressions that the apostle next uses in the text: “compassionate, brother-loving, tender-hearted, friendly.” People who are zealous for the good will exercise all these commendable virtues. Instead of being harsh in their judgments of others, they will be kindly and sympathetic, and will try to put the best construction on

every act of their fellowmen. So far from hating any one, they will love all their brethren. As opposed to sharp criticism, they will be tender-hearted; and instead of being rude and ill-mannered, they will show courtesy toward all. Zeal for the good will bind together their hearts and interests, and will make them compassionate even toward the froward.

### **3. They will have a forgiving spirit.**

Zealous for the good, they will have no room in their hearts for resentment; indeed, for the truly good man life is too short for cherishing such feelings; there are too many great and noble things to be done to admit the small and petty. So the apostle lifts us to elevated thoughts and principles by saying: “Not rendering evil for evil nor reviling for reviling, but, contrariwise, blessing, knowing that to this ye were called, that ye should inherit blessing.” Nothing is more certain than this: If our minds are filled with zeal for the good, they will have no room for vindictive feelings. Love for mankind will be our chief characteristic. Any person who nourishes a spiteful temper proves by that very token that his zeal for the good is an absent quality. The Christian, spirit of forgiving love toward those who do us a wrong is the precise opposite of the spirit of the world, which always seeks to give “tit for tat” and to “pay back in the same coin.” When men render evil for evil and reviling for reviling, they get nowhere; they never close a breach between them; rather, they widen it; but where the forgiving spirit is manifested, how quickly alienation among men is dissolved, and the clear sunshine of good will prevails!

### **4. They are pure of speech.**

The followers of the good heed the next injunction of the text: “He that would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.” Here the apostle quotes from the thirty-fourth Psalm. You cannot conceive that people who are zealous for the good will be guilty of impure speech. Such talk certainly promotes anything but the principles of real goodness. Foul speech flows from an impure mind, for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” Moreover, it inflames the evil imagination of those who hear. If you are ever tempted to tell an unbecoming story or make a lascivious reflection, remember the ad-

monition of the text to “refrain the tongue from evil and the lips from speaking guile.”

## **5. They shun the evil and do the good.**

Says the text: “Let him turn away from the evil, and do good.” In the Christian life there is always the negative element as well as the positive. The apostle Paul gives the same precept when he says: “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” The evil must always be resisted; the good must be inculcated and cherished. “Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.” A zeal for goodness involves a zeal against evil. No ethical teaching is so exalted and thorough-going as that of the Bible. It leaves no room for sin; it makes infinite room for righteousness.

## **6. They seek peace.**

So says the text: “Let him seek peace and pursue it.” This consists again with zeal for the good. It does not love wrangling, but avoids it wherever possible. It is earnest about the way of peace. - Note the emphatic use of words in the text: “Let him seek peace.” The good man is not to be indifferent and lethargic, and let peace come in an easy way; but he is to seek it — that is, earnestly try to promote it. He will seek methods and try plans for promoting peace and good will. Not only so, but he will “pursue it;” which means that he will not cease his efforts, but will continue them until he brings about conciliation or has exhausted all reasonable means to achieve it. He knows that quarrels and warfare, so far from advancing the cause of true righteousness in the world, bring in their train more evils than they can ever cure.

# **II. Blessings Of Those Who Are Zealous For The Good.**

Great good will come to those who pursue the good. The text declares: “For hereunto were ye called, that ye should inherit a blessing.” And again:

“Who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous for the good?” Let us classify and reflect upon some of the blessings indicated in the text.

## **1. They shall enjoy life.**

The simple way in which the text puts it is this: “He that would love life and see good days, let him refrain,” etc. While the followers of the good have their trials, and sometimes very stern ones and hard to bear, yet there are no people who really enjoy this earthly life as truly as they do. Perhaps the reason of it is, they have a real purpose in life, and therefore are constantly inspired to nobility of thought and deed. For such persons life can never grow humdrum and tedious. They are never surfeited with the poor, unsatisfying pursuits of worldly pleasure. They do not know *ennui* and disgust, as the poor, flitting, frivolous worldlings do. Look at the earnest Christian people around you; do you find them the cynics and pessimists? Are they the people who complain that this is “the worst possible world,” or, if it is not quite so bad as that, it is “worse than no world at all?” Do you find them blasé? Are they among the people who have grown discouraged about education, and whine that culture simply makes men all the more keenly conscious of their misery? No! There is a different note on the lips of Christian people who live for a real and exalted purpose. It is the major note, not the minor. Instead of bewailing this world as a “lapse of the Infinite” and a “sad blunder,” they exclaim jubilantly with the apostle: “All things work together for good to them that love God; to them that are the called according to His purpose.” Yes, it is true everywhere and always: “He that would love life and see good days,” let him refrain from evil; let him seek peace and pursue it; let him be zealous for the good.

Once Ole Bull was asked whence he derived his inspiration for producing such marvelous strains from his violin. His reply was: “I get my inspiration from the hills of Norway.” It was the towering mountains of his native country, snow-capped and sublime, furrowed by green and picturesque valleys, and riven by deep ravines and fjords, that filled his soul with the inspiration that drew music from the strings of his instrument to thrill the heart of the world. So you may depend upon it, the child of God does not draw his inspiration for a good and joyful life from a low and groveling source, from the desire for worldly indulgence and lust. No! He looks unto the hills, from whence cometh his help; his help cometh from Jehovah, who made

heaven and earth. Oh! if we would live inspired and inspiring lives, we must draw our inspiration from a high and ennobling source.

Another stimulating thought is set forth in the text for the uplift of those who are zealous for the good:

## **2. They may rest securely under the divine guidance and care.**

This brings us again to the central verse of the text around which all our thoughts have been revolving: “And who will be able to harm you, if ye be zealous for that which is good?” Note how this is impressed and accentuated in other parts of the Epistle. Verse 12: “For the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.” That is why He is able to protect His people from all peril. In another Psalm the Lord says: “I will guide thee with mine eye.” This is most comforting, for God can see in the darkness as well as in the light; and so we may be secure in His protection, for He will guide us past all the pitfalls and foes that we cannot discern with our dim and imperfect vision.

But let us remember the obverse side of this passage: “The face of the Lord is against them that do evil.” It is only when we are zealous of the good that we have a right to claim the protection and direction of the divine sovereignty. If we do evil, God’s face will be turned against us.

Observe further how the text promises security and direction to those who are zealous for the good: “But if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, blessed be ye! But ye need not be afraid of their terror, neither need ye be troubled; but reverence ye Christ as Lord in your hearts.”

Oh, what consolation there is in Christ! Suffering for righteousness’ sake will never really harm those who are zealous for goodness; indeed, it is more likely to further them in the divine life; to refine and purify them as silver and gold are refined and purified; to cause them to bring forth more abundant fruitage, even as the vine that is properly pruned becomes more prolific in rich and ripe clusters. The antidote for all fear and complaint is holding up Christ in our hearts as Lord, for He is stronger than all our foes.

In conclusion, let us look a little more closely at the centripetal verse of our text for the day: “Who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous for that which is good?”

[a] Suppose that people malign you.

Well, if you follow the good, they cannot really do you any harm. They may hurt your reputation, but they cannot hurt your character and your soul. Indeed, if you follow the good in spite of their traductions, you will come forth from the trial all the braver, stronger and purer.

[b] But what if some one should persecute you and deride you for being a Christian?

Do you know that, if you will follow the good, they cannot injure you? They may do themselves fatal harm by their malignity, and will have to give an account of their misdeeds; but they cannot harm you, if you refuse to sin, and cling to Christ and His righteousness. The derider cannot hurt the good man; the derider can hurt only himself. We have known people who were in the habit of ridiculing other people; but we have always found that they ridiculed their betters, and that their fun-making acted like a boomerang, flying back and giving the hurlers themselves the most damaging stroke. No, my brethren, no one will be able to harm you, if you are zealous for the good.

[c] But suppose that some one should take even your life from you, would that not do you serious harm?

Our reply again is, No! not if you are a follower of that which is good. Our Lord told us plainly: "Fear not them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but fear Him rather who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." If a time of martyrdom should ever come to the earth again, as some Biblical scholars predict, let us remember with Christian courage and fortitude that, if we will not sin, but will continue to trust in Christ, no torture of the body can hurt the soul. Was Paul really injured when he was beheaded for the gospel's sake? Were not he and all his fellow-martyrs released from their trials through the dissolution of the body? Who was it that was really harmed by the wicked slaughter of the disciples of Christ in those cruel days of persecution and martyrdom? It was not those who died for their faith. No; it was those who put them to death. Listen to Paul's assurance for those who abide in that which is good: "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

"Up to the hills I lift mine eyes,  
The eternal hills beyond the skies;  
Thence all her help my soul derives;  
There my Almighty Refuge lives...

"He guides our feet, He guards our way;  
His morning smiles bless all the day;  
Our Holy Guardian's wakeful eyes  
Admit no slumber nor surprise.

"Should earth and hell with malice burn,  
Still thou shalt go and still return,  
Safe in the Lord; His heavenly care  
Defends thy life from every snare."



# **43. A Paradox: Christian People Are Both Dead And Alive. Rom. 6:3-11. The Sixth Sunday After Trinity.**

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:3-11)

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH has always had to contend with heresies. Sometimes liberalistic people speak jeeringly about “heresy hunters.” You have never needed to hunt for heresy; it has always been bold and outspoken enough to be easily detected. This is true today. During the year of our Lord 1919 some eight or ten books of a liberalistic and decidedly heretical character have been issued in this country by prominent publishing firms, and written by men who stand high in the offices of the Christian Church. Some of them are teachers in theological seminaries. All you need to do is to read these books — and certainly they must have been written and published for the purpose of being read — in order to see how outspoken are the heresiarchs of the present day. They are not disguising their views. If Germany is being punished for her rationalism, we tremble for what may be in store for America, in view of the serious departures of many of our leading theologians from the conservative and Biblical doctrines. Here is one of these

books, written by a professor of theology in a great American university, which boldly denies the virgin birth of Christ and rejects all His miracles, including His resurrection and ascension. Yet he calls his work “empirical” theology; and by “empirical” he declares that he means “experimental.” It must be a very meager Christian experience that has never felt the Lord Jesus Christ’s supernatural power in regenerating the soul.

Well, Paul found heresy even in his day; nor was he under the necessity of hunting for it. Right there it was before his eyes in the church at Rome. It was what is known as the “antinomian” heresy. The word “antinomian” means “against the law.” Its error was this: If we are saved by grace and not by the deeds of the law, then we can violate the law all we want to, because God’s grace will save us; all we need to do is to believe in Christ. In the first and second verses of the chapter from which our Epistle for the day is taken, Paul deals with this heresy of the early Church. He puts it in this way: “What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” That is what the antinomians held. “The more we sin, the more God’s grace will be displayed,” they agreed; “then let us go on in sin, so that the grace of God may abound.”

You can readily see that people who would reason in that way would want to continue in sin because they loved sin, not because they were anxious that divine grace should be more gloriously displayed. They were perverting the doctrines of grace; they were trying to win the favor of heaven through a fallacy.

Paul replied to them by saying: “May it not be so! We who died to sin — how shall we continue to live therein?” Then he proceeded with his irrefragable ethical argument to prove that those who are saved by grace are both dead and alive — dead in one respect, alive in another. Let us use this Pauline paradox in the division of our subject: “Christians are Both Dead and Alive.”

## **I. In What Respect Christians Are Dead.**

The text and context teach that they are dead to sin — not dead in sin, but dead to sin. Says the apostle: “We who are dead to sin, how shall we still live therein?” By this he means that, when men are saved by divine grace, they are saved from sin by that very act, and therefore cannot continue to

live in the very thing from which they have been rescued. Suppose a man were saved from drowning in a deep river. After he had been pulled to the shore and was standing on the solid ground, would he insist that he could be in the water and be rescued from it at the same time? Let us remember that the antinomian error was an absurdity, and could be held only by persons who 'knew not the a-b-c of the Christian doctrine of salvation by grace. They thought they could live a moral and spiritual contradiction — that they could be both saved and not saved at the same time. This principle, that Christians are dead to sin, is illustrated in several ways in the Epistle:

## **1. In baptism.**

Says the text: “Or know ye not that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him in baptism unto death.”

What is the meaning of baptism? It has both a positive and a negative signification: on the positive side it means that the new life of holiness in Christ has been implanted; on the negative side it means that sin has been canceled and expelled from the heart and life. It is the negative aspect that is dealt with in the text — that is, as Christ died unto sin on the cross, so we in baptism are to die to sin; as Christ was buried in the grave, so we in baptism are to bury our sins, in order that we, like Him, may arise into newness of life. This is what Paul means by being baptized into the death of Christ. He is using figurative language, but it is very apt; for what better way could it be expressed than that the person who has been saved by grace through faith in Christ has died to the sinful life, so that he lives in it no longer, but lives the holy life implanted by the Spirit of God?

This is a complete answer to the antinomian heresy: a man cannot be dead to the sinful life and yet continue to live in it. If he lives in sin, he proves, ipso facto, that he has not been saved by grace. No man can perform the paradoxical exploit of living in sin and being saved from sin at the same time. This point is also illustrated in the text in another way:

## **2. In the likeness of Christ's death.**

Let us translate literally what the apostle says on this point; “For if we have become united in the likeness of His death, so also shall we be of the resur-

rection.” Paul’s Creek was very compact. In English we must use a good many more words to express the same idea. Paul’s figure of speech here is apt: When Christ died upon the cross of Calvary, there is a sense in which sin was put to death: it was atoned for; its penalty to violated justice was canceled, and God was reconciled, so that He would no longer impute transgression to those who repented and accepted the expiating sacrifice. Now, Paul made a metaphorical use of these facts.

When a person repents of sin and accepts Christ as his atoning Saviour, there is a deep sense in which he is united with Christ in His death; he dies to sin even as Christ died, not in an expiating sense, but in an ethical sense. Hence again he, having died to sin, cannot continue to live therein, as the antinomians held.

Those who are saved by Christ are dead to sin according to another relevant illustration:

### **3. In the similitude of Christ’s crucifixion.**

Paul puts it in this way: “We know this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer be subservient to sin; for he that is dead is justified from sin.” Nothing could be more expressive as symbolical language. The apostle’s vivid imagination sees Christ hanging bodily on the cross, dying for sin. So he also sees the penitent sinner’s old nature hanging on the cross with his Saviour, dying unto the very sin for which Christ died. The difference is this: Christ died for sin; the penitent sinner dies unto sin. The similitude is this: the death of both the Redeemer and the sinner consists in the fact that the death of both is vitally connected with sin — in the case of Christ sin was atoned for; in the case of the sinner it is canceled and eliminated. Again it must be true that the person whose sins have been nailed to the cross is dead to sin, and so cannot continue to live therein.

Thus we have dealt with the part of our text which teaches the respect in which the Christian is dead: he is dead to the sinful life. We are now brought to the consideration of the next part of our theme:

## **II. In What Respects Christians Are Alive.**

We shall now find that the theme of our reflections is only an apparent paradox, not a real one. The true Christian life harmonizes into a beautiful unity all seeming ethical contradictions. Let us see how this comes about.

## **1. The Christian walks in newness of life.**

It is this way: If we were buried with Christ by baptism into the death of our sinful life, so, as He was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we shall be raised from the dead spiritually and walk in a new life. Before conversion we were alive to sin; we lived in it; we were swayed by its principles and we indulged in its pleasures; but now that the old sinful desires have been slain, a new and holy life has been begotten within us; now “old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” What we once loved we now hate; what we once hated we now love. We have become dead to the old life and alive to the new.

Let me urge upon you, my friends, that this new spiritual life is the only true, free and happy life. The text says, “He that is dead hath been released from sin.” The worst kind of bondage is ethical bondage. Men may boast of their civil and industrial freedom, but if they are living in sin, they are the veriest slaves, unable to break the fetters of evil habit. The only freedom worth having is the ability always, no matter what the circumstances, to do what is right and good. Moreover, such a free and enabled life is the only kind that affords true satisfaction. A book, entitled “In Tune with the Infinite,” was written some years ago. It is a good book. Does it not stand to reason that the person whose thought and life are not attuned to the Maker and Orderer of the universe cannot live a happy and harmonious life? Suppose you go to work in a factory. Then suppose you refuse to put yourself in harmony with the order of the institution, its rules of work, its complicated machinery and its unified purpose to turn out certain products, do you imagine that, in such circumstances, you will find any comfort and pleasure in your work? Just so when we get out of sympathy and accord with Him who rules the world, nothing will move harmoniously with us. And it is sin, and sin alone, that puts us out of joint with God and His order. It is the new life, begotten within us through faith in Christ, that puts us in tune with God and His rule over the world. A man who lives in sin is like a planet that has been flung from its orbit, and is therefore destined to destruction.

There is something very intimate in this new life of the Christian person:

## **2. His life is bound up with the life of Christ.**

“If we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him; for the death that He died, He died unto sin once; but the life that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Even so regard yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.”

There we have set forth the true mysticism, the true spiritual life. Paul elsewhere says our life is “bid with God in Christ Jesus.” Christ taught the same doctrine: “I in you, and ye in Me.” “He that abideth in Me shall bring forth fruit.” Paul says again: “I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me.” Thus there is a close and living conjunction between Christ and the believer. Does anyone ask for the inner reason for this blessed condition? It consists in this fact: “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.” The divine life was incarnated in human form. God poured all His life and His love upon the world through His only begotten Son. Is it not true, then, that, if a man is united with Christ, He is vitally connected with the center of all life and being in the universe? That is the reason the life in Christ is the best, the holiest, the truest, the most harmonious and rhythmical life. On the other hand, the life that is not centered in Christ is uncentered, and instead of revolving smoothly, it flings about roughly and injuriously in an eccentric. What a sad thing it is to be separated from the true center of the universe, to be a wandering star in the system of divinely ordained and appointed order! But what a happy lot is his whose life and thought and aspiration are all conformed to the divine plan!

## **3. It is a life of righteousness.**

While this truth is implied throughout our text, yet it is taught explicitly in the verses that follow: “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof: neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

It all comes back to a refutation of the antinomian error — that the doctrine of salvation by grace, instead of leading to sin, leads to righteousness. The man who is saved by grace is saved from sin, not in sin; therefore the new life is a life of holiness. Dead to sin, alive to righteousness — that is the maxim of salvation by grace.

Let no man deceive himself. He cannot deceive God. His graciousness does not mean that He will permit dishonest men to impose upon His goodness and take advantage of His mercy. The truly charitable man will not allow the loafer and the impostor to profiteer on his bounty, and thus prevent it from going to persons in real need. God is as wise as His human creatures, and will not be victimized by the duplicity of ethical impostors, who vainly profess a desire to multiply the grace of God by continuing to live in sin. God will detect the mendacious motive in such an attempt, and will thwart the vicious design. This is the divine rule: He that lives righteously is righteous, and thereby proves that he has been saved by grace. He that lives in sin proves by that very token that he knows nothing of salvation of any kind. He is still a stranger to grace. The poet had the right conception of the ethical offices of divine grace:

"Grace first contrived the way  
To save rebellious man;  
And all the steps that grace display  
Which drew the wondrous plan.

"Grace led my roving feet  
To tread the heavenly road;  
And new supplies each hour I meet  
While pressing on to God.

"Grace taught my soul to pray,  
And made my eyes o'erflow;  
'Tis grace that kept me till this day,  
And will not let me go.

"Grace all the work shall crown  
Through everlasting days;  
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,  
And well deserves all praise."

# 44. Contrasts Between The Old Life And The New. Rom. 6:19-23. The Seventh Sunday After Trinity.

I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:19-23)

THE PERICOPE OF LAST SUNDAY led us into the discussion of the heresy of anti-nomianism, which arose in the church at Rome in the time of the apostle Paul. That error might be briefly described in this way: Since we are not saved by the deeds of the law nor by our own works of righteousness, but solely by the grace of God, on condition of faith in Christ, the more we sin, the more will the divine grace be displayed; therefore let us continue in sin that grace may abound more and more.

We fancy that there are very few people who would or could so misunderstand the Biblical plan of salvation. However, there are unbelievers today who accuse us Christians of virtually holding to such a perverse doctrine. We once heard an infidel make this accusation against Christianity — that our Christian doctrine of forgiveness through faith simply encouraged people to do wrong. It would be better, he declared, to believe that no sin can be forgiven; that every sin must meet with condign penalty. In reply we have to say, on that basis no one would ever be saved from sin, because all are sinners, and all continue to sin, and so there would be no end to any sin-



ner's punishment. That would be an utter hopeless doctrine, and would keep people in sin through sheer desperation.

But it is not true that our Christian doctrine of justification by faith gives loose rein to sin. The history of Christianity proves that, whenever persons come to God through Christ and have their sins pardoned, they are also born again, and thus have a new and better life implanted in their hearts, leading them to righteousness and purity. Besides, the Christian knows that to continue in sin is an insincere attempt to take advantage of God's mercy, which proves in itself that repentance has not been genuine. In the verses leading up to our Epistle for today, the apostle refutes the error of the antinomians in this forceful way, which we will translate as simply as we can:

“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law, but under grace? Never! Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves bondmen in obedience, ye are the bondmen of him whom ye thus obey, whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though ye were once the bondmen of sin, ye have obeyed from the heart the form of teaching unto which ye were delivered. And having been set free from sin, ye became bondmen to righteousness.”

Here we have the crass error fully refuted, and at the same time the apostle sets forth the sharp contrast between the old life of sin and the new life of holiness. In the next few verses, constituting the text for today, he illustrates this contrast. In opening this discussion he says, “I speak humanly on account of the weakness of your flesh.” He means that, because they have difficulty in understanding spiritual matters, he will employ human illustrations, just as Christ often spoke in parables in order to set forth spiritual truths plainly and vividly. This contrast between the old life and the new is set forth under three symbols or illustrations in the text. We will reflect upon them in their order. He illustrates —

## **I. By The Symbol Of Servants.**

To translate the text as literally and clearly as possible: “As ye (formerly) yielded your members in bondage to uncleanness and to lawlessness unto (still greater) lawlessness, so now (I pray you) yield your members in bondage to righteousness unto (progressive) holiness.”

Paul here represents both the old life and the new by the metaphor of a servant or bondman. Formerly the Christians at Rome were bondmen to the life of sin; now they are bondmen to the life of holiness.

There is no bondage so galling and ruinous as bondage to a sinful life. Jesus taught the same theology regarding sin as did His inspired apostle: "Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin." All you need to do is to read history, and consider the people of our own time, to be convinced of the enslaving nature of sin. Note the poor toper [drunk] reeling along the streets, a spectacle for everybody. Is he a free man? He may insist on his "personal liberty," but he fails to realize that his favorite phrase is the slogan of his own ignominious servitude. Yes, "he can leave liquor alone whenever he wants to!" But the trouble is, he does not want to. His appetite cries for drink, and his will, being fettered by the habit, is too weak to resist temptation. The same is true of the debauchee, the slave of lust, who cannot control his base passions. Is he a free man? No; he is the veriest slave. So there are people who are subservient to ill temper, avarice, envy, worldly pleasure. Whatever form of temptation comes to them, they are so enthralled that they cannot say No. Moral weaklings, they simply yield to every allurement of evil. Take the extravagance of today among so large a majority of our people. It is one of the primary causes of the high cost of living. People today do not know how to economize. When they want a thing, no matter how much it costs, they must have it. They can deny themselves nothing. They are led by a perfect furor of desire for voluptuous living. It is the veriest slavery, this craze for indulging. The extravagance among the rich, and especially among public men with large salaries taken from the public till, has set the pace for everybody else; for the man who toils does not see why he must be denied the pleasures that come so easily to others who are no better and no more deserving than he. Thus there is a present-day craze for indulgence of all kinds; and it means servitude of the most ruinous character, even while the voluptuaries are boasting of their freedom. Better remember Christ's earnest warning: "He that committeth sin is the slave of sin."

One of the worst forms of thralldom is the frenzy for wealth. See to what lengths of obloquy it sometimes leads men. During the recent war, while many of our soldiers were making heroic sacrifice, some of them giving up their young lives on the battlefield, and while some of us were giving to the extent of our ability to the support of our government from a sense of patri-

otism, there were men in this country who were actually profiteering on the misfortunes of others, making what we do not hesitate to call “blood money,” that shall rise up in all its goriness and testify against them on the day of judgment. We read of one man who, while men were dying by the thousand on the battlefields of slaughter in France, and while many others were dying by starvation, declared heartlessly: “I hope the war won’t end till I have made my pile!” To such depths of infamy will this enslaving demon of avarice lead men. Better be a minion rotting in jail, with a good conscience, than to be such a slave to the dollar madness. Depend upon it, sin is only another name for slavery.

Let us turn the picture, and look at the obverse side. Our epistle bids us to yield ourselves as servants to righteousness. Does this mean that we must be slaves whether or not? If we are not slaves of sin, must we be slaves of righteousness? Yes, that is the metaphor that Paul uses: As you were once the servants of sin, so now you should be the servants of righteousness. But remember Paul is simply making use of this imagery to make his teaching emphatic. He does not mean that the service of truth and goodness is a galling service. No; it is a delightful service, a service of the highest freedom. Herein lies the beautiful paradox of the Christian life, that he who is the slave of righteousness is the freest man in the world. And how is this seeming contradiction resolved? In this way: Man’s natural state by the original creation was a state of freedom in righteousness; hence as long as he did right, he knew no bondage, no weakness, but had true ability to perform God’s holy will and obey God’s holy law. But as soon as he did wrong, and thus introduced moral weakness into his being, he lost his freedom, his ability to choose the good and true, and became a slave to lust and passion. This is the crucial point: As long as a man has the ability to choose the right and the good, and really makes such choice, he is a truly free man. When he loses the ability to function normally and righteously, the chains of subserviency are fastened upon him. You may hear their clanking in all his acts and speech.

Under another suggestive figure of speech the apostle represents the contrast between the old life and the new:

## **II. By The Symbol Of Fruitage.**

He expresses his thought in this way (close translation): “For when ye were the bondsmen of sin, ye were free as to righteousness” — that is, ye were not then the servants of the good, but of the evil. “But what fruit had ye then in those things of which ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now, having been set free from sin, and having become bound to God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification, the end of which is eternal life.”

The old life of sin, the apostle teaches, bore a very bad crop. He reminds the Roman Christians that now, since they had been rescued from that life through faith in Christ, they were very much ashamed of their former state and manner of living. Now they saw how coarse, crude and debasing their conduct had been. They did not care to think of it, except as such recollections might warn them never to return to the old beggarly elements of the world. Now they blushed to speak of the things they had once done without shame. When the fair light of God’s salvation breaks upon and illumines the soul, it makes the life of sin look most hideous.

Oh, the shameful fruit that grows on the tree of sin! Knotted, gnarled, decaying, and worm-eaten at the core! It is the deadly Upas tree that spreads poison in the atmosphere all around it. Its fruit is like the apples of Sodom that turn to ashes in the hand that grasps them. How many of us, when we think of our lives of sin, blush with confusion, and brush the thought as quickly from our minds as we can! Before our enlightened consciences we marvel that we ever could have engaged in such manner of life. Fain are we to forget it.

On the other hand, what beautiful and useful fruit grows on the tree of the new life in Jesus Christ! The text says it is “fruit unto sanctification,” which will issue in “eternal life.” This is a kind of fruit that is worth cultivating, because it is good for this life and the life to come. It is a kind of fruit that never decays and never grows old. It is sweet, palatable and wholesome. Just as the apostle enumerates the fruits of the tree of sin, so he gives a catalogue of the lovely fruits that grow on the tree of true righteousness. He calls it “the fruit of the Spirit,” which is “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law.”

In worldly matters thrifty people are very particular about their orchards. They plant the right kind of trees; they bud those that are naturally inferior; they cultivate and fertilize the soil; they prune the branches carefully; they

use various insecticides to destroy pests that would injure the trees and the fruit. As a rule, these painstaking efforts bring the results that are desired in abundant and luxuriant crops. Why should we not be just as anxious about the orchards of our lives? Why should we not see to it that God implants the right kind of seeds and enriches the soil with His grace? The fruit that you raise in your earthly orchard, useful as it is, is only temporary; it will not and cannot last. Sooner or later the fruit will be gone, and by and by the orchard is bound to decay. That is the way of all earthly good. But the fruit of righteousness will never perish. The text assures us that it will last unto eternal life. May all of us cultivate this kind of fruitage in our lives! What a beautiful and happy world this would be if all men and all nations would bring forth the fruit of the Spirit! Then every social, economic, civil, national and international problem would be solved.

By still one more metaphor does the apostle draw the sharp contrast between the old life of sin. and the new life of righteousness:

### **III. By The Symbol Of Wage And Gift.**

This part of the text is connected with the rest by one of Paul's logical conjunctions — "for." After speaking about the bondage and fruitage of the two kinds of life, he says: "For the wages of sin are death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Note the contrast here: in the one case the result is wages, in the other it is a gift. In the one case it is something deserved; in the other case it is a pure benefaction. Let us note the reason of this difference. Ought it not to be otherwise? If the result of a sin is a wage, should not the result of a righteous life also be a wage? If a sinner earns punishment, why cannot the good man earn salvation?

No; the Bible is right, and human speculation is wrong. Man begins by being a sinner. If he is a sinner, he deserves punishment. Is not that clear? But if he is a sinner, he does not deserve pardon. Is not that just as clear? Therefore if pardon is bestowed upon him, it must be because the person against whom he has sinned is merciful and gracious, and willing to grant him forgiveness as a free gift.

This doctrine may be illustrated in the human world: Suppose a man has done another a great wrong. If the wrong-doer is apprehended and punished

condignly, he receives precisely what he deserves; the penal consequence is his wage. However, if he should repent and beg for forgiveness, and the person against whom he has sinned should grant him pardon, it would not be because he deserved it, but because mercy had been extended toward him. You see clearly, I think, why in the one case it would be a wage, in the other a gift.

The wages of sin — what are they? The text says “death.” Here the meaning is spiritual death. It does not mean unconsciousness, but it means the death of all true goodness and happiness, the death of the true life in happy fellowship with God. That is what the New Testament always means by eternal death — eternal punishment, according to Matt. 25:46: “And these shall go away into eternal punishment.” Let me give the warning again that the results of sin can be nothing but the most baleful and ruinous. You cannot get good out of evil; you cannot evolve an eternity of blessedness out of a life of sin. As long as there is sin, there must be spiritual disaster as its consequence. You may say that some time in the future life you will repent, and then you, too, will be saved. Let me ask you seriously: What assurance have you that, if God’s merciful overtures do not lead you to repentance in this life, you will be disposed to repent in the next life? Do you have any reason to believe that the chances will be better then than they are now? Or do you think you will repent because you are in great misery? But that will not be true repentance; it will not be godly sorrow for sin; it will simply be a selfish desire to be relieved from your punishment. How do you know that God will accept such legalistic repentance? Do you think it would fit you for an eternal abode in the city of immaculate purity?

But now the door of mercy and grace is wide Open, for God has given this assurance in the text: “The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Now before punishment is meted upon us, and while there is opportunity for true repentance and faith, let us accept the gracious benefaction, become the children of God, and the heirs of eternal life.

# 45. The Blessings Of Adoption. Rom. 8:12-17. The Eighth Sunday After Trinity.

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. (Romans 8:12-17)

TODAY we desire to speak to you about the great and sacred blessings of adoption. The central verse of the text is the fifteenth: “For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear, but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father.” By the doctrine of adoption is meant that, through faith in Christ and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, we become the true, ethical children of God, knowing by our experience that such a filial relationship has been established. Is not this an inspiring doctrine — that we are indeed and in truth the children of God, and therefore His heirs forever and ever? A person who has had such an experience need not hang his head in shame.

There is a sense in which all persons are the sons of God. As our little catechism teaches, all persons, whether good or bad, are the children of God by creation and preservation — that is, God has brought them into being and keeps watch over them. In this respect no person, however wicked, is a child of the devil, for the devil neither creates nor preserves; he can do nothing but ruin and destroy, and then only if men yield to his enticements. Some people declare that wicked people are not the children of God in any

sense, but only the children of the evil one. But it is wrong to make such sweeping statements. Proper discrimination should always be made. Wicked people are still God's children by creation and preservation, because He not only gave them being in the world, but still exercises His loving care over them, so that they may have a chance to come to repentance. In this sense no person is a child of the devil. The prodigal son was still his father's son, even after he disobeyed, forsook his home, and went into a far country.

However, wicked and disobedient people are not the true and ethical children of God; they do not have His spirit; they are rebellious and straying children. So far as their ethical temper is concerned, they are the children of the evil one, just as Christ taught (John 8:44): "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar and the father thereof." This proves that wicked people have the evil one as their father in the ethical sense, not in the sense of creation and providence.

However, with truly regenerated people the status is very different. They are the children of God in every sense and in the fullest sense: by creation, preservation, redemption and regeneration. They are true children of the Most High — children in the ethical and spiritual sense. Each one can say of himself humbly and joyfully, "I am the child of a King." What a blessed condition this connotes! Let us follow the guidance of our text in describing the great blessings of adoption.

## **I. The Children Of God Are No Longer Debtors To The Flesh.**

In the text Paul puts the case in this way: "So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh: for if ye live according to the flesh, ye must die."

This verse proves how deeply Paul had thought about the problem of man's natural condition. He was a profound student of anthropology. Ethically and spiritually he had not studied man in vain. Before regeneration man lives according to the flesh. With Paul the word "flesh" does not mean merely the body, but the whole carnal or sinful nature of man. There are



people who are not what you call sensual in the physical sense of the term; yet they are unspiritual; they care not for God and religion, but live only for worldly enjoyment and aggrandizement. According to Paul's use of the term, they also live after the "flesh" — that is, after the rudiments of the world. "God is not in all their thoughts." They do not seek after spiritual good, which is the only good which God can approve; for unless a man's motives are spiritualized and purified, he cannot be acceptable to God, nor can he do anything that will be truly pleasing to Him. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." To be a debtor to the flesh (which is only another way of saying, a slave of the flesh) is surely not a very happy and honorable state. It is not worthy of people who were originally made in the divine image: The consequences of the carnal life are anything but desirable: "For if ye live according to the flesh, ye shall die."

However, the children of adoption have been delivered from this debt to the carnal life. They are no longer in bondage to the elements of the world. The fetters of the old evil habits have been broken, and they now rejoice in "the glorious liberty of the children of God." Do you remember how aptly Christ depicts the contrast between the state of sin and the state of adoption? It is recorded in John 8:34-36: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is the slave of sin; and the slave abideth not in the house forever; but the Son abideth forever: If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Paul put the same truth in this epigrammatic way in the text: "But if by the Spirit ye put to death the practices of the body, ye shall live; for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

Yes, a new and better life has come into the regenerated soul. Unshackled from the dominance of the fleshly habit, it soars aloft in true freedom to have fellowship with God and all good and holy intelligences. When Luther was freed from this bondage to the old life, he lived in a new world, and began to write about "the liberty of the Christian man." While he was in the old thralldom of the flesh, he had never a word to say about the glory and blessings of freedom. So with Paul. It was after, not before, his conversion that he wrote so glowingly about "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

## II. The Children Of God Are Freed From Bondage To Fear.

One of the most precious experiences of the converted man, the true child of God, is depicted in this concise way by the apostle in the text: "For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear, but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." The apostle John has a pertinent epigram on the same doctrine: "There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love."

And what is the inner reason? Why does adoption relieve us from the bondage of fear? It follows as a logical result. When we come to God through Christ, and know by the testimony of the Holy Spirit that we have been adopted into the divine family, then we know that God is our heavenly Father; that He feels a paternal love toward us and has a paternal interest in us. To us He is no longer the stern Judge, looking upon our sins, but the loving Father who says, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee."

Again, the experience of adoption releases us from the bondage to fear of the universe. As long as we are out of tune with the Creator, that long we cannot be sure that the universe is friendly toward us, because there are so many facts and occurrences in nature which we cannot understand and which seem to be inimical to our well-being. So we may become fearful and pessimistic. But when we are right with God, then we look upon His handiwork with different eyes, so that, even when we cannot understand the ways of providence, yet "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." Yes, one's view of the cosmos depends chiefly on one's view of the Creator and Preserver of the cosmos. In accord with Him, we are in accord with His universe, and may study it with delight and confidence.

The experience of adoption also disenchains us from the fear of man. Says the Psalmist: "The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life: of whom shall I be afraid?" And again: "The Lord is on my side: I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" Christian history proves that many a person who was timid before conversion became fearless afterward. The apostles themselves afford conspicuous examples of the transforming character of the experience of regeneration

and spiritual enduement. Before Pentecost they were fearful, and forsook Christ and fled, while one of them even denied Him; but on the great day of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and afterward, no fear of man could close their lips or silence their heroic testimony. So it was with those two brave woman martyrs of the early Christian Church, Perpetua and Felicitas. Before their experience of Christian faith, they were timid women; but when once they knew that they were the children of God, they would not deny their faith, even though they were cast into the arena to be torn to pieces by the lions before a mad and jeering multitude.

But what cowards the man-fearing spirit makes of many people! I have just been looking over some of Charles Spurgeon's sermon notes on the text (Prov. 29:25): "The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." I will quote one of his instructive paragraphs:

"The difficulties attending an open confession of Christ are the occasion of multitudes making shipwreck of their souls. In many hopeful characters that Scripture, 'The fear of man bringeth a snare,' is verified. Cato and the philosophers of Rome honored the gods of their country, though unbelievers in the superstitions of their country. Plato was convinced of the unity of God, but durst not own his convictions, but said, 'It is a truth neither easy to find nor safe to own.' Even Seneca, the renowned moralist, was forced by temptation to dissemble his convictions, of whom Augustine said, 'He worshipped what himself reprehended, and did what himself disapproved.' At the interruption that was given to the progress of the Reformation by the return of the Papists to power, some, as they went to mass, would exclaim, 'Let us go to the common error.' Thus conviction is not conversion where there is no confession of Christ."

The only antidote for the man-fearing spirit is the experience of adoption of sons into the divine household. The sense of divine paternity disimprisons the heroic qualities of the soul. Only he who knows how to depend on the divine omnipotence can overcome fear of all other lesser powers.

He only can look up confidingly and say, "Abba, Father." On this rhythmical word "Abba" Luther says beautifully (see the Lutheran Commentary): "The word Abba is one which a young child makes from simple and filial confidence in his father, crying, 'Ab, Ab;' for it is the easiest word which a child can learn to make. Such a simple, filial word faith uses when addressing God through the Holy Spirit." So it seems that even the Hebrew

word that the inspired writer used makes for the spiritual life and incites men to the courage of faith. No wonder the same writer said so positively, “Every Scripture is inspired of God!”

### **III. The Children Of God Have The Witness Of The Holy Spirit Within Them.**

On this doctrine and experience we have in our text one of the classical passages of God’s holy word: “The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God.”

On this passage we note, first, that it is the Holy Spirit who bears this inner testimony. And why is this the special function of the Spirit? Because the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son, bearing witness of the loving relationship between them — that the Father has pater-nity and that the son has filiation. Therefore when the Holy Spirit comes to us from the Father through the Son, He bears witness to us that we through the Son and like the Son are the children of the Father. What other testi-mony could He bear? He must be true to His sacred office. If God were not a Father from eternity, He never could become our Father in the true and vi-tal sense of the term; but since He is Father by His very nature, He becomes truly our Father when we accept the Son by faith; and the Holy Spirit, who bears witness from eternity that God is the Father and Christ is the Son, continues in time to fulfill His eternal function of bearing witness to the re-generated soul that it is a child of the Father. Every point in the Christian plan of salvation lies in the very nature of things; there is nothing arbitrary and mechanical about it.

Observe again that there is mutual testimony between the Holy Spirit and the human spirit. This proves that man has a spirit — an entity that is psychical like the entity of God Himself. If there were not a likeness be-tween man’s essential being and that of God, there could be no communion. Persons and things cannot have conscious fellowship. The only kind of be-ings that can have such fellowship are personal beings. So God is a person, and man is a person, and therefore the divine Spirit can have conscious fel-lowship with the human spirit. One might represent the divine Spirit and the human spirit as two flames. When they are united, as they are in regenera-tion, they come together into one flame, and both aspire upward. The heav-

only fire first kindles the human fuel on the mind's altar, and then they burn jointly. How wonderful is the union of the divine and our human consciousness!

And let me say, in the next place, that this inner witness of the Holy Spirit is not something indeterminate and obscure. No; it is as clear as the day. If a man knows anything, he knows what is the content of his own consciousness. So the experience of the Holy Spirit in the heart is sure, explicit, intelligible, as clear as any other fact of consciousness. The converted man knows that he is a child of God. His soul looks up to God, and cries, "Abba, Father."

Does anyone ask, "How can a person be sure it is the voice of God in the soul? Might it not be merely the imagination?" We answer, No! it is not imagination. It is fact, clear, irreducible, experimental fact. "But how do you know it is God's voice?" In this way: If a child were lost in the darkness and should call to his father for help, would not the father answer, and would he not let the child know whose voice was responding to his cry? Or would he keep silent? Or if he answered at all, would he disguise his voice, so as to deceive his child? All these questions answer themselves. So depend upon it, when a soul, conscious of being lost in the darkness of sin, calls upon God for help, God will not only answer, but will also assure His returning child of the identity of His voice. He will let him know that it is His heavenly Father who comes to his aid. We insist upon it again and again, the chief part of the content of the experience of adoption is this, that God is our Father and that we are His children. My brethren, let us keep this experience bright and clear.

## **IV. The Children Of God Are Heirs Of God.**

This is the last thought of our text: "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."

On this verse Dr. Jacobs says aptly in the Lutheran Commentary: "Sonship and heirship go together. Adoption implies the setting aside of an inheritance for the person adopted. This inheritance differs, however, from others in that its enjoyment is not dependent on the death of the father."

Yes; the living God Himself shall be the best and greatest part of our heritage, for we shall be His people, and He shall be our God.

And what is meant by our being “joint-heirs with Jesus Christ?” It means this: As the incarnate Son, after His humiliation, suffering and death, was restored to His pristine glory at God’s right hand, so we, who through faith in Him have become the children of God, shall share His glory and blessedness. “We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” So the last part of the text shall some time be fulfilled: “If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified together with Him.” “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”

"We speak of the realms of the blest,  
That country so bright and so fair;  
And oft are its glories confessed —  
But what must it be to be there!

"We speak of the pathways of gold,  
Its walls decked with jewels so rare,  
Its wonders and pleasures untold —  
But what must it be to be there!

"We speak of its freedom from sin,  
From sorrow, temptation and care,  
From trials without and within —  
But what must it be to be there!

"We speak of its service of love,  
The robes which the glorified wear,  
The Church of the First-born above —  
But what must it be to be there!

“Do Thou, Lord, ’mid sorrow and woe,  
Still for heaven my spirit prepare,  
And shortly I also shall know,  
And feel what it is to be there.”

# 46. How To Use Old Testament History. 1 Cor. 10:6-13 The Ninth Sunday After Trinity.

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:6-13)

“NOW THESE THINGS were our examples,” says the common version of our Epistle for the day. More literally translated it would be, “But these things became types (*tupoi*) for us.” This is said in the first verse. Then in the eleventh verse we read: “Now all these things happened to them as types, and were written for our admonition to whom the ends of the ages have come.” The Twentieth Century New Testament gives the meaning of the first verse in this way, “Now these things happened as warnings to us,” which, while it is not a literal translation, is very good interpretation.

The apostle referred in previous verses to the experiences of the children of Israel in their wilderness wanderings, their obedience and their disobedience, their fortunes and their misfortunes. He made reference especially to the crossing of the Red Sea, the overshadowing cloud, the baptism unto Moses, and the rock from which the fresh water gushed when Moses struck it with his rod. Now he says that all these things occurred and were recorded to teach useful lessons to us who live in the later times. This does

not mean that they were not actual historical occurrences, and did not take place for the sake of the Israelites themselves; but it means that they did not happen for their benefit alone. They happened also that succeeding generations might profit by them. Thus each generation should become wiser and better, because it may learn useful lessons from all its predecessors. Moreover, God saw to it that a record was made in His inspired Word of these events that would have the highest pedagogical value. How much we may learn, therefore," from the Old Testament history! It should never be laid aside. While we do not live in the Old Testament dispensation, but in the New, yet we may gain much profit even as Christians from the Old Testament history. This is true of all history, indeed; but of none is it so conspicuously true as of the records in God's ancient Book. It would almost seem that the wanderings and experiences of the Israelites in the wilderness are a recapitulation of the pilgrimage of every Christian through his earthly life. Let us see what we can learn today from the incidents alluded to in our Epistle. We find here things to be avoided and things to be heeded.

## **I. Things To Be Avoided.**

### **1. Evil desire.**

This is the general truth set forth, the more specific warning being given in the succeeding verses. Says the text: "These things happened as warnings to us, to teach us not to long after evil things as our forefathers did" (free translation). Read the history of the Israelites, and you will learn that whenever they did right, God approved and blessed them, and brought them on their journey; but whenever they did wrong, He reproved them, and sooner or later visited them with condign punishment. Ought not that to be a warning to us who live in these days? Can we not see what God approves and what He disapproves; what He rewards and what He punishes? As a nation we ought to learn the lesson. While God may spare us for a while to give us a chance to repent and amend our ways, we still may learn that, even though punishment may be mercifully delayed, it will come sooner or later upon the nation that does wrong. Israel never escaped. Even though God bore long and patiently with His people, their sin always found them out, when they refused to repent and return to God. "Though hand join in hand,



yet shall not the wicked go unpunished” (Prov. 11:21). Listen to Solomon, the wise man (Eccles. 8:11-13): “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and prolong his days, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, that fear before Him; but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.” Note again (Ps. 9:17): “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.” Once more (Prov. 14:34): “Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” So let us as a nation and as individual citizens learn our lesson in the school of Old Testament history, for God’s attitude toward good and evil is the same as it was then. “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (1 Pet. 3:12).

## **2. Idolatry.**

Regarding this sin the apostle gives specific warning: “Neither be ye idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.” The allusion here is to the thirty-second chapter of Exodus, which records the making of the golden calf by Aaron, while Moses was absent on the mountain receiving the tables of the law from the hand of Jehovah. The meaning is that the people made a feast to their idol, and when they had eaten and drunken, they rose up to engage in hilarious sport in its honor. Instead of a solemn feast before Jehovah, they now engaged in the kind of light and vain amusements that characterized the religious festivities of the heathen people around them. We know what the result was — God punished them severely for their idolatry, and many of them perished.

In Paul’s day this warning against idolatry was especially needed, for then the worship of idols was prevalent all around the Christians, and much of the meat offered in the markets was consecrated to the pagan gods; besides, there were numerous festivals and games in honor of the heathen deities. Thus it was easy for the Christians of that day to go too far in compromising their purely monotheistic religion. They had peculiar need to remember the first commandment, “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.”

But is the admonition of the text relevant today? Do we need to be warned against idolatry? Yes! and as sternly as did the people of Paul's day. The form of our idolatry is different, but for that very reason it is all the more subtle and dangerous. Many people's god today begins with a "G" — and a capital "G," too. Its name is Gold. Some one has aptly said, "There are many people today' who spell God with an 'L' in it."

Another popular god of the day is honored with a capital "P" — Pleasure. All many people can think of is some form of worldly enjoyment, and the more comical and frivolous it is, and the less instructive, the more they relish it and run after it. The moving-picture shows in which the banalities of the coarse comedian are displayed, are the most popular. Sometimes one suspects that many people today have a mortal fear of going to places that might compel them to use the gray matter of their brains. Yes, there are "gods many" today, even as there were in the olden times, and all of them are mere nothing and vanity. Money is a good servant, but a hard master. Pleasure, sought for its own sake, leads to satiety and nausea. Let us beware of all forms of idolatrous devotion.

### **3. Sexual lust.**

The text holds up the people of Israel as a warning in regard to this coarse and hurtful sin: "Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them did, and fell in one day twenty and three thousand." The record of this terrible destruction by a plague on account of sexual indulgence is given in the twenty-fifth chapter of Numbers. This example proves God's horror of the sin named, and was described for our admonition today, as well as for people of all times.

In our day we need the commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," as much as it was ever needed in the history of the world. At this time and in this country sexual morality is greatly endangered. The marriage relation is treated with levity, and is far too easily broken. People in high society often set the example of marital laxness. On the trains many people boldly advertise their lack of self-control. In many moving-picture shows the chief interest lies in the doubtful relations existing between people of the opposite sex. How often the whole plot of the story revolves around the illicit relations of men and women! All these exhibitions simply stir prurient desire in the young, and loosen their conceptions of sexual propriety. The

white slave traffic still flourishes, and the law seems to be powerless to cope with the evil of salacious impurity. Let us as a people heed the solemn warning that comes to us from the plague that was visited upon God's ancient people.

#### **4. Tempting God.**

“Neither let us tempt the Lord, as some of them did, and perished by the serpents.” How did the Israelites tempt God? The story is vividly told in the twenty-first chapter of Numbers. The people “journeyed from Mount Hor by the way to the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom.” As the way was hard, they became much discouraged, and complained against God and Moses, saying: “Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no food, and there is no water, and our soul loatheth this vile bread” — referring to the manna with which God had miraculously supplied them. Then God sent the fiery serpents among them, “and they bit the people, and much of the people of Israel died.” In other ways they put God's patience to the test. Indeed, it is said that they tempted God ten times.

From these circumstances we learn what it is to tempt God. After He has graciously delivered us, if we then complain because we cannot have every desired luxury, and wish that he had left us in our former condition — that is especially trying to Him. We ought to remember that He who comes to our rescue in trouble, as He did to deliver the children of Israel from their Egyptian bondage, will surely afterward continue to care for us and provide for our needs. We tempt God, therefore, when we do not trust Him, but repine about Our lot, and blame Him for failing to supply us with every bounty. Today people need to learn the lesson of contentment with what God bestows by His providence and grace. If we would only remember that “in some way the Lord will provide.” Even if it is not your way nor my way, yet in His own way He will supply all our needs.

In this pregnant Old Testament history we are also warned against —

#### **5. Murmuring.**

“Neither murmur ye, as also some of them murmured, and perished by the destroyer.” The murmurings of the children of Israel are recorded in the sixteenth and seventeenth chapters of Numbers. Their grievances arose chiefly

because they did not have all the physical comforts they desired. Most murmuring comes from that source. People complain very little about being deprived of spiritual and intellectual blessings. Probably if they did, God's patience with them would not be so sorely tried. In the case of the rebellious people, God expressed His displeasure with their discontentment by sending upon them a very destructive plague.

From this severe treatment we should learn that murmuring is extremely offensive to God. That excellent preacher, Thomas Brooks, reads us a good lecture on this besetting sin in one of his sermons. He says: "I have read of Caesar that, having prepared a great feast for his nobles and friends, it fell out that the day appointed was so extremely foul that nothing could be done to the honor of their meeting; whereupon he was so displeased and enraged that he commanded all of them that had bows to shoot their arrows up at Jupiter, their chief god, in defiance of him for the rainy weather; which, when they did, their arrows fell short of heaven, and fell upon their own heads, so that many of them were sorely wounded. So all our mutterings and murmurings, which are so many arrows shot at God Himself, will return upon our own heads. They reach Him not, but they will hit us; they hurt Him not, but they will wound us; therefore it is better to be mute than to murmur. It is dangerous to contend with one who is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).

Mr. Spurgeon gives an apt illustration with a touch of humor: "A child was crying in passion, and I heard its mother say, 'If you are crying for nothing, I will soon give you something to cry for.' From the sound of her hand, I gathered the moral that those who cry about nothing are making a rod for their own backs, and will probably be made to smart under it."

"Our murmuring is the devil's music," adds Mr. Spurgeon. It is the sin which God cannot endure, for He said in the olden time: "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation which murmur against Me?" Says Mr. Spurgeon again: "Murmuring is quarreling with God, and inveighing against Him. 'They spake against God' (Num. 21:5). The murmurer saith interpretatively that God hath not dealt well with Him, and that he hath deserved better from Him. The murmurer chargeth God with folly... The murmurer is a mutineer."

We have gleaned some lessons of warning in the Old Testament school which we have been attending. Let us try to learn some lessons of comfort and encouragement.

## II. Things To Be Cherished.

### 1. Temptations come to all men.

Sometimes we think our case is peculiar. We often hear men make this claim. But that comes from their thinking only of themselves, and failing to understand the numerous trials that come to their fellowmen. Paul was wiser than these egotists, for he said in the text: "There hath no temptation overtaken you but such as is common to man." Remember the case of the Israelites. Was not Moses tempted just as they were? Yet he did not yield. Did not the same temptation to cowardice come to Joshua and Caleb as came to the rest of the twelve spies sent up into Canaan? Yet those two men did not succumb to fear as their companions did. So all along the history of the world, all men have had their trials, and we should not think ours unique and exceptional. Let us brace up by remembering that all the heroes of faith were tempted and tried as we are, many of them even more severely. Had they not been tempted, they would not have been "heroes." If others could fight and conquer, so can we.

"Must I be carried to the skies  
On flowery beds of ease,  
While others fought to win the prize,  
And sailed through bloody seas?"

"Are there no foes for me to face?  
Must I not stem the flood?  
Is this vile world a friend to grace,  
To help me on to God?"

"Sure I must fight if I would reign:  
Increase my courage, Lord!  
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,  
Supported by Thy Word."

### 2. We may rely on God's faithfulness.

So the text assures us: "But God is faithful, and will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." He knows both the temptation that assails

us and the strength we possess, and He will graduate the one to the other. He will not always remove the temptation; that would spoil us, and make us weak and ineffective. But He will see to it that the temptation is not too strong for us to endure. "He tempers the wind to the show lamb."

Not only so, but the text assures us that our faithful God "will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that we may be able to endure it." This does not say that temptation will be fended from us, so that we shall go to heaven "on flowery beds of ease;" but it does declare that the way out of the evil situation will always be provided. Read the history of God's people, and see that He has always been faithful to this promise. Even those who were weak and timid by nature were always given unexpected courage when the ordeal came, as was the case with all the martyrs who died for the sake of their faith. Nothing could daunt them.

Yes, the promise of God is sure — "yea and amen to them that believe." Said a dying Christian: "Speak to me now in Scripture language alone. I can trust the words of God; but when I hear the words of man, it costs me an effort to think whether I can trust them or not." Rev. E. Paxton Hood, that versatile writer and preacher, tells in one of his books of his visit to his dying friend, Benjamin Parsons. "How are you today, sir?" Mr. Hood said. The dying man replied: "My head is resting very sweetly on three pillows: Infinite Power, Infinite Love, and Infinite Wisdom." God will be faithful to His promise through all our earthly pilgrimage, and at its close He will be the same faithful Guide and Comforter. May all of us know this by a blessed experience! Amen.

# 47. Unity In Diversity. 1 Cor. 12:1-11. The Tenth Sunday After Trinity.

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. (1 Corinthians 12:1-11)

IN NATURE there is much variety. There are the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms, and each kingdom presents endless diversity. Yet nature is one. It is all bent toward one purpose. It is a cosmos, not a chaos. It is a universe, which means (*unus* and *verto*) to turn into one. Why is it that the natural realm, with all its infinite diversity, is still a universe? The only adequate answer is, it was created and is controlled by one Mind.

When we examine the Bible, we find the same principle of unity in diversity. No two books are the same in content; no two are written in the same style. All kinds of literature are found between its lids. The scope of its themes is most extensive, ranging from the commonest everyday affairs to the most exalted subjects possible to human thought. And yet there is unity of doctrine, and also unity and continuity of historical narration from the creation to the redemption accomplished in “the fullness of time” through Jesus Christ. How will you account for the unity in diversity in the Bible? The only adequate explanation is that it is the product of one Mind.

What we find in nature and in the Bible we also find in the realm of grace. Here there is also unity in the midst of manifoldness. Varied as men's gifts are in the service of the kingdom of God, all are bound together in the unity of one purpose. No spiritual gift contradicts any of its fellow-gifts. What is the explanation of this unity in diversity? It is, as the text teaches, the operation of "one and the self-same Spirit." This "unity in diversity" will be the theme for our consideration today.

The apostle begins his discussion by saying: "But concerning the spirituals, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant." That is the literal translation. He does not say "spiritual gifts," for the word "gifts" is not in the original.

His statement is general. In English we would say "spiritual matters." Then he goes on to show what he means. He says: "Ye know that ye were Gentiles, led away unto dumb idols just as you happened to be swayed." That is, once you were worldly and unspiritual. Then he declares that they had been changed, so that now they worshipped and served Christ as their Lord. The text then indicates how this wonderful change in their spirit and life was brought about. We shall deal with this matter anon. After the apostle has spoken of spiritual matters in general, he leads out into the discussion of the special and diversified gifts of divine grace. Thus his treatment of his theme is logical; he passed from the general to the particular, from the fundamental unity of spiritual endowment to the unfolding diversity. We will treat the topic in the Pauline order.

## **I. The Holy Spirit's Singular Testimony.**

How were the Corinthians won from dumb idols to Christ; from carnal to spiritual experiences? Note the apostle's keen and discerning answer: "No one who speaks by the Spirit of God will call Jesus anathema, and no one can truly call Jesus Lord save by the Holy Spirit." If the Corinthians had not received the Holy Spirit, they would still be unspiritual, running after dumb idols; but now they are believers in Jesus Christ, and that is indubitable proof that the Holy Spirit has borne witness in their hearts that Jesus Christ is Lord. Paul's teaching agrees with that of Christ, who said of the Holy Spirit, "He shall testify of Me."



Now Paul's great statement in this verse is of vital importance in the crucial times in which we are living. Much, very much is it needed. Perhaps there are few people today who would call Jesus accursed (in the Greek, anathema). Of course, if there are such people, we may know that they do not speak by the Spirit of God, who always bears witness to the Lordship and Messiahship of Christ. However, there are many people today, yes, people in high places in the Church and the State and our colleges and universities, who do not and cannot call Jesus Lord. In the last year, both in England and America, numerous books have been issued which deny the proper Deity of Christ. One book, written by a professor of theology in a great American university, denies the virgin birth of Christ and rejects all His miracles, even His resurrection and ascension. With this author Jesus is not Lord; He is simply a great and good man who lived so close to God as to afford other men an incentive to live in the same way.

But this is not the teaching of the Bible. John said expressly: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." Paul says that He "was God manifest in the flesh." The angel of the annunciation said: "His name shall be called Immanuel, which, being interpreted, means God with us." How often the apostles call Jesus Lord! When doubting Thomas was convinced of the resurrection of Christ, he called Him "my Lord and my God;" and Christ accepted his confession and commended his faith. But the rationalist of the day thinks he knows better. He rejects the clear testimony of the Holy Scriptures, and decides everything by reason — that is, his own reason. He is an advocate of what is known today as "Modernism," because it poses as being up-to-date in thought. An acute Christian thinker some years ago pointed out clearly the difference between "Modernism" and the true Biblical doctrine: "Two life-systems are wrestling one with the other in mortal combat. Modernism is bound to build a world of its own from the data of the natural man, and to construct man himself from the data of nature; while, on the other hand, all those who reverently bow the knee to Christ, and worship Him as the Son of the Living God, and as God Himself, are bent upon saving the Christian heritage."

In dealing with this "modern" spirit a very recent writer (January, 1920) has this trenchant word to say: "But be modern and not so old-fogy!" he quotes the liberalist as saying scornfully. Then he replies: "Well, it may be just as good to be old-fogy as new-fogy. What has the new-fogy party to of-

fer? ‘Be modern,’ they cry, as if to be modern were to be right or true. To confuse modernism with truth is a grave error. Truth is neither chronological nor the particular possession of a self-constituted class of modern discoverers. Two and two make four is old-fogy, but it works very well. The law of the attraction of the heavenly bodies is very old-fashioned, but it is quite safe, and if we managed to get a new law in its place, things would go to smash. So this demand for the modern must show us something that will stand the test of experience.”

And what is that test? It is explicitly stated in the text for the day: “No one can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit,” Nothing could be clearer. If a person cannot in his heart call Jesus Lord, and worship Him as the only Mediator, he proves by that very token that he has not received the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. If that is dogmatism, it is the dogmatism of Paul, not of the evangelical minister. But is it dogmatism in the bad sense of the term? No! it is the dogmatism of those who have experienced the sacred functioning of the Spirit of God in their souls, impinged upon their consciousness. Listen: Part of the content of a true religious experience is this: Jesus is the Lord! If a man can say that truly, he has the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit testifies of Christ.

Thus we have dealt with the singular and unique testimony of the Holy Spirit. But there is more, much more in the text. So we consider —

## **II. The Holy Spirit’s Plural Operations.**

Paul next tells of the diversity in this unity. While the Holy Spirit bears uniform testimony to the Lordship of Christ, yet His gifts of grace to different individuals are varied. There are many men of many minds, and therefore the Holy Spirit adapts His functioning to their varied talents and temperaments. True, all persons who are converted are converted by the Holy Spirit, and brought to a saving knowledge of Christ as Lord and Redeemer; but no two persons are converted in quite the same way. In eternity God’s varied methods of grace will be more interesting than romance. This is Paul’s impressive way of stating this doctrine: “However, there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit: there are diversities of services, and the same Lord; there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who energizes all things in all.”

But why all this multiformity of gifts and operations? Not for show, nor for human plaudits — but, as the apostle adds: “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for profit.” Every person is to use his gifts for the good of the Church, for the salvation of men. Paul says elsewhere (Rom. 15:2): “Let each one of us please his neighbor for his good unto edification.”

We must now follow the text in its classification of the manifold gifts of the “one and self-same Spirit.”

### **1. “To one is given the word of wisdom.”**

This is an important gift in the Church of Christ. Wisdom is the ability to adapt one’s knowledge to the practical affairs of life; to make it effective in accomplishment. A man may have a great deal of mere academic lore, and yet may not be able to make practical use of it. We have known pupils who could solve difficult problems in their textbooks, but who could not solve the same kind of problems in practical life. We knew one young pupil who could spell all the words in her spelling-book, but who would “miss” a word almost immediately if it was selected from another book. So it is good that God in His grace has dowered some people with practical wisdom. The Lutheran Commentary defines this wisdom in this way: “The ability to apply the facts and doctrines of Christianity to the varied events and perplexities of the Christian life.” May God always endue men with this practical spiritual gift in His Church!

### **2. “To another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit.”**

Here we have a fine and necessary gift. What was said before was intended as no disparagement of knowledge. What is meant here by knowledge? It is “the ability to present, in due order and with clearness, the doctrines of Christianity, or its important facts as illustrated by the confessions and scientific theologies of the Church.” We need men in the Church who can specialize in learned research. While they should be engaged in some practical work, to prevent them from becoming merely academic, they cannot spend much of their time in such outside labor, or the rich and deep treasures of knowledge will not be explored and brought to the attention of the

world. More than that, the enemies of the faith sometimes display not a little erudition; therefore the Lord must raise up men of evangelical faith who can meet and match these learned unbelievers on their own ground. Suppose there had not been a Gladstone and a Wace to reply to the attacks of Huxley and Spencer on the Christian, faith, how many, many more people would have been led into the sad and dark road of agnosticism! Yes, God needs men who have the gift of scholarship. And thus far in the history of the Christian Church He has always raised up capable defenders of the evangelical faith. Today there are such men. They are more than a match for liberalists and free thinkers. Eternity alone will be able to measure the good that these great scholars have done and are doing, by their books, addresses and sermons, for the cause of evangelical religion.

### **3. “To another faith by the same Spirit.”**

What does Paul mean here? Do not all men have to have faith in order to be saved and to please God? They certainly do, and no man insists on the need of general faith in Christ on the part of all men more than does Paul. Therefore he must refer to something different. Suppose we let Luther interpret the passage for us (see Lutheran Commentary). “Not the common faith in Christ whereby one is justified before God, and obtains forgiveness of sins,” he says, “since this must be found in all Christians, even though they have not the particular gifts here mentioned; but he here means a peculiar virtue or power of the Spirit which He works in the Church, so some can do remarkable things with unwavering courage (1 Cor. 13:2).” Perhaps Luther himself might be cited as an outstanding example of the faith here mentioned by Paul. Many other people in Luther’s day had faith in Christ, and were justified and converted, but few of them were endued by grace as Luther was, who had the courage to stand before kings and cardinals and to defy the pope himself. Not all men are thus empowered; but in the whole history of the Church God has raised up men who have been “chosen vessels” of rugged and heroic faith. Such men were Peter and Paul, Polycarp and Chrysostom, Augustine and Luther, Ridley, Latimer and Knox. Oh! there has been a bright galaxy of these elect ones who have had the special endowment of intrepid faith.

### **4. “To another gifts of healing.”**

Perhaps this refers to a miraculous gift in the apostolic Church, but it has its modern application. Why should not the skillful physician look upon his calling as a divine vocation? If he does his expert work in the fear of God, it is a religious work, and should be regarded as a gift of God's selective grace. It is said that the great surgeon, Dr. Kelly, will perform no operation until he has offered special prayer. He is in the apostolic succession of those who have been divinely endued with "the gift of healing."

## **5. "To another the working of miracles."**

In Paul's day only certain persons could perform miracles. We must never think that miraculous ability was general. Had it been, miracles would have ceased to be miracles. So today there may be elect persons who have power to perform things that belong to the extraordinary sphere.

## **6. "To another prophecy."**

## **7. "To another discerning of spirits."**

## **8. "To another divers kinds of tongues."**

## **9. "To another the interpretation of tongues."**

I regret that time forbids the discussion of these peculiar gifts. In the apostle's day certain miraculous enduements were needed for the establishment of the Church. After the Church was established, they ceased to be exercised in their original form; but all of them have their representatives, only in a different way, in the Christian Church today. For example, to prophesy means to speak for God, to proclaim His Word and His Will. There are men today who have the special gift for preaching the gospel. So with discerning of spirits; there are men today who are especially called to defend the true doctrine and who have a special keenness in detecting error and heresy. In regard to tongues, some people are gifted linguists, and are much needed in the dissemination of the gospel. There are also men who have a special aptitude for interpreting languages and translating them accurately into

other languages. So we find that each apostolic gift has its duplicate in the Church of today.

### **III. The Holy Spirit's Standard Of Enduement.**

This is the last statement of the text: "But all these worketh the one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to each one severally as He will." The divine will is the standard. It is not for you and me to question why. We may take it for granted that God knows best how to distribute His gifts of grace. You and I may not know why He has called us to a certain kind of work, but if we find our place and do our work faithfully, we shall see that God has made no mistake. He always chooses wisely.

What is your particular talent, my friend? Well, whatever it is, use it for Christ and His cause. It was given to you for that purpose. Years ago, at a religious convention, we listened to a soloist who sang with peculiar power and impressiveness. After the service We said to her: "Thank God that Christ has captured that marvelous voice of yours!" "Yes," she replied, her eyes radiant, "my voice is laid on the altar of Christ and His Church."

Whatever our gifts and talents, whether great or small, let us devote them with singleness of heart to the service of our King.

# 48. The Essence Of The Gospel.

## 1 Cor. 15:1-10. The Eleventh Sunday After Trinity.

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. (1 Corinthians 15:1-10)

PAUL PREACHED a definite gospel, not a philosophy of ambiguity and obscurantism. He himself knew what he believed, and stated his faith boldly and clearly. In the early part of the Epistle for today he repeats and reinforces the gospel he had previously preached to the Corinthians, when he established the Christian Church in that city. Note how emphatic and firm his statements are. He says: “But I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I announced unto you; which also ye received; in which also ye stand; by which also ye are being saved, if ye hold fast to the word which I preached to you — unless indeed your faith was all in vain.”

The gospel he had then proclaimed to them had undergone no alteration. He did not have a different gospel now. He was no Changeling, saying one thing today and another thing tomorrow. In this firm conviction and experience it would be well if Paul had more imitators today in some quarters of the theological and religious world. And now he declares that, if the Corinthians would be saved, they must hold fast to the gospel which he has

proclaimed to them, and which he now proposes to restate, so that no one could possibly be mistaken as to its essence.

Moreover, he gives them to understand whence he had derived the good news of salvation. He had not himself originated it; he had not worked it out of his own consciousness and speculation; it was not the result of his “theologizing,” as so many “modernists” are fain to make out. No, but he says: “For I delivered unto you in the first place that which I also received.” In Gal. 1:11, 12 he states clearly how the gospel came to him: “For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it; but it came to me through revelation from Jesus Christ.”

Now it is all-important that we should know from Paul himself just what his theology was: what were the chief and vital components of the gospel he so fervently proclaimed. And we have them stated explicitly in the Epistle for the day. Three points are especially brought out, namely, the atonement, the resurrection, and salvation through divine grace. These are subjects that are always up-to-date, and that occupy a large place in the minds of thinking men today. So let us analyze these salient doctrines of Paul’s gospel.

## **I. Christ Died For Our Sins.**

Here we have the vital doctrine of atonement for sin through the death of Jesus Christ. Paul is very positive in his statements, for he was always in earnest; no half-hearted message did he proclaim. He says: “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried.” Note: Paul does not merely assert that Christ died, but says He “died for our sins.” If this means anything, it means that Christ did not merely die as a martyr to the cause of truth, but that He died to make atonement for sin. To die as a martyr could not properly be called “dying for sin.” All the Christian martyrs died for the sake of their faith in Christ, but no one holds that they died for the sins of the world. We would not say that they died even for their own sins. No; they died for Christ’s sake.

The Greek word (*huper*) translated “for” is a strong and significant one, meaning that, when “Christ died for our sins,” He died to cancel them, to redeem us from their power and condemnation. What else could Paul have



meant by saying that Christ died for our sins? Paul uses the same preposition in Rom. 5:6-8: “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly... But God commendeth His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Dying for us surely must mean dying for our sakes and to save us from the just penalty of our sins. Paul used the precise word that should have been used to teach the doctrine of substitutionary atonement. If his words do not mean that, he used words in an obscure and confusing way. If that is what he means, every phrase and word he employed was rife with significance and radiant with meaning.

Worthy of note is the fact that Paul says, “Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.” To what Scriptures did he refer? Paul always meant the Old Testament when he used the term “Scriptures.” But what parts of the Old Testament would he have had in mind? Surely those portions that said something about the Messiah who would “die for sin.” Other parts would have been irrelevant to his theme. Where do we have this teaching in the Old Testament? The clearest passages are found in Isaiah 53:5, 6: “He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have gone every one unto his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” In these passages, and others like them, we have plainly taught the doctrine of vicarious atonement — that Christ suffered the penalty of our transgressions in our stead. Otherwise how could the stripes which we should have received been laid upon Him? The key to all the passages which refer to Christ’s death and its effect in saving us from sin is this: substitutional atonement. Without that key they cannot be rationally interpreted. If you lose the key to your house, you will have a hard time getting into it; but if you hold the key in your hand, it is a very simple matter to enter. Oh! let us not throw away the key that unlocks the high and sacred meaning of God’s holy Book.

And what is the sweet reasonableness of this great doctrine that Christ died “to make propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 22:2; 4:10)? It is simply this: God, in His earnest love for fallen man, desired to save him from his sins and from their just consequences; but God is an ethical being, and His justice must be upheld even while He shows mercy to sinful man. So God decided to take the penalty upon Himself in man’s stead, and this He did in the person of His

eternal Son who became incarnate and suffered as the God-man in our place. Thus God could be just and merciful at the same time. He showed grace and love, and also proved Himself just, in the one ethical transaction. If it should be said that one man could not atone for the sins of another, that may be true; but the Son of God could do that, because the Triune God is Himself the ground and source of both love and moral law.

So much for the atonement as a component part of Paul's gospel. But there is another vital element in the gospel preached by our great apostle.

### ##II. Christ Rose From The Dead.

Observe that the apostles almost always combined the death of Christ and His resurrection. When Peter preached so powerfully on the day of Pentecost under the influence of the Holy Spirit, he proclaimed Christ crucified and resurrected. The book of the Acts says that Paul "preached Christ and the resurrection." This he did on Mars Hill, and when he stood before Felix, Festus and Agrippa. He also says (Rom. 4:25): "Who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification." Again (2 Cor. 5:14, 15): "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they should live no longer unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again."

Paul is just as insistent on the resurrection of Christ as he is upon His atoning death. Note, he says that Christ "was buried." Why does he add this after saying that Christ really died. He would not have been buried until His followers were sure He was dead. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, before they interred Him in the sepulcher, would have left no means untried to convince themselves that all physical vitality had gone from His body. He was buried because He had really died.

What follows? If He was really dead and buried, then, if He appeared afterward, His resurrection must have been a fact. With Paul there was no doubt about the miracle of the resurrection. If Christ did not rise from the dead, there was no proof of His Messiahship, but if He did rise from the dead, as He had promised again and again that He would, then the evidence of His Messiahship was undeniable, and Paul had a true gospel to proclaim.

However, the apostle was not satisfied merely to assert dogmatically that Christ had risen from the dead, but proceeded to give the proofs. He mentions six instances in which Jesus appeared to His disciples after He had come forth alive from the grave. Such first-hand testimony cannot justly be called in question. What object would those people have had in declaring

that they had seen the risen Lord if they did not see Him? They received no worldly advantage by making such a claim. Indeed, some of them had to suffer and even die for their testimony. They must, therefore, have been thoroughly convinced that Christ had risen, or they would not have staked their all, as they did, upon that belief. They were good people, and therefore they would have had no desire to deceive. They proved their sincerity by their willingness to suffer and die for the gospel of the risen Savior. They lived and taught in so sober and calm a way that we cannot lay their advocacy to fanaticism. So the only reasonable attitude is to accept their testimony as competent and truthful witnesses. If we do that, we, like Paul, have a blessed and inspiring gospel to proclaim. Let us examine Paul's witnesses.

"He was seen of Cephas," says Paul. How did Paul know this? When He (Paul) went down to Jerusalem after his conversion, he met Peter. Do you suppose that Peter, who so boldly preached Christ and the resurrection on the day of Pentecost, did not tell Paul of the wonderful events of the first Easter morning, when he went to the tomb and met the risen Master? Do you think that Peter could ever forget that solemn event? And was Peter's testimony of the Competent kind? Yes; for he had been very skeptical about Christ's resurrection. He was one of those to whom the story of the women who had met the risen Christ seemed like "an idle tale." He had given way to cowardice, and had denied Christ. So, if Peter was convinced that Jesus had risen from the dead, and if he was willing to proclaim it everywhere in season and out of season, he must have had indubitable proof that the resurrection was an actual occurrence. Who will impeach the testimony of the apostle Peter?

After that, says Paul, He was "seen of the twelve." This refers, doubtless, to the meeting in the closed room in Jerusalem when Christ appeared to the twelve apostles and convinced Thomas of His bodily resurrection. Were the circumstances of ' this Christophany of such a character as lend themselves to delusion? Is it likely that twelve men would have seen the same specter at the same time? . Remember how skeptical they were. They were not looking for His appearance. They were rather discouraged, and thought that the cause of the Master whom they had followed was a forlorn hope. Yet here they testify that all of them saw the Lord alive. Such testimony cannot be impeached.

But there is still more verification at hand: "After that He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto

the present time, but some have fallen asleep.” Either Paul told the truth here, or else he was guilty of the greatest folly. If he was not telling the truth, how easy it would have been for some of the five hundred persons to step forward and deny that they had ever seen the Lord alive? But notice how careful Paul is in his statement. He will not overstate the case. Although the major part of the five hundred witnesses were still living when Paul wrote this epistle, yet he was so cautious and truthful that he added, “but some have passed away.” This method of careful and precise statement bears the marks of verisimilitude. Deceivers do not express themselves in that way. Is it likely that over five hundred persons would have had the same hallucination at the same time?

Note Paul’s sober account. Had he been making up a story, or rehearsing a myth or a legend, he would probably have swelled the number of witnesses to a thousand in the next statement. But not so. He was simply stating the truth as he knew it. So, after saying that Christ was seen by more than five hundred at one time, he adds simply and veraciously, “After that, He was seen of James,” only one person. Here is no writer of fiction, no framer of “cunningly devised fables.” Here is an honest writer. James was also a competent witness, because, whether he was the Lord’s brother or another James, he, too, was a man of sober judgment, the very opposite of the enthusiast who is looking for wonders and sensations.

“Then of the twelve,” Paul subjoins. This again marks the truthfulness of Paul’s claim. If he had been concocting a story, he would hardly have mentioned the twelve again, but would have tried to swell the number of witnesses. Even if twelve men who were once arch skeptics, and then were so thoroughly convinced as to be willing to die for their faith, might in some way have been deceived once, it is not likely that all of them would have had the same hallucination the second time. It is more credulous to doubt than to believe their testimony.

Paul’s proof was cumulative. He added the final proof, at least to himself, of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. He says: “And last of all, He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time: for I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God.” To what does Paul here refer? To his marvelous experience on the Damascus road, when Christ appeared to him and said, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” And when Paul responded, “Who art thou, Lord?” the answer was, “I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou per-

secutest?” Was not that sufficient evidence that Christ had risen from the dead and was alive forevermore? If He had not risen, is it likely that He would have appeared to Paul now, and would have accused him of persecuting Him by persecuting the people who proclaimed His resurrection? More than that, how will you account for the experience of Paul if he was not converted through the appearance of the risen Christ to him? Accept the narrative at its face value, and you have Paul adequately accounted for; indeed you have adequately accounted for the whole phenomenon of Christianity. Otherwise all is insoluble mystery.

Thus two component parts of the gospel preached by Paul were the atonement and the resurrection. How satisfying is such a gospel? If it is true, as we believe it is, our sins may be forgiven, for “Christ died for our sins.” If they may be forgiven, we shall be saved from their power, cleansed from their pollution, and delivered from their terrible penalty. Could there be a more precious and satisfying gospel than that? Then, if Christ rose from the dead, He is the living Savior today, and comes to us with regenerating and delivering grace and power. Then, too, we may know that man is all immortal; for if Christ rose from the dead, that means that His soul as well as His physical organism was alive. There cannot be a body without a living, conscious soul. So if Christ is now all alive, we know that He will redeem us both in body and soul, and thus our immortality is assured. Paul’s gospel is the only adequate and satisfying one. Who has anything better to offer in its place? I have read of many “modern substitutes for Christianity.” I can find none that meets the needs of the soul. But Christianity, with its complete system of beneficent and uplifting doctrines, does meet those needs.

From the two vital constituents of the gospel just discussed flows the third named in our text.

### **III. All That We Are As Christians Is Due To Divine Grace.**

Let our great apostle tell the beautiful story: “But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

Truly, truly Paul was logical. If Christ died for our sins and rose again for our justification, then we could by no means save ourselves; and therefore our salvation, and all that we are and have, come purely from God's grace.

We are glad that Paul did not attribute merely His conversion or his justification to the grace of God, but also his whole subsequent life. Some people, who are extremely fearful about anything like "synergism" in conversion, treat sanctification in a synergistic way; as if it were partly a matter of human merit. But that is a mistake. There should be no synergism anywhere. If in conversion we are enabled to accept salvation, it is only by the grace of God. If in sanctification, or growth in holiness, we are able to cooperate with the will of God, that is also due to divine grace. By the grace of God we are what we are. If we do good, it is because the grace of God endues us with ability. We are converted through grace; we are sanctified through grace; we serve God by grace; we are saved for time and eternity by grace. This is the great, satisfying, all-sphered gospel that Paul preached. May we hold it fast!

# 49. The Difference Between The Letter And The Spirit. 2 Cor. 3:4-11. The Twelfth Sunday After Trinity.

And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. (2 Corinthians 3:4-11)

“AND THIS CONFIDENCE have we through Christ toward God,” is the opening sentence of our text for today. The phrase “to God-ward,” used in both old and revised versions, is a very awkward form of expression in English. There is no such phrase or form in the original, and so Paul never used it. He said plainly “toward God,” meaning that through Christ alone we learn to have faith in God. Is not this the truth? Does it not agree with Christian experience everywhere? People do not find God in a satisfactory assurance except through Jesus Christ. “No man cometh unto the Father but by Me,” said our Lord. And how true it is that, when men come to Christ and accept Him in simple faith, they get a real inner certitude that God exists, and that He is the loving and redeeming God. This is an experiment that is convincing because “it works.”

But why did Paul make this assertion just at this point? We must note the connection. In the latter part of the preceding chapter he was speaking about the greatness of the gospel and the responsibility of its proclaimers. Then he cried out, “But who is sufficient for these things?” He replies by saying: “We are not like many persons, making merchandise out of the Word of God, but in all sincerity, and bearing God’s commission, we speak before Him in Jesus Christ.” By this he asserted that he got his sufficiency from God Himself. Now, after saying in the next few verses (the first three of the text-chapter) that the Corinthians themselves were the evidences that Paul had preached the true gospel — they were his epistle known and read of all men — he reverted to his previous thought, and gave the source of his confidence toward God; it was Christ. Then he led on to the idea of the ministry of the New Covenant, which is a dispensation of the Spirit and not of the letter. Let us classify his thoughts on this subject.

## **I. Who Made Us Ministers Of The New Covenant?**

Paul answers this question most incisively. Although we have this strong faith in God through Christ, he says, it is “not that we are competent of ourselves to reason out anything by ourselves, but our competency is of God, who also made us competent ministers of the New Covenant.”

First, here is a renunciation of the idea of competency for the preaching of the gospel from a merely human source. The apostle’s desire always was to glorify God, not to exalt man. Therefore he said, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves.” Unlike the so-called “modern mind,” which seems to have a furor for apotheosizing man, which boasts; loudly of human exploits and achievements, which is so very much afraid that the human element in the production of the Bible will not receive due credit, and which desires to “humanize” Christ in such a way as to detract from His divinity — unlike all this modern advocacy, Paul always was jealous of God’s honor, ascribed all sufficiency to Him, and might have said, in the language of the Psalmist, who had the same spirit, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name be the glory.”

Paul even renounced that pride and pet of the “modern mind” — human reason. He said, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to reason anything



of ourselves.” Observe that he uses a Greek word from which we get our English word “logic.” He means to say that we do not derive our gospel and our efficiency from logical processes, thus proving how “advanced” we are. Oh, no! our fitness to proclaim effectively the New Covenant comes from an entirely different source. It comes from God; it does not come up from beneath; it comes down from above. Paul did not forget Pentecost, as so many “advanced” thinkers today seem to do, but remembered that Christ bade His original twelve apostles to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endowed with power from on high. Christian sufficiency is not something that men evolve out of their sub-conscious minds or out of their natural resources; it is a divine bestowment. Dependence on and pride in mere human reason is the bane of our day. Rationalism destroys spiritual power and efficacy for the simple reason that, in its pride, it disconnects the soul from the Source of spiritual endowment. Religiously it is like cutting the cable that connects the machinery with the dynamo or power-house.

An acutely written recent book deals with “Christ and the Dramas of Doubt.” The dramas referred to are *Prometheus Bound*, the Book of Job, *Hamlet*, Goethe’s *Faust*, and Ibsen’s *Brand*. All of them treat of the doubts that come to the mind from the problem of evil in the world. The analysis of Goethe’s *Faust* is especially incisive. And why is it that Goethe failed to solve his problem? For with all his labored effort, he does not solve it in his great drama of Faust and his evil genius, Mephistopheles. Why? Because he left God out of his scheme of life and the world. “Herein,” says our author, “lay the source of his doubt and also the incompleteness of his final answer to the problem... . This was the standpoint and the source of skepticism both of Faust and of Goethe... Man himself is a lonely, inexplicable tragedy, except as behind nature there is a directing Personality, a Mind that can fellowship with his. This was the one element which Faust failed to bring to the world of knowledge, and, later, to the world of nature. Hence there should be no surprise that, in searching a supposedly aimless universe, one should return on one’s weary way disappointed and in despair.” Later the author asks this pertinent question: “How can one who has lost the sense of a personal God in the universe come to that knowledge that will satisfy?”

Yes, my friends, this is the secret of the moral and spiritual inefficiency and the general discontent of our age: men are seeking to glorify man and exalt human reason, and are crowding God out of their lives; at least they are trying to reduce the supernatural in life to the veriest minimum. Is it any

wonder that human souls are afflicted with ennui and discontent? Can the soul that was made for communion with God find rest, contentment and efficiency in that which is not God and is less than God? Nay, verily! Paul was right when he said, “Our sufficiency is of God.” Let the dissatisfied people of this “modern” age go back to Paul and his perfect teaching. “Our souls, O God, can never be at rest until they find rest in Thee!” exclaimed Augustine.

But what kind of a covenant was this New Covenant of which God had made Paul a competent minister? The next part of the text will explain that.

## **II. A Covenant, Not Of The Letter, But Of The Spirit.**

And what does Paul mean by this? By “letter” here he evidently means, interpreting by the whole text and context, the law, for he afterwards refers to the law which was “written and engraved on stones,” and he contrasts that law with the New Covenant, or the gospel. So he maintains that he was not a minister of the law, but of the gospel, for that is what he means when he contrasts “the letter and the spirit.”

Here he was proclaiming the same doctrine that he had ever been preaching — that salvation does not come by the law, but by the gospel. And what is the law? “The law is that ordinance which teaches us what we ought to do and what we ought not to do.” Very good. But suppose we fail to keep the law! Then it condemns us; it becomes a consuming fire. And is it not a matter of universal experience that we do fail to keep the law of God? Must we not admit that “we all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God?” If, then, we are all sinners, and the law condemns us, how can we be saved by the law? No, my brethren, the law cannot save us; that is not its divinely appointed function. “By the law cometh the knowledge of sin.” Therefore, as Paul says, the New Covenant, of which God has made us competent ministers, is “not of the letter,” “for the letter killeth.” In civil matters the same is true. The violator of the law cannot be saved by the thing that condemns him and pronounces sentence upon him. How then can sinners against the divine law hope to be saved by the law? Yes, “the letter killeth.”

But there is “something better for the sons of God.” Paul, the inspired teacher of the true doctrine, tells us that he was a minister of the Spirit, for “the Spirit giveth life.”

Christ gave the seminal principles for the gospel, and then the Holy Spirit endued and guided Paul to unfold those principles more fully, so that the doctrine might be plain enough for the most unlettered sinner to understand. The New Covenant of the Spirit is only another Pauline way of designating the gospel. And what is the gospel? It is “that which offers grace to me in Jesus Christ.” Well, here, then, is something we can all do, no matter how weak and sinful we may be; we can accept God’s help and mercy which He offers to us so freely and graciously. The poorest beggar can accept a benefaction. At least, as long as he has life in him, he can let a generous person help and feed him. So, if you and I as sinners cannot keep the law and thereby save ourselves, we can accept salvation by God’s gratuitous grace. This is the good news of the Spirit in contrast with the fateful voice of condemnation which we hear in the letter of the law.

Now Paul was logical and consistent when he declared that, for the preaching of such a doctrine, men are not sufficient in themselves. For preaching a poor and inadequate doctrine of human reason some men may have a sort of quasi-ability, and may make it sound very euphonious and plausible. Hence they aver that we are saved by our own goodness, our own character, or our own sacrifices. That is the way of human pride, and therefore the way of human inefficacy. But when men turn from such vain human endeavors, and seek a way of real salvation which is by the gospel of pure grace, they must look to God alone; they must reach out and grasp the supernatural; they must go to the God who is plenteous in mercy and ready and able to save. Hence the logic of the gospel: in it our sufficiency is of God; it cannot be otherwise. Will anyone tell me how men can be saved by grace, which is the gospel way, without getting help directly from God? Salvation through the Spirit connotes immediate contact with the God of mercy and grace.

Let me direct your minds to another thought on this part of our theme. There is a beautiful way by which the letter may be converted into the spirit — that is, by which the gospel may transfigure and spiritualize the law. Many of the Judaizers in Paul’s day (the Pharisees in Christ’s day held the same error) tried to keep just the letter of the law without trying to keep it in the spirit. For example, if they did not bow down to crass idols, they

thought they were not idolaters, but real keepers of the first commandment, even though their affections may have been far from God. So if on the Sabbath Day they did no manual work, they thought they were extremely pious, even though their hearts were full of pride and contempt of their fellowmen. This was trying to keep the letter while violating the spirit of the law itself. How true is the text, then, when it says, “The letter killeth!”

Right here is where the New Covenant of the Spirit is needed. When the sinner comes to Christ by faith, and is saved by divine grace, the Holy Spirit infuses a new ethical and spiritual life into his soul; and now he loves God and his fellowmen and keeps the law of God in the spirit, and not merely according to the letter. That is what God inspired one of His prophets to write (Jer. 31:33, 34): “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Jehovah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.” The letter to the Hebrews (ch. 10:16, 17) quotes this passage, and refers it to the New Covenant. This is the divine reasonableness and beauty of the gospel: when the Holy Spirit breathes the new life into the soul, He inscribes the holy law of God in a living way upon it, so that it no longer keeps merely the letter of the law, but also, and much more, the spirit. The gospel cleanses and renews the very fountain springs of man’s being. Paul knew this from experience when he said, “But the Spirit quickeneth;” and so may you and I know it.

### **III. The Superior Glory Of The Gospel Over The Law.**

This part of our theme is set forth in a series of propositions in the rest of the text. Let us note these contrasts, and observe how strikingly they are brought out.

#### **1. The contrast of life and death.**

Read what Paul says (I will simplify and modernize the language somewhat): “For if the ministry of death in letters engraved in stones was produced with such glory that the children of Israel could not look upon the

face of Moses on account of its glory, though it was only a passing glory; how much more glorious shall be the ministry of the Spirit?"

Paul refers here to the time when Moses communed with God on Mount Sinai, and received the Ten Commandments from His hand, and when, as the prophet came down the mountain side, his face was so radiant with the glory of God ' that the Israelites could not look upon it. And yet Paul says the giving of the law was the ministration of death, because all men were sinners, and therefore the law can do nothing but condemn them and bring death upon them. If that kind of a death-dealing ordinance was glorious, how much more glorious is the gospel, which is the ministration of life and salvation? If the outward manifestation for the time being is not so glorious, yet the radiant light shining in the soul that is saved by the gospel is brighter than the light of any merely material luminary. However, the glory of Christ at God's right hand is the final consummation of the gospel, and in that glory we shall share if we accept His grace.

## **2. The Contrast of condemnation and righteousness.**

"For if the service of condemnation was glorious, much rather shall the service of righteousness abound in glory." That is Paul's way of depicting the contrast between the law and the gospel. The law could mean only judgment upon sinners. They never could be saved by the Sinai way. Its thunders would crash around them, and its lightnings would consume them. Yet the giving of the law on the holy mountain was awful in its glory. But how different the brightness, the sweet, mild radiancy of the gospel, which, instead of terrifying with its "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not," soothes and composes the soul with the tender words, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; thy sins are forgiven thee! I have wrought out for thee a perfect righteousness which I will bestow upon thee without money and Without price."

## **3. The contrast of the transitory and the permanent.**

This is the last thought of the text. Let me give it in the lucid translation of the Twentieth Century New Testament: "Indeed, that which then had glory has lost its glory, because of the glory which surpasses it. And if that which

was to pass away was attended with glory, far more will that which is to endure be surrounded with glory!”

You know how that is illustrated in nature. Why can we not see the stars in the day time? Because the superior light of the sun swallows up their inferior or dimmer light. So with the Old Testament dispensation and the New. The Old was given amid much glory and demonstration, and had a grandeur all its own; but since the greater effulgence of the New Covenant has broken upon the world, the glory of the Old has been so far surpassed that it appears dim in comparison. The old dispensation, divinely ordained though it was, and glorious in itself, was only a temporary regime, and therefore many of its services have been annulled; but the gospel of the Son of God is enduring; it shall never pass. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.” Said our Lord: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my Word shall not pass away.”

What sacred instructions shall we gather from these contrasts between the letter and the spirit?

[1] Let us not be so vain and simple-minded as to think that we can be saved by the law, when we know that, because we are sinners, the law can only consume us with its burning sentence of condemnation.

[2] Let us turn to the gospel of grace and mercy in Jesus Christ, for there, and there alone, can peace be found.

[3] Having been saved by divine grace, let us keep God’s holy ethical laws in their spirit and intention, and not merely according to the letter.

[4] Let the supernal glory and sweet reasonableness of the gospel fill our hearts with joy and gratitude, lure us to greater heights of faith and grace, and inspire us with anticipations of the unending glory and felicity which shall be ours in the Father’s house of many mansions.

# 50. The Sure Covenant Of Grace. Gal. 3:15-22. The Thirteenth Sunday After Trinity.

Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. (Galatians 3:15-22)

“BRETHREN, I speak after the manner of men.” This is the way Paul introduces the theme which he discusses in the pericope for today, the thirteenth Sunday after Trinity. He means that he is going to use an illustration from human experience to illumine a spiritual truth. In pursuing this method he is following the example of his Master, who often drew His parables from men's dealings with one another. The gospel for today is a good example of Christ's parabolic method of instruction, for it contains the parable of the Good Samaritan, which has in it so much of the human element. It is rife with human interest.

And what was Paul's illustration drawn from human experience? It was this: “Even a man's covenant, when, properly confirmed, sealed and certified, is not annulled or changed.” Under ordinary circumstances it stands fast. This must be so, or else the transactions of human society would be to-

tally unreliable, and no man could put confidence in any contract made among men. Every legal document would be “only a scrap of paper.”

Now this is Paul’s argument: If a man’s covenant, duly confirmed, is expected to hold fast, how much more a covenant that God makes! Well, that was the character of the covenant which God made with Abraham, the father of the people of Israel. That covenant was a covenant of grace, not of the law; for Paul declares that, according to the Scripture, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness;” and therefore “the righteous man shall live by faith.” Then the apostle goes on to give various reasons why God’s covenant of grace which He made with Abraham stood fast, and could not be annulled by anything that occurred afterward. Let us note his line of argument: it is most interesting.

## **I. The Promise Was Made To Abraham.**

With Paul this was an important point in his argument, for he was a Jew and was writing to Jewish Christians. Therefore, after saying that even a confirmed covenant made among men would not be changed or annulled, he puts the matter emphatically by saying: “But to Abraham were spoken the promises.” He places the name of Abraham first in the sentence, giving it the place of emphasis. The promise was all the surer, because it was made to Abraham. Why? Because God had especially chosen Abraham to be the father of His people. In him they were all seminally wrapped up, or ensphered, as it were, and God said to him, “In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” Therefore, if God made a covenant with Abraham, who was thus divinely selected to be the head and father of His chosen people, that covenant would stand forever. No subsequent action or legislation could render it void. In Abraham and his offspring God entrusted His whole plan of redeeming grace. He looked into the future to see whether He could make such a venture, and carry it to a successful issue, for God would not enter upon so great and vital an enterprise in a blind way, but would make sure that He could achieve success. He must have seen that Abraham was the right kind of an instrument for His gracious purpose, or He would not have chosen Him. Therefore His promise to Abraham would be fulfilled. A human covenant would stand just as far as would be possible under finite conditions: how much more a covenant that God would make with the fa-



ther of a people to whom He entrusted the plan of redemption both for time and eternity! For this reason Nehemiah (ch. 1:5) addressed God in this way: “O Jehovah, the God of heaven, the great and terrible God, who keepest covenant and loving-kindness with them that love Him and keep His commandments.”

Now Paul teaches that all who are saved by faith in Christ are “the children of faithful Abraham.” Therefore we, too, may trust in the Covenant-keeping God, whose “promises are yea and amen to all them that believe.”

## **II. The Promise Was Made To Abraham’s Seed.**

Here Paul uses a peculiar method of illustration or analogy. He says: “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many; but as of one, ‘And to thy Seed,’ which is Christ.” Some liberalistic interpreters find fault with Paul’s logic here, and declare that he used the allegorical method of Biblical interpretation. We do not believe that he meant to use a strictly logical process here; he meant simply to illustrate, so as to make his point vivid, just as all parables and metaphors are used, not to prove a truth, but to illumine and enforce it. Did Christ mean that His parables were to be regarded as logical proofs? No; but having the truth, He brought it home all the more impressively by using the concrete rather than the abstract method.

So with Paul here. In the Old Testament (Gen. 13:15; 17:8) the singular number is used. Every time it says, “To thy seed,” and not, “To thy seeds.” Abraham had other children besides Isaac; therefore it was not to his seeds, but to his seed, that the promise was made. It was to be fulfilled in the single line of Isaac and Jacob. Therefore God afterward said again and again to the people of Israel, “I am the God of your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”

And now, as Christ had come of this divinely chosen singular stock, and as He was the God-man, and had taken into His Godhead seminally all humanity, therefore the “Seed” of Abraham found its singular, unique and concentrated fulfillment in Him. Paul did not mean to prove that this was the way to interpret the Scripture, but to show how it was that in Jesus Christ the entire seed of Abraham was gathered into the one divine-human

Person, including in His redeeming purpose, power and grace all the seeds of the earth. It was the “Seed” of Abraham that would save and fructify all the multitudinous “seeds” in the world of humanity. As Adam was the first federal head of the race, so Christ was the Second Federal Head. The first failed; the Second succeeded, because the covenant was made with Abraham and his all-inclusive Seed, Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

The question is, Will such a covenant hold fast? It will; Paul saw and knew by experience, and we also may see and know in the same way, that, “in the fullness of time,” the promise to Abraham and his Seed for blessing all the families of the earth, is being fulfilled. Paul’s illustration holds good; it has been verified by history and experience. All of us know that salvation does not come from a multitude of individuals, but from one divine-human Person, the promised Seed of Abraham. Thus God’s covenant standeth sure.

Luther has some pertinent words on this passage in his Commentary on Galatians: “And indeed the promise is nothing else than a testament, not yet revealed, but sealed up. Now, a testament is not a law, but a donation or free gift. For heirs look not for laws, exactions, or any burdens to be laid upon them by the testament, but they look for the inheritance confirmed thereby... If, then, the testament of a man be kept, why should not rather the testament of God be kept? ...Now the promises are made unto him, not in all the Jews or many seeds, but in one Seed, which is Christ.”

### **III. The Covenant Was Made Long Before The Law Was Given.**

Let us listen to Paul’s reasoning on this point: “Now this I say: A covenant which God confirmed previously, the law, which came four hundred and thirty years afterward, did not annul, so as to make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer by promise; but God granted it to Abraham through promise.”

Remember that Paul is pleading for the covenant Of grace through faith over against the Judaistic idea of salvation by the deeds of the law. So here he is simply appealing to the historical fact that the promise was given to Abraham four hundred and thirty years before the law was given to his descendants on Mount Sinai. Would God make a promise to Abraham, the father of His chosen people, only to annul it afterward through the making of

another and a contradictory covenant? NO! God was not so unstable and capricious a ruler as that. The law was given for another purpose, and not to displace the covenant of divine grace. Before Abraham had done anything to merit the divine favor, God came to him with the promise of grace, and “Abraham believed God,” says the Scripture, “and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” That is, he was saved by grace through faith, not by the deeds of the law, which was not given until over four centuries later.

Here again we, like Abraham, may have the assurance of faith. If we are sinners and are unable to keep the law of God, we need not despair, for God promised salvation to Abraham and his posterity on the condition of faith in His promises long before He enunciated the law amid thunderings and lightnings. Do not be afraid of the law, then, my friends, if you are clinging by faith to the promises of God. It was given for another purpose, as we shall see anon. Just now we are to remember that the covenant-keeping God will fulfill His engagement to save us by faith, so that we may be “the children of faithful Abraham.” “In thee and thy Seed shall all families of the earth be blessed.” You and I are included. Says Paul: “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure; having this seal: The Lord knoweth them that are His.” “Now that which God once hath promised and confirmed He calleth not back again,” Luther comments, “but it remaineth ratified and sure forever.”

If the law was not given to displace the covenant made by promise to Abraham on the condition of faith, why then was the law given? That is the next point that Paul clarifies in the text.

## **IV. The Real Purpose Of The Law — How It Differs From Grace.**

The law was not to supersede the covenant of grace — no, no; but, rather, as we shall soon see, to confirm and enforce it, and render it all the more necessary. Says the text: “The law was added because of transgressions, until the Seed should come to whom the promise was made.” This statement goes right into the heart of the ethics of God’s plan of redeeming mercy. The promise was that the Seed should come to save the people from their sins. But how could they be saved from sin unless they were shown what sin is and how heinous and destructive it must become without salvation?

Be it remembered that salvation is an ethically spiritual transaction, and cannot be forcibly imposed upon any one. The sinner can be saved only if he voluntarily renounces sin by repentance. Besides, he would never seek for salvation by faith in a Redeemer if he did not know and feel that he was a sinner. But how is he to be brought to a consciousness of his moral condition, his desperate estate? By the law of God only; by a rule that will tell him clearly what he ought to do and what he ought not to do. Therefore says Paul: "By the law cometh the knowledge of sin." Now this was God's ethical method of salvation. First he proclaimed to Abraham that salvation would come by promise through faith — that is, by grace. But when his people had sufficiently grown and advanced, he had to teach them that, in order to be saved by grace, they had to be made conscious of their sin, so that they could repent and come to Him and accept salvation through the plan He would provide. This knowledge He imparted in the law.

Hence the law was not a different covenant, nor a different mode of salvation; it was, rather, a revelation to help to make the covenant of grace effective; or, as Paul puts it, "a school-master to lead us to Christ." It was God's means of convincing the sinner of his sin so that he would fly to the Saviour. Thus the law does not nullify grace; it leads to grace. We must not think that the law is not good, or that it is useless because it cannot save us. The pain we feel when we are sick will not cure us, but it will cause us to hurry to the physician for the remedy we need. Thus the text says, "The law was given on account of transgressions, until the Seed to whom the promise was made had come." In Christ that Seed has come, so that now we can go to Him for restoration and salvation.

## **V. The Covenant Of Grace Is Founded On True Mediation.**

Paul next makes a statement that is difficult to understand, and that has been a puzzle to interpreters through all the centuries. Our Lutheran Commentary (in this case Dr. Swensson) says that there have been over four hundred different interpretations of this passage. Why does the Bible have such difficult passages? To make us think and investigate. Never mind, my friend. The God of both nature and grace is not averse to having us use the gray matter of our brains. So here is an expression that is so phrased as to

make us knit our brows and do some hard thinking. We will translate it as literally as we can. Speaking of the law, the apostle says: "Having been ordained through angels in the hand of a mediator; but a mediator is not of one; yet God is one."

What does Paul mean by this enigmatical language? Perhaps something very deep. Certainly a man like Paul would not have used words that had no definite meaning. He was too earnest for that. Let us see whether we can get a clear idea of his meaning. The law was given through angels, for the Bible teaches that angels were present at the giving of the law on Mount Sinai (see Deut. 33:2, Acts 7:38,53; Heb. 2:2). The mediator was Moses, who received the law from God or the angels, and delivered it to the people of Israel. God enabled Moses to stand between Himself and the sinful people, even though he himself (Moses) declared that he feared and quaked exceedingly. Now a mediator implies more than one person. In the case of the law it implied three — God, the people and Moses. So here a third party — Moses — was needed. But such a third party was not necessary in the covenant of grace. Why? Because God is one, one in His triune nature, and will furnish the Mediator Himself, and therefore does not require the mediation of a third party. If Father, Son and Holy Spirit were not the one Godhead, and yet if the Godhead were not a Trinity, God never could become the Mediator Himself; a third being would have to be found. But that would be impossible, for the only one who can mediate between divine justice and guilty sinners is the Divine Being Himself, who is the ground and source of all moral principles and moral law. He only can make expiation for the sins of the whole world. The divine one alone can give sufficient value to a person to make His suffering an equivalent to the eternal principle of justice for the sins of the millions of the race.

Thus in the case of the law there had to be and could be a third party, namely, Moses, as a mediator; but in the covenant of grace God is directly one of the parties, and Himself makes the mediation between Himself and man. If He should give His moral law directly to sinful people, they would be destroyed; they could not endure the ethical purity and condemning power of the law; but when God comes to men in the way of grace, He comes gently, meekly, lovingly, beneficently, as He did in the gift and incarnation of the Son, who is one in essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit. And so this doctrine goes to the root of the matter: Moses, though a mediator between God and man, being a third party, could not make real atone-

ment for sin; indeed, he was a sinner himself, and needed the real mediation. But Christ, being in His essence one God and a member of the eternal Trinity, could be such a Mediator as would cancel sin by taking its penalty upon Himself, thus in His own person making peace between God and man. No merely human being could have made such propitiation; he would not be sufficient in love, nor in power, nor in ethical purity and value. That was a work that the incarnate God alone could accomplish, and hence it was the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham that in his Seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. It was the sacrifice of the God-man alone that could enable God to preserve His justice and uphold His moral economy, and at the same time show mercy to the sinner who believes in Him. That this is the correct interpretation is proved from what follows in the text, and this we must consider.

## **V. Law And Grace Concur In The Same Saving Work.**

Paul says: "Is the law, then, against the promises of God?" That is, if God, being one, needs no mediator outside of Himself in the covenant of grace, does that mean that grace and law are opposed to each other? No; for "if a law was given which was able to quicken, verily righteousness would have been by the law; but the Scripture hath shut up all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."

That Christ, the God-man, one in divine essence with the other members of the Godhead, is the true Mediator is proved by the fact that it is through faith in Him that the promise of salvation can be realized. Thus the law and divine grace work together, the law convicting of sin and proving the need of salvation; divine grace offering and conveying that salvation. Thus the original covenant made to faithful Abraham stands sure, and gives to all believers an anchor of hope and certitude.

# 51. Two Kinds Of Fruit — Carnal And Spiritual. Gal. 5:16-24. The Fourteenth Sunday After Trinity.

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. (Galatians 5:16-24)

LET ME call your attention first today to the contrasts of the Bible. It is not a book that mixes things that are different. Everywhere in the Good Book a dualism is taught. God and the world are not one but two. Matter and mind are two different entities, and cannot be merged or forced into one substance. Right and wrong are not only two different principles, but two utterly antagonistic principles. This is the stalwart teaching of the Bible. Needless to say it is fundamentally different from much of the teaching of modern people who hold anti-Christian world-views. They have a disposition to blur or elide all differences, to blot out all distinctions. All of them are monists; a monist is one who holds that there is only one substance. The pantheist is a monist who merges God. and the universe into one essence, and calls the universe God, but denies His transcendence and personality. The materialist is a monist who says that there is no God, but that matter is the only substance; that even mind is not a separate entity, but is only the result of certain combinations of atoms and molecules. One materialist declares, "as the liver secretes bile, so the brain secretes thought."

Now what do these monists do with regard to right and wrong? Well, just as they blur or abolish other differences, so they destroy the distinction between right and wrong. You can easily see that if everything is the result of material evolution without God, it is idle to call one thing right and another wrong. The same is true if the universe is God.

Not so the Bible. It says that God is distinct from the cosmos, and is a holy personality; therefore what is right is in accordance with His will, while the wrong is everything that is contrary to His will and nature. See how clear and how superior is the teaching of God's inspired Word, which says: "Woe unto them that call good evil and evil good; that put light for darkness and darkness for light; that call bitter sweet and sweet bitter!" Here is no blurring of fundamental distinctions.

Now our text today draws a sharp and clean-cut distinction between good and evil, between the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit. Let us therefore note —

## **I. A Deadly Antagonism.**

This antagonism is between carnality and spirituality; therefore between the good and the evil. Says Paul: "But I say, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall in nowise fulfill the lust of the flesh." That is what I would call a fundamental doctrine of our holy religion: the ethical character of the Holy Spirit and that of the lusts of the flesh are so antagonistic that a person cannot live according to both at the same time. Righteousness and sin are impenetrable to each other. They cannot dwell together in the same heart. Says Paul elsewhere (2 Cor. 6:14,15): "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever?" Yes, my brethren, if you walk by the Spirit of God, you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

Then Paul brings out the contrast between good and evil still more sharply. Let us translate his statement literally: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: these things are opposed to each other, so that ye should not do whatsoever things ye may desire."

See the irreducible conflict between the Holy Spirit and sin; between the good and evil. They crave different things entirely; they fight each other to



the death. In the final outcome one or the other must be vanquished; and we know that, according to the teaching of the Bible, the good shall be the victor; for “there shall be new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.” If you and I would be on the Victor’s side, we must ally ourselves with God and His righteous cause.

I want you to notice another thing in this passage that seems to have escaped the acumen of many translators of the Bible. It does not say, as the revisers have it, that, since the flesh and the Spirit are contrary to each other, “ye may not do the things ye would.” No; that was not Paul’s colorless and vague way of saying things; but this is what he said: “So that ye should not do whatsoever things ye may desire.” The meaning is this: Since the flesh lusts against the Spirit, you must not always follow your inclinations; you must test them first by the law of God and the teaching of Christ, to find out whether they are the impulses of the Spirit or the enticements of the sinful nature. Yes, we must try the spirits, as St. John enjoins, so that we may know whether they are of God. One test may always be successfully applied: Does an impulse lead to that which is good and pure or to that which is evil? If the former, it comes from the Holy Spirit; if the latter, it is derived from the carnal nature.

We have now noticed a deadly antagonism set forth in the text — that between the Spirit and the flesh, between good and evil. Let us consider —

## **II. A Vital Difference.**

This is the difference between the two kinds of fruit growing on the two kinds of trees represented in human lives.

### **1. The works of the flesh.**

The apostle gives quite a formidable catalogue of them: “Now the works of the flesh are these: Fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wrath, factions, divisions, parties, envyings, drunkenness, revelings, and such like; of which I forewarn you, even as I have forewarned you, that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Well, my brethren, what do you think of the works of the carnal nature? How do you like the fruit growing in that orchard? It certainly is unsightly and malodorous. One would not think that people would want to produce such fruit in their lives, or live in the midst of so nauseating an environment. Yet how many people do! They even seem to revel in such things, and find their chief enjoyment in them. And why? Because of their corrupt nature. Were their nature changed by the Holy Spirit, they would loathe these fetid things and fly from them. The man who is filled with intoxicating drink desires to be in a coarse and filthy and ill-smelling saloon, but the man who has clean tastes would not enter such a vile place.

Observe that some of the fruit mentioned in the terrible list is of a very crass and corrupt nature physically — fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, drunkenness, reveling. Some people are tempted by sin on the material side of their nature. Their sins are mostly sins of the flesh, that is, of the body. Our first parents saw that the tree was good for food — a temptation chiefly on the physical side. That was a representative sin, and has been projected all along into a large part of the posterity of the original pair. These kinds of sins are included among “the lusts of the flesh.”

The rest of the sins in Paul’s catalogue are sins of the mind rather than of the body. They are idolatry, sorcery, strife, jealousy, envying, etc. So our first parents saw that the fruit of the tree was pleasant to the eyes, and was to be desired to make one wise. This, too, was a seminal sin, and has come down to us through all the generations by inheritance; so that today, as always in human history, there are many people whose sins are chiefly mental. Thus we note that Paul includes mental sins with the works of the flesh, showing that by “the flesh” he does not mean merely the body, but the whole carnal nature of man, of which the grossness of the flesh is only a sample. And mental sins are just as offensive to God as are physical sins. God punished many people for adultery, drunkenness, and the like, in Bible times; but He also punished the lying of Ananias and Sapphira with instant death. A lie is chiefly a sin of the mind, though it may be acted outwardly through the body. For a person to be quarrelsome, envious and vindictive may be just as repugnant to God as for one to be lascivious or drunken.

Now it is no wonder that Paul declares: “I forewarn you that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” How could people who are all covered over with lust and envy be admitted into heaven? That surely would destroy its heavenly character, and would make it very

soon a place of corruption and suffering like this sin-ruined world. No; the works of the flesh cannot be permitted in heaven. Corrupt trees, with their corrupt fruit, shall never grow in the celestial orchard. “And there shall in nowise enter into it anything unclean, or that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but only they that are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life” (Rev. 21:27). Oh, how terrible are the works of the flesh! They bring so much misery to people in this world, and they exclude them from the heavenly realm.

“Our flesh and sense must be denied,  
Passion and envy, lust and pride;  
While justice, temperance, truth and love  
Our inward piety approve.”

Let us turn our attention now to another kind of tree on which there grows a very different kind of fruitage.

## **2. The fruit of the Spirit.**

Here we get into a different atmosphere, one that is pure and rare. Note the beauty, the surpassing excellence of the fruit that flourishes on this spreading tree. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control: against such there is no law.” What a list of lovely virtues growing on the fruitful tree of the spiritual life! Who does not covet such a life? Its very recital ought to win our hearts, and cause us to renounce the gross works of the flesh and cultivate the fruits of the Spirit. The more I think of it, the more I wonder that everybody does not live the life of the true Christian, and make his life beautiful and winsome.

The first fruit of the Spirit is love. How can it be otherwise when God Himself is love! Then we see growing on the same tree the fruit of joy. Certainly! True and deep joy must exist where the Spirit of God dwells. The next fruit we pluck is peace. Of course, it must be so, for the Spirit is God’s Spirit, and will therefore bring peace with Him to the soul. But here is also a bright cluster on the tree — longsuffering. In this world there is need for this virtue, the virtue of patience; but when God, who is from everlasting to everlasting, comes into our souls, we bear trial with fortitude in view of the

wonderful weight of glory that shall be ours by and by. We reach out our hand and pluck some more fruit — kindness. And is it not true that, when the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts, He makes us feel kindly and sympathetic toward all our fellowmen, even our enemies. Wait! here is another cluster — goodness. It is one of the highest virtues. If you can truthfully say, “He is a good man,” you have paid the person thus described the highest tribute and praise. Oh, how much there is in just simple goodness! Is that all? No; here is the solid and substantial fruit of faithfulness, the virtue of the person who has been tried and proven true. God can depend on him; the Church can rely upon him. Oh! but there is a kind of fruit that does not make much parade, but its as sweet and mellow as any of the other clusters — meekness. Yes, the Spirit does not puff us up with pride, because He has shown us our sins and unworthiness, and thus has caused us to walk humbly before God and with our fellowmen. Ah! here is the last kind of fruit that is mentioned, but it is by no means the least — self-control. It is a most necessary virtue in the Christian list. If a man could not control himself and his passions, I fear that one fault would in time destroy all the fruit growing on this goodly tree. Yes, self-control is a kind of fruit that is most luscious and that seems to include some of the flavor of all the other kinds, while it has a distinctive flavor of its own. Oh, that we might cultivate all these Christian graces, and be fruit-Christians!

Inspect all these various kinds of beautiful fruit, love, joy, peace, etc., and you will have to agree with Paul that “against such there is no law.” Of course not! because all of them are in harmony with the holy law of God. As Paul says in a previous verse, “If ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” No; then you are parallel with the law, not under it.

### **3. How the works of the flesh are destroyed.**

“And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof.” There is that old tree of our carnal nature; what shall we do with it? Crucify it with Christ. But how? By looking in faith to the Christ who was crucified for sin but who rose again for our justification; then He will come to our help, and will by His power and grace and Spirit uproot the old Upas tree, and destroy all its gross and corroding fruit. Note what the Bible says: “Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.”

Yes, it always comes back to that — our hope is in Christ, and in Him alone. I have never known a person to be truly saved from sin and doubt except through faith in Christ; and though I have read a good deal of history, I have never read of a person being saved from doubt and sin except in the same way, through Christ. But I have known and read of many, many persons who have been saved by going to Him. He says: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.” The apostle Peter reiterated this doctrine (Acts 4:12): “And in none other is, there salvation: for there is none other name under heaven,” given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

#### **4. How the fruits of the Spirit are developed.**

This is told in the verse following the text. It belongs logically to the Epistle for today: “If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit we should also walk.” We have given what we think is the correct translation. In Paul’s metaphorical language the word walk refers to the outward conduct; hence his meaning here would be: If you have the Spirit of God living within you, be sure to make your outward actions correspond. A superficial critic might say that this is superfluous advice; because, if the Holy Spirit is in your hearts, your outward demeanor will take care of itself. But Paul knew human nature better than that; he also knew the divine method of grace better than the critic. He knew, as all converted people know, that when the Holy Spirit regenerates a man, He does not make him perfect at once, or destroy the old Adamic nature entirely, but sets his will free and implants a new life principle, and then bids him use his regenerated powers. So the life of grace still requires effort on the part of the regenerated man. God will not simply carry him to heaven on His hands or on a soft palanquin. Therefore Paul’s advice was sane and practical: If you have the Spirit within you, walk according to His guidance and impulsions, and thus by your outward behavior you will “prove the doctrine all divine.”

Peter was writing to regenerated people when he so urgently counseled them to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.” So the inspired writer of the letter to the Hebrews understood the divine method of grace when he admonished thus: “Wherefore leaving the doctrine of the rudiments of Christ, let us press on to perfection” (Heb. 6:1).

Yes, my friends, one of the best ways to develop the fruits of the Spirit in our lives is by the practice of all the virtues named in the text — love, joy, peace, longsuffering, self-control, etc. You have never known an orchard to continue long to bear good fruit unless it was taken care of and cultured. So it is with the spiritual life. Let us have the Holy Spirit in our hearts the first thing; that is the necessary condition and foundation of the spiritual life; then let us cultivate the graces of the Spirit. In this way we shall be acceptable to God and influential among our fellowmen. Let us pray the prayer of that spiritually minded poet, Lowell Mason:

"Oh, that the Lord would guide my ways  
To keep His statutes still!  
Oh, that my God would grant me grace  
To know and do His will!

"Order my footsteps by Thy Word,  
And make my heart sincere;  
Let sin have no dominion, Lord,  
But keep my conscience clear.

"Assist my soul, too apt to stray,  
A stricter watch to keep;  
And, should I e'er forget Thy way,  
Restore Thy wandering sheep.

"Make me to walk in Thy commands;  
'Tis a delightful road:  
Nor let my lips, or heart, or hands  
Offend against my God."

# **52. The Spirit-Directed Life. Gal. 5:25-6:1-10. The Fifteenth Sunday After Trinity.**

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. (Galatians 5:25-26)

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden. Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6:1-10)

THE CHURCH, in selecting her periscopes, has not always assigned an easy task to her ministers. Some of the lessons are quite long and the thought is involved; so that it sometimes requires not a little mental effort to find the inner unity and arrange the material in an orderly way. However, the exercise is good discipline both mentally and spiritually, and leads to more intense and careful study of the Holy Scriptures, and thus helps to make us ministers truly Biblical preachers. If we were to roam as we desired through the Bible, we would be likely to follow the line of least resistance, choosing such texts and themes as were easiest for us to handle. Moreover, we would not be likely to make our sermons so Scriptural as we should. We would be more apt to yield to the temptation to preach on themes not derived from the inspired Word. So we are persuaded that the Church has pursued the wise plan.

Our lesson for today follows immediately after last Sunday's lesson, which dealt with the two kinds of fruit, that of the flesh and that of the Spirit. The first sentence will give us the unifying thought of the whole passage: "If we live by the Spirit, we should also walk by the Spirit." The best way to prove that we have the Holy Spirit within us is to conduct ourselves according to the Spirit's directions and principles. So Christ taught when He said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits," and James in the passage: "Show me thy faith by thy works."

Now let us see what is involved in the temper and conduct of the Spirit-directed life.

## **I. A Right Attitude Toward Our Fellowmen.**

### **1. Vainglory is to be avoided.**

"We should not become vainglorious, provoking one another, envying one another," the apostle admonishes. In itself vainglory or pride is an evil thing, because it is repellant to God, who loves a humble and contrite heart. If He could take pleasure in the haughty and vain person, He would not be a truly ethical God. We ourselves feel repelled by a person who is vain and conceited. Moreover, pride leads to provocation of others, because it always looks upon itself as better than others. Thus strife and envy will ensue. Abraham Lincoln's favorite poem was the one beginning with the line, "Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?" Is it not true that pride goes with so many other evils that, where it exists, they exist also, and thus society is disturbed by the spirit of division, and love and concord fly out of the door? Many a poor man's life is made miserable because of the pride and consequent extravagance of members of his family. Many people live beyond their means because of their pride, and thus are often led to dishonesty or thrown into bankruptcy. Yes, pride always consorts with a long train of other evils. It is opposed to the Spirit-directed life, which is always humble.

### **2. A generous temper is to be cultivated.**

The person who is filled with the Spirit will not be harsh and unmerciful to the erring and the weak. This Christian principle could not be more aptly set



forth than it is in the text: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in any offense, ye who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness, looking to yourself lest you also be tempted.” The Holy Spirit in the heart will always make a person magnanimous. He cannot be small and picky and spiteful. If another person falls into sin, the Spirit-directed man will not jump upon him with harsh condemnation, but will try to win him back to the path of rectitude. The true Christian is also conscious of his own weakness, and knows not when he himself might yield to temptation; then, if he has had no mercy on an erring brother, he has no claim on his fellowmen for a lenient judgment. We have often noticed this fact — that the censorious person, the person who judges his fellowmen harshly, is himself always full of faults. While he is trying to pick a mote out of a brother’s eye, he cannot see clearly on account of the beam in his own eye.

### **3. A helpful disposition is to be shown.**

The sympathetic way in which Paul puts it is this: “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” Just as Christ came into the world, and bore the burden of sin’s penalty for us, so we should help others to bear up under their burdens of sorrow or poverty or disappointment. This is one of the best ways to prove that the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, dwells within our hearts.

### **4. The teacher is to be recompensed by the taught.**

Paul, though he knew how to discuss doctrine, also knew how to be practical. Here he tells how Christian people should treat their preachers and teachers. He says: “Let him that is taught in the Word communicate to him that teaches in all good things.” Christ once said, “The laborer is worthy of his hire.” Here Paul teaches this practical lesson: Those who prepare themselves for preaching the gospel, and who must spend most of their time in giving instruction according to the Word of God, should be properly supported by those who receive the benefit of their teaching. A minister who gives himself faithfully to the spiritual work to which he is called will have no time and strength to do other kinds of work to make a livelihood. He must read and study. He must preach, and he ought to preach well; visit the sick, bury the dead, and comfort the sorrowing. When will he do all these

things if he must spend most of his times in some outside occupation for a living? Either he will make a very poor living, or his work for the Church and her spiritual interests will be neglected.

This does not mean that the minister should become rich; by no means. It would be unseemly for any man to grow wealthy by preaching the gospel. But he ought to have a livelihood, so that he can pay his debts promptly, buy books and periodicals, rear his family, educate his children, and, above all, so that he can give himself up wholly to the work of the Church.

This part of the text may be given a wider application. The person taught in the word is to communicate to the teacher “in all good things.” Some parishioners communicate bad things to their pastors. They are petulant, critical, nagging; sometimes they gossip so much about the minister and his family that they destroy his influence for good. Every now and then you will find a church in which there are one or two members who simply keep the congregation in a turmoil all the time by their constant fault-finding and bickering. Sooner or later they drive away every pastor. Such a boss-ridden church is to be pitied. It never knows peace and concord until the trouble-makers move away, or are expelled, or pass on to eternity. Oh! let us “communicate in all good things,” not in bad things.

## **5. Christians should do good to all men.**

This injunction is found in the last verse of the text, which says: “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, and especially to them that are of the household of faith.”

People who are directed by the Holy Spirit will not be narrow in their dealings with their fellowmen. As they have opportunity, they will do good to all men: to their friends and to their enemies, to the people in their own land and to those in foreign lands, to their own nation and to other nations. A person of narrow sympathies cannot be a good, whole-hearted disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved the world and died for the world’s sins. So much for the general statement of this injunction.

But there is a sacred qualification here: “especially to them that are of the household of faith.” Is this a bid for narrowness? Not in the least. While the true Christian will love all men, and will seek to do them good, he will have a special fellow-feeling with those who are in the Church and are impelled by the same Christlike spirit that moves him. We cannot have the

same feeling toward all men. We should love all men, but we cannot love them all in the same way. God loves all men, but not in the same way; He loves the impenitent sinner with the love of pity; the true believer with the love of complacency.

So with Christian people. They cannot treat all alike, for not all people sustain the same relation to them. There is a peculiar affection among people of the same household of faith, and there should be. Just as a man's first duty is to his own family, so his next duty in the spiritual realm is to his own Church.

The Spirit-directed life also involves a principle that is very personal:

## **II. A Right Estimate Of Oneself.**

### **1. A man should think of himself modestly.**

“If a man thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.” This is excellent counsel, and may well be taken to heart by people who regard themselves too highly, and seem to think that the whole world revolves around them. “He that exalteth himself shall be abased.” “Pride goeth before a fall.” While we should never think meanly of ourselves, for God does not, yet there is nothing more becoming than a modest and humble spirit; whereas a vain spirit is universally condemned.

### **2. Each one should test his own work.**

We shall give Dr. Swensson's admirable translation of this part of the text: “But let each man prove his own work: then he shall have his ground of boasting with reference to himself alone, and not with reference to his neighbor.” The meaning evidently is that each man should make sure he will stand the test of close scrutiny himself before he tries to get others right. And it is true — unless a man is himself right with God he cannot bring others into right relation to Him. If I am not acquainted with yonder man, I cannot take you up to him, and introduce you to him, and tell you what kind of a person he is. Figure it as you will, religion begins at home. The foundation of character must be in one's own personal life. Get right

yourself; then you can help your fellowmen to get right. The next thought follows this one logically:

### **3. Each man must bear his own load.**

Is it contradictory for Paul to say in a previous verse, “Bear ye one another’s burdens,” and then here, “For each man shall bear his own load?” No; there is no discrepancy here. Paul was simply proving himself fundamental and all-sided in his thinking. So far as our social relations are concerned, we should bear one another’s burdens, and always be helpful and sympathetic. But there is always a point where each man must bear his own burden; must decide for himself, must act for himself, must be responsible for himself. This principle obtains in all life. It pervades every sphere. No man can perform certain kinds of work for others. You may offer food to the beggar, but he must eat the food for himself. And in the moral and religious realm no person has a right to shirk his own tasks, and unload them upon the shoulders of others. Dr. Swensson says: “No one can escape from his own moral responsibility. Every soldier must carry his own equipment.”

Thus far our text has dealt with the Spirit-directed person’s duty to his fellowmen and to himself. There is something more, and something very vital, involved in the Christlike life:

## **III. A Right View Of God And His Law.**

Here we have to consider one of the classical passages of the Bible. Nothing more fundamental was ever spoken or written: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; for he that soweth unto the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life.”

Why does Paul exhort here against self-deception? Why does he say in such earnest tones, “God is not mocked?” Because he wants to warn men everywhere that God will not lay aside His immutable law to suit the convenience and pleasure of those who indulge the sins of the flesh. If His harvest law is obeyed, and we sow good seed, it will be well with us. If we disregard that law, and sow the seed of evil, we shall have to bear the conse-

quences when the harvest comes. Let no man think that he can mock God and escape sin's penal consequences.

Now we know the immutable law in sowing and reaping. Whatever we sow we must reap. Sow wheat, and the harvest will be wheat. Sow cheat, and the harvest will be cheat. Young people should remember this invariable law. If, they "sow wild oats," they will have to reap the same kind of grain. Somehow, too, the sowing is not so serious as the reaping. There is the young person who sows "wild oats;" he is free, careless and reckless, and seems to enjoy his hilarious life. But the reaping is different. In his wild career he may have heedlessly sown the seeds of physical disease. By and by they germinate, develop and ripen, and now for long years he may have to reap the sad harvest. Let young people remember that the harvest is always greater than the sowing. Bad seed may be sown, too, just as easily as good seed. But the harvest will bring out the difference. The Scripture says, "He that soweth to the wind shall reap the whirlwind."

The text also contains a truth that is most encouraging: "He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life." Here the law of increase also holds good. If we sow spiritual seed in this life, we shall reap a correspondingly precious and abundant harvest in the life to come. That harvest is called "eternal life" in the text. "Eternal" means never-ending; "life" means true life; not mere consciousness; not mere existence; but true, abounding and joyous life; life that is full to overflowing. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." This surely is a powerful incentive to the right kind of sowing.

The last part of the text inculcates —

## **IV. A Right Conception Of Life's Work.**

The apostle does not want the workers in Christ's fields and vineyards to be discouraged. Hence he puts a very comforting admonition into his discourse at this point, saying: "And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in 'due season we shall reap if we faint not."

Sometimes people grow weary in well-doing because they cannot see the results at once. They are impatient. They want to sow and reap at the same time; they want to plant their trees or vines one day and gather the ripened fruit the next. Ah, but that is not the law of growth in either the natural or

the spiritual realm. No farmer expects his harvest immediately after sowing his grain; nor does the orchardist expect to gather fruit from his trees at once. So it is in working for Christ and His cause. There must be a time of sowing, a time of growth and unfolding, and at length a time for reaping. "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." Think how long some noted missionaries, like Ziegenbalg, Schwartz, Hans Egede, Judson, Henry Martin and Livingstone, had to labor before any appreciable fruition from their toil appeared. Yet they were never daunted, and today the great progress of the missionary enterprise is due to their patient and persistent efforts. Let us take heart, for the assurance is, "In due season ye shall reap if ye faint not."

"Sow in the morn thy seed;  
At eve hold not thy hand;  
To doubt and fear give thou no heed;  
Broadcast it o'er the land.

"Beside all waters sow;  
The highway furrows stock;  
Drop it where thorns and thistles grow;  
Scatter it on the rock.

"The good, the fruitful ground  
Expect not here nor there;  
O'er hill and dale alike 'tis found:  
Go forth, then, everywhere.

"And duly shall appear,  
In verdure, beauty, strength,  
The tender blade, the stalk, the ear,  
And the full corn at length.

"Thou canst not toil in vain;  
Cold, heat, the moist and dry  
Shall foster and mature the grain  
For garner in the sky.

"Then when the glorious end,  
The day of God, shall come,  
The angel-reapers shall descend,  
And shout our 'Harvest Home!'"

# 53. A Great Cause And Its Great Results. Eph. 3:13-21. The Sixteenth Sunday After Trinity.

Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. (Ephesians 3:13-21)

FAITH IN A GREAT CAUSE — what a potent moving force it is! It is the secret of every enterprise in the world's history that has been worth while and that has promoted the kingdom of God. Great faith in great truth is the conquering power in the moral and spiritual realm. No man who believed small things has ever been an achiever of great results. Paul was a man with the enthusiasm and vision of a great faith in a great cause. He begins this chapter by saying, "For this cause, I." Then in the lesson for today he says again, "For this cause." What was the great emprise that moved him so mightily? In verse two of the chapter he calls it "the dispensation of that grace of God which was given me." In verse eight he calls it "the unsearchable riches of Christ." In verse eleven he phrases it differently: "the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." All these expressions mean one and the same thing — the gospel of Christ, the good news of redemption through His blood. It was this revelation that inspired Paul, that filled him with joy and heroism and the spirit of self-sacrifice. Let us notice today some of the beneficent results of great faith in a great cause; for such faith

never sits down idly; it ever drives its possessor onward, and makes him a true propagandist.

## **I. No Fainting At Trial.**

Moved by his great faith in the gospel, Paul wrote in the first verse of the text: “Wherefore I ask that ye faint not at my tribulations, which are your glory.” A moment’s thought will show why he made his appeal. He was the great apostle of Jesus Christ. Everywhere he had given the tokens of his apostleship, even to the working of miracles. He had established the Church at Ephesus, and was therefore the spiritual father of those people. He made great sacrifices and did herculean work for Christ and the gospel. But now afflictions had come upon this eminent and most useful servant of Christ! How could the Ephesians reconcile this fact with God’s fatherly care and Christ’s repeated promises of His presence? Paul’s afflictions were well-nigh staggering to the faith of this young Christian congregation, and they were asking the age-old question, Why?

Now Paul exhibits his undaunted faith — “a faith that will not shrink, though pressed by every foe.” He entreats his fellow-Christians not to faint at his tribulations, and even goes so far as to assert that these very trials are their glory. This indicates that Paul’s faith was not made of poor and weak material, that it did not go to pieces on the first rock of trial. He was not like the seed that fell on stony soil where it had no depth of earth.

Let us learn from Paul the lesson of a dauntless faith. Far too many people have only fair-weather faith, but no faith for stormy weather. They build their ship of Christian faith only for smooth seas and clear skies; then, when the tempest rises on the sea of life, the poor vessel goes to pieces and sinks despairingly in the waves. Have you ever thought about it that faith which will bear no testing by trial is really no faith at all? We do not need faith when the way is perfectly clear, for then we have knowledge and sight. It is only when the way grows dark and perilous, so that we cannot see the path clearly before us, that we need to exercise trust in God, and lay our hand confidently in His. Oh! we must not let ourselves grow disheartened when afflictions come. Then is when we need faith to comfort and sustain us. Therefore Jesus said: “Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God and believe in Me.” Yes, faith in God and in Jesus Christ is the cure for all our



sorrows; for, armed with such faith, we know that “all things work together for good to them that love God.”

Paul’s faith in the great cause led to another result:

## **II. Bowing In Humility Before God.**

Says our apostle: “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.” We do not believe that history records the deeds of a single person who had a great faith in a great cause who was not reverent and humble. Just think over the heroes of faith and the achievers of great and worthy deeds, and tell me whether you can find a haughty and imperious person in the entire roll. You cannot find one. Even among the heathen philosophers, the greatest among them were the most humble.

Why is it that great souls bow the knee before the God of all things in humility and worship? There must be a reason for it in the nature of things. Is it not because they are great and profound enough to realize that back of and above this great universe there must be an Intelligence that is all-wise and all-powerful, and therefore is worthy to be adored and trusted? They can see that it would be impossible for the impersonal universe to have the ground of its sustenance and existence in itself. It is not the deep thinker who denies the existence of a Supreme Being. Any person who thinks that the personal can evolve out of the non-personal, the conscious out of the non-conscious, the rational out of the irrational, the moral out of the non-moral, and the spiritual out of the material, and all this, “by means of resident forces,” proves by that very token that he does not know the first and fundamental principles of science and philosophy, and has made little progress in true thinking from cause to effect. No; souls with great faith and great thoughts often say with the Psalmist: “The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him.”

A great cause also imposes the burden of great responsibility, and great responsibility drives men to their knees. Witness Washington praying at Valley Forge for the cause of the American revolution; witness Lincoln praying in the midst of the crushing responsibilities of the Civil War; see Foch praying long and earnestly in a little chapel on the eve of a great battle. It is only people with small faith, small aspirations, small duties and un-

dertakings who ignore God, and feel that their sufficiency is in themselves. Listen to the Psalmist: "I will look unto the hills, whence cometh my help; my help cometh from Jehovah, who made heaven and earth."

But what does Paul mean by the phrase, "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named?" If we go back to the Greek, we will understand it: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named." Why, certainly that makes it all clear. The fatherhood of God is the basis of all other fatherhoods. God is the Father of the Son from eternity; therefore fatherhood is possible in God's creation. If the principle of paternity had not been in God from eternity, it never could have been manifested in the universe, for something cannot be brought out of nothing, and no effect can be greater than and different from its cause. So Paul's faith in the great cause of the gospel led him to bow humbly before the eternal and fundamental Source of all fatherhood, which is also the Source of all self-sacrificing and redeeming love. Ah! Paul had in his soul the basis of all truth. His thought ran deep.

Our apostle's great faith in the great cause of redemptive grace also led him to have —

### **III. The True Conception Of Prayer.**

Have you ever noticed the precise character of the prayers of Christ and His inspired apostles, and also their teaching about the doctrine of prayer? They never struck a false note. They never prayed for wrong things, and never taught others to pray for wrong things. Between the temporal and spiritual elements of life they never subordinated the latter to the former, but always the reverse. Indeed, most of their prayers were for the highest kind of blessings, namely, the spiritual. This fact is proof of the divinity of the Christian religion, for had it been a human production, a wrong note would have been struck somewhere on the subject of prayer.

Neither did Christ and His apostles trouble themselves with speculations about the possibility of prayer. They never got themselves so enmeshed in purely materialistic and mechanical conceptions of the world that they could not believe that the Supreme Personality, who made it and framed all its laws, could intervene in any way He might desire, to answer the earnest petitions of His children. To them it was no more a violation of a law of na-

ture for God to come to the help of human beings than it is for an earthly father to hasten to the aid of his child who is in imminent danger. Let us note some of the characteristics of the prayer which Paul offered at a throne of grace for his Ephesian brethren.

## **1. Prayer for inner strength.**

“That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man” — that is the apt way in which the apostle casts his thought. He does not pray that the Ephesians may have worldly wealth or fame or pleasure. Even Paul could not have known whether they ought to receive such gifts, for there is always danger that earthly goods may militate against and destroy the spiritual mind. So Paul put it right: he prayed for spiritual blessings for his people. He wanted their hearts to be made right, to be filled with the grace, all else that was needed would be supplied. Whether they were rich or poor in earthly store, they would be rich in grace, rich toward God, rich in heavenly treasures. Let me ask, Is that the general temper of people today? Are they anxious for spiritual blessings? Do they crave the inner graces of Christian love and righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost? Do you hear anybody today bewailing his sins and crying for pardon? I fear that too many people today have a furor for mere worldly possession and pleasure. Is it not significant that the worst war the world has ever known was a war for commercial supremacy and for earthly power and dominion? And that awful conflict was waged in our day, and millions of people are suffering from it now. Are we not going to learn the lesson that the craze for temporal things will always lead to woe and strife among men? Can we not realize that the only way to bring peace on earth and good will among men is to desire and pray earnestly for the inner graces of the mind and heart? Tell me, did you ever hear of a quarrel among men on account of inner grace and spiritual excellence? No; dissension comes along the worldly line always; never along the spiritual.

## **2. Prayer for the indwelling Christ.**

This is simply a continuation of Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians. Not only does he pray that they may be strengthened through the Spirit in the inner

man, but also that “Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” Is that mere repetition? Is it that fault in rhetoric which we call tautology? Not at all! Paul here proves how well he understood the divine order of salvation. This is the process: First, the Holy Spirit must come into the heart, and do the inner work or regeneration, begetting faith; then the heart, being cleansed and spiritualized, becomes a fit dwelling place for the exalted and glorified Christ who is everywhere. Without this inmost psychical work of the Holy Spirit the human mind never could accept Christ by faith, never could appreciate Christ’s active and passive obedience and expiatory work; hence never could be a fit place for His indwelling.

Thus Paul was a true theologian. He never held the error that the Holy Spirit was Christ’s proxy here on earth, coming into men’s hearts in Christ’s stead. Never! He taught the true doctrine — that both the Holy Spirit and the Christ dwell in the believer’s heart. The believer is human; hence he cannot be satisfied merely to have a divine personality present with him; he must also have the incarnate God, the “Word made flesh,” dwelling in his soul. Depend upon it, Christ, Christ, CHRIST is present with you, my fellow-Christian. He is with you in His own blessed divine-human person, and not mediately through the person of another member of the Trinity. We are rich indeed; the whole Trinity is present with us and in us, each Person performing His own sacred function. Paul said, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” A great faith in great truth makes the greatest believers and the acutest theologians.

Ah, yes! the indwelling Spirit and the indwelling Christ will lead the believer to appreciate and, at least in measure, to understand the greatest truth in the world and in heaven:

### **3. The immeasurable dimensions of Christ’s love.**

This is still a part of Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians: “To the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to apprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ, though it passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God.”

Note the orderliness of Paul’s petition: First, the Holy Spirit must create a new inner life; then Christ comes into the heart to dwell there; then, and then only, can the dimensions of Christ’s wonderful love be apprehended.

You see, the Christian religion is an inner, spiritual experience. No wonder the poor materialist and worldling cannot appreciate it! Can a blind man appreciate the beauty of a sunset? Can a deaf man feel transports in the singing of a Jenny Lind or the playing of an Ole Bull? No more can the natural man receive the things of the Spirit of God. But note the innerness of the conception: "Being rooted and grounded in love." How does that come about? Just as Paul says — through regeneration by the Holy Spirit and the indwelling of Jesus Christ. Then you can gain some conception of the love of Christ.

But how can we fathom the unfathomable? How can we measure the immeasurable? We reply, we cannot. Our text does not say that we shall measure Christ's surpassing love for us; it says that we may apprehend it. We apprehend it; we do not comprehend it. Paul also says in the text that we "may know the love of Christ, though it passeth knowledge." He used his language correctly; he chose his words wisely. We may know many things that we do not know fully. We know that matter exists, and we know many things about it; yet it passes knowledge; there are many things about it that we do not know; we do not even know what matter is in its essence. So with the dimensions of Christ's love: if we have had a Christian experience, we know that Christ loves us, and we know at the same time that we cannot measure the breadth nor length nor height nor depth of that love. What knowledge we have is true and satisfying knowledge, but there is always something more to learn, and will be more and more throughout the endless eons of eternity. Only let us appreciate that love now as much as we can. Think of its breadth — it reaches to the uttermost boundaries of the universe; its length — it runs back to eternity and forward to eternity; its height — there is no physical, ethical or spiritual exaltation to which it does not extend; its depth — there is no sin so deep-dyed which is not atoned for by the love of Christ and which cannot be forgiven on condition of repentance and faith.

"And those who find Thee find a bliss  
Nor tongue nor pen can show;  
The love of Jesus — what it is  
None but His loved ones know."

Great faith in a great cause leads to one more great result:

## IV. A Great Doxology.

Let me read it to you, and then tell me whether you have found such exalted eloquence anywhere outside of the Bible: “And now unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen.”

This passage reaches a height of conception, of feeling and of expression that has never been surpassed. In and of itself, it affords indubitable evidence of Paul’s divine inspiration. Such conceptions do not come from the natural mind nor from mere human genius. It is what we might call heavenly eloquence. It is too lofty for analysis. We shall have to wait till we reach heaven before we can appreciate all its exaltation of meaning. But since God is such a glorious being as Paul represents Him to be, I hope that some day all of us who are here today shall be permitted to join with all the saints in this ascription of praise to the Majesty that sitteth upon the throne for His unmeasured and immeasurable love to us in Christ Jesus our Lord. Great faith in a great cause will so enlarge our powers and clarify our vision that we may be able to have a part in this greatest of all doxologies.

"Join all the glorious names  
Of wisdom, love and power  
That ever mortals knew,  
That angels ever bore:  
All are too mean to speak His worth,  
Too mean to set my Saviour forth.

“But, oh, what gentle terms,  
What condescending ways,  
Doth our Redeemer use  
To teach His heavenly grace!  
Mine eyes with joy and wonder see  
What forms of love He bears for me.”

# 54. The Greatest Vocation In The World. Eph. 4:1-6. The Seventeenth Sunday After Trinity.

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (Ephesians 4:1-6)

OUR TEXT TODAY is connected with that of last Sunday by “therefore.” Thus we know that the two lessons are joined together logically. Last Sunday our theme was “A Great Cause and its Results.” Today we continue the thought, only now we shall use the terminology of the text, and speak of “The Greatest Vocation in the World;” for the apostle begins with this exhortation: “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.”

There are many important vocations in human life; and every honorable and useful vocation is, in a sense, a divine calling, because it belongs to the economy of the world as God has made it. Whether we work with our hands or with our minds, just so we are doing something that is right and useful, we are doing God’s will, providing we do our work in His name, and thus make it religious. Some people seem to think that the minister’s calling is the only divine vocation — but that is a mistake. It is a great calling; indeed, in some respects, the greatest of all callings; but all other men ought also to do their everyday employment in such a spirit as to make it divine and holy.

However, there is one calling that is greatest of all, for it includes all the others and gives them their true value. It is the calling of the Christian, whereby he has been called from darkness to light, from sin to righteousness, from the power of Satan unto God. You see, if a person has entered this calling and is pursuing it faithfully, he will do everything else in the fear of God and with a religious purpose. ’

Perhaps if we look into this calling and discover some of its great features, we shall feel a stronger incentive to heed the apostle’s injunction to “walk worthy” of it. So let us engage together in some observations on —

## **I. The Vocation Itself.**

For our material at this point we will go outside of the text to another writing of Paul in which he defines some of the elements of the Christian’s calling — 2 Tim. 1:9,10, where he says: “Who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works,” etc. Let us follow this passage somewhat closely. It does not refer here primarily to the minister’s calling, though found in a pastoral epistle, but to the calling of the Christian, and therefore includes all of us who have named the name of Christ.

### **1. A holy calling.**

God never calls us to low things, but always to high and exalted principles and planes of life. When He invites us into His kingdom, He says, first of all, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Now suppose for a moment He should say: “You do not need to repent; you need not confess and forsake your sins; you can continue in them just as you are, and still belong to my kingdom if you want to.” Suppose, my friend, He would call us into His service in that way, would you and I have any respect for Him? No; we would declare that His Kingdom was no better than the devil’s kingdom.

So our Christian calling is a holy calling; a good and righteous employment; an honorable occupation; one of which we need not be ashamed. The Christian religion is truly ethical, or it is nothing. Some other religions do not combine faith and ethics very closely, but in our religion rightness is one of the primary elements. In the Christian life we are called from wrong-



ness to rightness, from sin to holiness, from corruption to purity. You cannot be a bad man and a Christian at the same time. Christ and Belial cannot dwell together in the same heart, nor function in the same life. Salvation here and hereafter is from sin unto righteousness. We once heard an infidel aver that he “would rather be annihilated than go to the Christian’s heaven.” We could not help thinking that the Christian’s heaven is always depicted in the Bible as a place of immaculate purity. Perhaps that was the feature about it that he did not like! Oh! depend upon it, my friends, the Christian’s vocation is a holy calling in time, and will be in eternity. It is a constant progress to higher and better things.

## **2. It is a calling according to grace, not according to works.**

That is what our beautiful text in Timothy teaches: “Not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace.” The older I grow, and the more I study the Bible, mankind, and the plan of salvation, the more I am fascinated by the thought and doctrine of salvation solely by God’s abounding grace. All our works and all our service, if we are true Christians, are performed out of love and gratitude to God for His goodness and mercy, and not because we think we can merit salvation. “It is by faith that it may be according to grace.” A prominent man, in speaking before an assembly of Christian thinkers on the much-vaunted subject of “salvation by character,” declared that he himself did not want to take the risk of being saved in that way; that he would prefer to depend on the goodness and grace of God. We applaud the saying; it proved that he had gone deep in sounding the real nature of human life and character. Therefore he could never be a light-minded and superficial Pelagian either in his theology or in his experience. I like what a dying Scotch Covenanter preacher replied to a friend who visited him, and said to him, “What are you doing now, my brother?” Hear the old saint’s reply: “I am taking all my good works and all my bad works, all my prayers and all my sermons, and everything I have ever done, and am throwing them overboard, and am going to heaven on the plank of free grace!” Such testimony thrills me through and through. I do not want a boastful epitaph engraved on my tomb-stone when I am buried, but only this simple legend: “He trusted in Jesus Christ alone for his salva-

tion.” Oh, this great Christian vocation “according to grace” — how beautiful and uplifting it is to contemplate!

### **3. The Christian’s calling is eternal as to the past.**

Have I not said that the Christian’s vocation is not a mean and meager one? Says Paul in the passage from Timothy:

“According to His purpose and grace which were given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal;” or, as the original has it, “before the ages of ages.” This phrase was the Greek way of describing eternity.

So our calling in Christ was not an after-thought with God, but was provided for from eternity — that is, God, foreseeing all things, decreed in eternity that, on condition of faith in His Son, we are elected unto salvation. It is all very powerfully expressed in Rom. 8:28-30: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose; for whom He foreknew, them He foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that they might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He foreordained, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” You see, my brethren, how certain our salvation is, if we continue to trust in Jesus Christ; for it is all based on the absolute prescience or foreknowledge and power of God. If He could not have foreseen all contingencies from eternity, and thus have made provision for every possible exigency, Satan might thwart the salvation of even true believers; but now, since the eternal decree is based upon the divine foreknowledge, and is carried out by the divine omnipotence, nothing can defeat the election of God. But some one asks anxiously: “If God elects us in foresight of our faith, then does not everything depend on faith, after all?” We reply most emphatically, NO! Everything depends on the grace and power of God. Our faith does not save us; God saves us. If God did not exert His power, and do so with the utmost wisdom and skill, we might have any amount of faith, and yet we could not be saved; for sin and Satan are more powerful than we. God alone saves us — but, remember, according to His Word, we must be willing to let Him save us, and therefore must trust Him. So says the divine Word: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” What a great calling is ours that God from eternity should decree our salvation, and then carry out his eternal purpose in our poor lives in time here on

earth. Ah, yes! “I know,” says Paul, “on Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” With God there are no after-thoughts, no guesses, no uncertain adventures.

Another great feature of the Christian’s vocation is this:

#### **4. It is an eternal calling as to the future.**

Is not that an up-buoying thought? It reaches back into eternity; it stretches forward into eternity. This happy conception is taught in the verse from Timothy which says that Christ “hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” The gospel throws much light on the present life, and helps to solve all its deepest problems. It teaches us whence we have come — from God, created in His own image; it tells why we are in this world — to serve God and do good to our fellowmen; but it does not stop there: it also opens to our vision the gateway of futurity, and tells us about an immortal destiny. We, God’s rational children, are not the insects of a moment, the creatures of a day. We can think of eternity; therefore we have the note of eternity singing in our souls, the stamp of eternity imprinted on our being.

With such a calling in mind, do you wonder that Paul exhorted his fellow-pilgrims at Ephesus to walk worthy of their vocation? So this must be our next thesis:

## **II. How To Walk Worthy Of Our High And Holy Vocation.**

Fortunately we are not left to our own poor resources in this matter but have the guidance of the inspired text of Scripture. Here are a number of suggestive particulars:

### **1. We should pursue our vocation with meekness.**

The text puts it: “With all lowliness and meekness.” Is not that an anti-climax? After speaking of the many high and exalted features of our Christian

calling, must we now be told to follow it with humility? Would it not be more patent to hold up our heads and walk with great dignity and pride?

Nay; that would spoil everything. If we were to insert hauteur and vanity into the spirit of our service for Christ, it would be like putting poison into the fountain from which the stream flows. Paul knew full well that pride is the fruitful source of all bitterness and strife among men. He also remembered what His Lord and Master had said: "He that exalteth himself shall be abased; he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Take the person who is "wise in his own conceit" — do you think he could walk becomingly in the Christian pathway? Would not his vain temper mar his life, and make him unworthy of the Christian vocation? It surely would. "Blessed are the meek," said Christ; "for they shall inherit the earth."

All the pride of intellect that is so prevalent today, which boasts and struts and acts as if it were the sovereign of the universe, is contrary to the spirit of the gospel, which enjoins humility, faith, teachableness. This docile temper does not think itself superior to the Word of God, but gratefully submits to its teaching and obeys its precepts. It does not pick and choose, as if the human mind were wiser than the divine mind. In this connection we are pleased with a simple incident which Mr. Spurgeon relates. "I knew a youth," he says, "who wished to be baptized but his friends kept him back. When he fell ill, he fretted because he had not confessed his Lord according to the Scripture. 'But Isaac,' said his mother, 'you know baptism will not save you.' 'No, mother,' he replied, 'of course it will not, for I am saved. But when I see Jesus in heaven I should not like to have him say: 'Isaac, it was a very little thing I asked of you; did you not love me enough to do it?'"

No; my friends, it is the pride of rationalism that picks and chooses among the ordinances and requirements of the Scriptures; it is not the meek and lowly spirit which belongs to the Christian's vocation.

## **2. Our calling implies longsuffering toward others.**

The text says: "With longsuffering, forbearing one another in love." You might think that Paul would here name some of the great heroic and shining virtues as badges of the Christian's vocation; but that would have been a mistake, and would have proved that he wrote from the human standpoint instead of by divine inspiration. Paul knew well enough that good will in

the world can never come about by emphasizing and be-lauding the qualities that contribute to human pride and competition. If ever the world is to be won to Christ, and thus made a peaceable and happy place, it must be by the spirit of love and the practice of mutual forbearance. An example of what emphasis on proud militaristic principles will do for the world has just been set before us in most glaring colors by the late war. Do such principles make for peace and amity? We know they do not. Militarism breeds pride, hauteur, imperialism, caste and autocracy, no matter where it flourishes. When men have been trained to fight, they will want to fight; and when they have been bred under a militaristic caste system, they will lose their sense of democracy and equality. Let our own country, and all the other victorious countries, learn the lesson that God means to teach the world through the downfall and ignominy of the greatest militaristic nation on the face of the earth. We commend the Biblical virtues of mutual love and forbearance among all men as the panacea. Long enough has the world been trying the qualities that lead to high-mindedness, dissension and tyranny. If we cannot learn our lessons from the Holy Scriptures and from the examples and experience of history, then woe be unto us! The time will come when God will cry: "Let Ephraim go; he is wedded to his idols!"

All the parts, of the text are logically connected; so the next item follows from what has just been said.

### **3. Our Christian calling leads to unity.**

Most euphoniously does the apostle express this thought: "Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Have you not often wondered about the precise meaning of this rhythmic phrase? Does it not sound like tautology to speak of keeping "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?" On the surface it may sound so, but in the study of the Bible we must always plow deeper than the surface. This expression means this: The Holy Spirit is one. As is said later in the text, "There is one body and one Spirit." Now Paul exhorts us as Christians to keep that unity in the bond of peace — that is, do not break up the Christian community by divisions and jealousies, but keep yourselves under the sway of the Holy Spirit who is one. What a rebuke to a war-ridden and strife-stricken world! How far short of the Biblical teaching have the nations fallen which have had that teach-

ing before them for centuries! Surely there is ground for sincere and humble repentance.

Quite a number of particulars are recited in the rest of the text, showing why the Christian vocation should be built upon unity and good will. Let us note these reasons.

[1] “There is one body.” No doubt Paul here refers to the Church, the Christian community, which he often compares to the human body. As we know, the body is one organism composed of many and various organs; yet in normal conditions they are all united in one system and function . together for one purpose. So it should be in the Church. Wrangling there is like strife and mutual rivalry among the various organs of the body. “A house divided against itself cannot stand.”

[2] “There is one Spirit.” But if Christians fight one another, they prove by that very token that they are not under the gentle control of “the unity of the Spirit,” who surely would not create a schism against Himself.

[3] “Ye are called in one hope of your calling.” This means that all Christians are looking forward with one anticipation — final freedom from sin and eternal felicity with God. How, then, can they so far forget their great vocation as to indulge in petty quarreling and mutual ill-will?

[4] “One faith.” You are not justified and saved in one way and I in another. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” There is only one way, and that is faith in Christ. How should this one faith bind us Christians together! If by one faith we are bound to Christ, will not that very fact bring us together in unity?

[5] “One baptism.” Yet people actually wrangle over the mode of baptism! If Paul had meant that only one mode is valid, here was the place to say so explicitly. No; there is only one true baptism, and that is baptism in the name of the Triune God. The amount of water employed is not the essential thing.

[6] “One Lord, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.” Since God is one, and is immanent in all things, all His people ought to be bound together in one. “Even as the Father and I are one, so should ye be one,” was Christ’s earnest appeal to His disciples.

Now there is much more in the succeeding verses relative to walking worthy of our vocation; but they do not belong to our lesson for today, and have been dealt with in other sermons of this series. However, enough has been taught by our pericope to indicate some of the most important princi-

ples and qualities of the Christian's holy calling, especially that we should walk in lowliness of mind, in patience and forbearance toward one another, and in the loving unity of the Spirit. May we all hear and obey our Father's command: "This is the way: walk ye in it." Thus shall we "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we have been called." Let us join with the hymn-writer in both his confession and his petition:

"O Lord! with sorrow and with shame  
Before Thee we confess  
How little we, who hear Thy name,  
Thy mind, Thy ways express.

"Give us Thy meek, Thy lowly mind:  
We would obedient be,  
And all our rest and pleasure find  
In learning, Lord, of Thee."

# 55. An Apostle's Reasons For Gratitude. 1 Cor. 1:4-9. The Eighteenth Sunday After Trinity.

I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. (1 Corinthians 1:4-9)

A POWERFULLY WRITTEN BOOK recently came into our hands. It is Dr. A. D. Kelly's "Rational Necessity of Theism." It was issued in 1909, and depicts in a vivid way the prevalence of rationalism and materialism in England at that time, which was only a few years before the terrible war. During that period and for some years prior, England could boast of quite a galaxy of notorious materialistic scientists, all of them advocates of the theory of evolution. On page 17 Dr. Kelly gives a partial list of these men, a list that perhaps cannot be duplicated in any other country in the world: Spencer, Huxley, Clifford, Tyndall, Leslie Stephen, and Laing. Afterwards he mentions others who were more or less prominent, and says that they accepted many of the principles of their skeptical predecessors, also of Great Britain, David Hume and John Stuart Mill. A few quotations will prove how crass and materialistic these men were. Says Huxley: "I believe we shall arrive at a mechanical equivalent of consciousness, just as we have arrived at a mechanical equivalent of heat." Again: "The progress of physical science has meant, and now more than ever means, the banishment from all regions of human thought of what we call spirit and spontaneity." This is from Tyndall: "The logic seems of iron strength which claims for the brain an automatic action uninfluenced by states of consciousness." To this Clifford agrees: "We are to regard the body as a physical machine which goes along by itself accord-



ing to a fixed law... If anybody says the will influences matter, the statement is not merely not true, but it is nonsense.”

All this means that these British evolutionists had almost entirely lost the sense of the spiritual, just as Mr. Darwin admitted that he had so long been dealing with material things that he suffered from an “atrophy” of the faculty for appreciating music, poetry and art. See his pitiful confession in Kelly’s book, page 36.

We turn with a vast sense of relief from these crass and gloomy materialists to Paul the apostle, who told us centuries ago that “spiritual things are spiritually discerned,” and therefore require the spiritual mind. What a different atmosphere we breathe here from that with which the Tyndall-Spencer-Huxley crowd surround themselves! There you suffocate with the sense of bondage to matter; here you breathe the air of freedom in the realm of mind and spirit. Paul’s spiritual mind will be evidenced throughout this lesson, for all the blessings which stirred his heart to thanksgiving were of a spiritual character; none of them were of the earth, earthy. Let us analyze and classify.

## **I. A General Reason For Gratitude.**

This is given in the first verse, in which he says: “I thank my God always on your behalf for the grace of God which is given unto you in Jesus Christ.” Had Darwin or Huxley or Tyndall been writing in this place, he would have said, “I’m glad you folks have plenty to eat; you can be perfectly happy when you have full stomachs and other physical comforts.”

But Paul had a different spirit, a higher conception of truth and of human need. In this one sentence he mentions God twice; he speaks of the grace of God; he expresses thanksgiving to God; he says that divine grace comes through Jesus Christ. It is truly a spiritual conception and aspiration. Here you do not stifle; you breathe freely. I am profoundly interested in physical science; but when physical science wants to dominate everything, and pronounce final judgment in philosophy and religion, it becomes an incubus upon the human soul instead of an impetus to progress.

But, leaving the low bogland and fogland of materialism, let us consider Paul’s high and holy conception. He constantly thanked God for the grace which He had bestowed on the Corinthian Church in Christ Jesus. Just what

did he mean by that saying? First, he recognized God as the gracious giver. He did not break the connection between himself and the Ultimate Source of power. He would have felt that to be as foolish and irrational as to disconnect the electric wires of your residence from the main line that runs to the powerhouse, and then expect to light up your house by the push of a button. Brethren, let us recognize God in our lives, and thus always walk in the light.

And what was the grace of God that had been given to the Corinthians, for which Paul was So grateful? It was simply this: That Christ had been presented to them as the revealer of the true God; as the Redeemer of the world, as the Saviour of the soul forever and ever; as the bringer of the assurance of all spiritual realities to the minds of men. And all these happy experiences had come to them as the gifts of God's pure grace. They had not been earned or merited in any way, but were pure gratuities from the God of love.

Are not these blessings of a nature to stir gratitude and inspiration in any heart? The problem that puzzles me is that persons living in Bible lands can be atheists, materialists and agnostics, in spite of all these high and sacred revelations made to them so clearly in the gospel. Can they not read the printed page? And reading it, can they not see its superiority over anything that comes from mere human wisdom and ingenuity? Ought they not to welcome such truth instead of rejecting it with scorn, as many of them seem to do? Let me ask this question of every honest man: Ought we not to be glad to have any person or any book tell us that God is a God of love and grace; that He sent His only-begotten Son into the world to save it from sin and sorrow; that He is interested in all our affairs from the least to the greatest; and that He has prepared an eternal habitation for all who will love and trust Him? What kind of a heart must that be which does not want these things to be true? One would think that people would rush in vast multitudes to every place where certitude of such good things can be given. Oh! let us sincerely desire the blessing of God's grace, and we, like the Corinthians, shall have them.

## **II. Some More Specific Reasons For Gratitude.**

After Paul had spoken of the general reason for his thankfulness, he went further into particulars, specifying some of the elements, of the grace of God. His heart swelled with gratitude for the Corinthians because of —

## **1. The enrichment of their lives.**

He rejoiced that they had a large measure of grace. He wanted them to have abounding grace. He says, “That in everything ye were enriched in Him, in all utterance and in all knowledge.” When Paul uses such language, you think of food that has been made palatable and nourishing; or of soil that has been fertilized and made fruitful. Such were the experiences of his fellow-Christians over there at Corinth.

Some people seem to be content with very poor lives, with very scant experiences. At the World’s Parliament of Religions in Chicago we heard an agnostic say that he and his fellow-advocates did not deign to know anything about God, anything about the soul, anything about the future, anything about any of these mysterious problems; and then he added, “And we are very happy in our agnosticism!” We could not help concluding that it does not take much to make some people happy! Neither does it take much to make an ox perfectly contented! The soul that can be happy in such utter ignorance must indeed be very much shrunken. The poet Pope said, “Where ignorance is bliss, ’tis folly to be wise.” But we reply, Ignorance is never bliss! And of all kinds of ignorance, the most foolish, unnecessary and fatal is spiritual ignorance. We would not boast of much academic scholarship, but we would be ashamed to confess our ignorance of the existence of God, of the soul, of redemption through Christ, and of the reality of a future life. For, we confess it, if these things cannot be known, it boots little whether other things can be known or not.

But Paul thanked God that his fellow-Christians were enriched in all utterance and knowledge. They knew God through Christ, and they were able to tell others. They spoke with other tongues and in a spiritual language, just as all people do when the blindness of their natural eyes has been removed and they see clearly.

And what else moved Paul to thankfulness for the Corinthians?

## **2. They confirmed his testimony concerning Christ.**

That seems to be his meaning when he says, “even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you.” He thanked God for the spiritual enrichment of their lives because it verified what he had taught them about the grace of God in Christ. He had evidently told them that the Christian experience was not a poor, beggarly and unsatisfying experience, like the experience of mere worldly good, but that it grew better and brighter as the years went by. Paul was simply saying in a different way what the wise man had said long before: “The path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

I may add here, by way of application, that nothing causes the true pastor greater joy and thankfulness than to see his people growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a confirmation of his testimony to the riches of Christian truth and the reality of Christian experience. No minister likes to feel that his preaching and teaching are in vain; that the seed he is sowing falls on sterile soil.

Yes, there should be progress in our lives and experiences, so that “each tomorrow finds us farther than today.” Spurgeon once made some pithy observations along this line: “Nobody rides to heaven on a feather-bed. Grace has made a road to heaven for sinners, but it does not suit sluggards. Those who reach the Celestial City are pilgrims and not lie-abeds. Neglect is a sure way to hell; but we must strive to enter in at the strait gate, and so run that we may obtain. If you let your farm alone, it will be overrun with weeds; and if your heart be let alone, it will be eaten up with sins. Nothing comes of sloth but rags and poverty here and judgment hereafter. Let idlers in Zion note this.”

Paul had another cause for gratitude. It appears that the Corinthians —

### **3. Sought to cultivate every gift.**

For he says, “Ye come behind in no gift.” He does not say more specifically to what kind of gifts he refers, and therefore he must mean all the gifts of God’s grace. No doubt the Corinthians were generous in their offerings to the cause of Christ. They believed in both home and foreign missions, for they knew that, had not Paul believed in carrying the gospel to heathen countries, had he acted on the narrow principle that “we have heathen enough at home,” they themselves would never have known the joy of salvation through the gospel of Christ. Yes, an enrichment of spiritual life will unloose the purse-strings and unbind the fetters of selfishness. They “fell

behind in no gift.” Fine encomium that! When they noted how generous other churches were, they were spurred to a noble rivalry. What others could do, they could do also. So let us find out how much others are doing for the gospel, and let us go and do likewise.

But the Corinthians did not cultivate merely one gift, and let it go at that; they “came behind in no gift;” this is, they developed all the Christian graces. They were not one-sided and narrow. They wanted to flourish like the palm-tree, which grows symmetrically, and forms a picture of grace and beauty against the sky. Are we trying to bring up the varied elements of a fully rounded character? God wants us to grow into the full stature of men in Christ Jesus. Do you complain that it requires effort and sacrifice to develop a finely proportioned Christian character? Repine not, my friend. Every road that leads to the worth while has its difficulties. Surely you and I are manly enough not to want a smooth and easy way. The great Spurgeon said: “It is better to follow a rough road to heaven than a smooth road to hell.”

And now comes a somewhat unexpected turn in St. Paul’s paean of thanksgiving on behalf of the Corinthians, as sometimes happens in a musical performance-when a new key is struck or a new theme is introduced. He said that they were waiting for something, looking into the future with great expectation and desire:

#### **4. Looking for the second coming of Christ.**

Why did Paul rejoice and feel grateful because the Corinthians we’re waiting for the coming of the Lord? Because that proved the spirituality of their aspirations. It also gratified him to know how faithfully they continued to hold to his preaching, which had so often contained the note of the second advent. They that desire the Lord’s coming to judge the world, to establish justice and righteousness, to usher in the era of peace, joy and spiritual good, are not the people who follow the poor and beggarly elements of the world. Christians no more than others know when Christ will come, but they hold themselves in readiness for Him when He does come. Besides, this expectation for the Lord’s second coming is always intimately connected by true Christians with the coming of the Lord in death to bear them home to God, to the Father’s house of many mansions. They may not live on earth until the dawning of the day of judgment, but they know that

sooner or later they will be summoned by the angel of death, and just as they want to be ready for the one event, so they want to be ready for the other. More than that, no matter which shall come first, death or the second advent, they know that they shall be there to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. All the parts of the Christian system of doctrine hold together in a logical and organic unity.

In the last two verses of the text Paul gives some comforting assurances to the Corinthian Christians. He says: "And God Himself will strengthen you to the end, so that at the day of our Lord Jesus Christ ye may be found blameless" (translation of "The Twentieth Century New Testament") . It will be a great thing to be able to stand the test of the judgment day. It will be a searching time. Only those who have looked unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, will be able to endure that ordeal of searching scrutiny and exact weighing in the balance. However, God will confirm us to the end, if we trust and serve Him, and will not forget us on that day of assize. The closing verse of our text adds most cheerily: "God will not fail you; for He has called you into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." Yes, we can depend on the promise and fidelity of God. We may fail, but He will not fail. He is the all-powerful One, the all-wise God; the One who is altogether good; and He cannot be untrue to His covenant.

According to the text, God's fidelity is based on a most cogent reason; it is because He called us into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ. This simply means what Christ Himself said: "If ye confess me before men, I will confess you before my Father who is in heaven." Then the apostle John gives the same assurance: "If we sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." How the theology of the Bible hangs together, and how consoling and bracing it all is! He who has the Son as his friend will also have the Father as His friend. Fear not, timid soul, to stand before God, for "Christ your Advocate is made," and His intercession will surely avail.

Some people do not like to anticipate the last day of assize. As a rule, liberal theologians want to rule it out of God's program of the future. For some cause such a day of severe scrutiny does not suit them. To my mind, it is a sure mark of a man's true spiritual condition if he looks forward without fear and with bright anticipation to the coming of the Lord. That was St'. John's desire on his apocalyptic island, for he said: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus; come quickly." The imminency of Christ's coming does not frighten the true child of God; neither does the postponement of His coming

bring him discontent. To him the second coming of Christ means “the restitution of all things,” the establishment of “new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.” It is the sin of the world that grieves him most; and so he longs for the eternal reign of love, truth and justice.

On that awful day what diverse experiences there will be! John Newton was lifted by God’s grace from the lowest depths of sin to a high and honored place in the Church of Christ. He was eminently fitted by his experience, therefore, to arrange parts of the old Gregorian Chant in metrical form:

"Day of judgment, day of wonders!  
Hark! the trumpet's awful sound,  
Louder than a thousand thunders,  
Shakes the vast creation round!  
How the summons  
Will the sinner's heart confound!

“But to those who have confessed,  
Loved and served the Lord below,  
He will say, ‘Come near, ye blessed!  
See the kingdom I bestow!  
You forever  
Shall my love and glory know!’”

# 56. A Change Of Spiritual Raiment. Eph. 4:22-28. The Nineteenth Sunday After Trinity.

That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. (Ephesians 4:22-28)

“WHAT IS the greatest miracle ever wrought?” was a question once asked at a religious service. Instantly this answer came from the speaker: “The greatest miracle I know is that Jesus Christ has saved a sinner like me.”

The apt and prompt reply proved that the speaker was a truly converted man. He had experienced the work of regeneration in his soul, and that to him was the crowning and the finally convincing miracle. Knowing the power of the supernatural in his own experience, he did not need to trouble himself about the supernatural events recorded in the Bible. Ralph Erskine wrote the following lines which, while they sound paradoxical, are harmonized in Christian experience:

“I’m sinful, yet I have no sin;  
All spotted o’er, yet wholly clean;  
Blackness and beauty both I share,  
A hellish black, a heavenly fair.”

Now our text for today leads us along this line of thought, the change that comes to a person who flies to Christ for refuge. Paul uses a vivid figure of speech. He speaks of putting off certain kinds of garments and putting on others. Therefore we have chosen as our theme for today, “A Change of



Spiritual Raiment.” Let us meditate awhile on the wonder and beauty of this transformation. You and I know how different we feel when we throw off our old soiled clothing, cleanse our bodies of their soilure, and array ourselves in clean and wholesome garb. This is true in a much higher sense in the ethical and spiritual realm. Note:

## **I. The Garment To Be Put Off.**

Let us trace the connection with what precedes our text. Paul had been writing about the old life’ of the Ephesians, when they walked “in the vanity of their minds, being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God,” etc. Then he added: “But ye did not so learn Christ, since ye heard Him and were taught by Him according as the truth is in Jesus.” Then comes the text: “That ye put off, as concerning the former manner of life, the old man that waxeth corrupt according to the lusts of deceit.” I scarcely think that anyone here would dare to wear such a garment, especially if the Holy Spirit through the Word of God reveals to him clearly its character. Surely every one of us would throw off a robe of that kind with haste and loathing, would we not? An yet it is a sad fact that many people in the world prefer to wear the old, frayed, filthy garments of sin, and will not exchange them for the heavenly robes of purity and holiness.

What does Paul mean by “the old man?” He means our natural depravity which we inherit from Adam, who led the human family into sin, and therefore corrupted it at its very source. This old sinful nature he likens to an old, soiled and repulsive garment which is to be cast aside for a better one. Does some one protest that he is not responsible for having been born into the world with such an inheritance as the soiled garment of original sin? Perhaps we are not responsible for having been born in that state; but we surely are responsible for keeping on the old garment after being shown its corrupt character and having been offered the beautiful robe of Christ’s righteousness. Of course, we do not want to shoulder responsibility that does not belong to us; but that will not excuse us for casting aside the responsibility that really is ours. Besides, we add corruption to our original sin by our many actual sins, and of such sins we certainly need to repent, so that we may be cleansed from their defilement.

We need make no difficulty about the doctrine of inherited depravity. All we need to do is to throw off the old stained garment, and put on the true apparel that will be pleasing to God and healthful for our lives. Regarding the doctrine itself, we incline to agree with an aged woman who ' said: "I do not see why people should argue so much about the doctrine of natural depravity; I think it is about the best practiced doctrine of the Bible!" And it surely is.

The good woman was a profounder theologian than are some men who have the title of divinity attached to their names.

Paul characterizes this "old man" by saying that it pertained to the "former manner of life" with the Ephesians — that is, their life in sin and idolatry. This teaches us that we cannot live the old life and the new at the same time. You cannot wear the old garment and the new contemporaneously. In the physical realm a foolish person might try such an experiment, but in religion no such folly can be allowed, for God demands purity in His followers. The man in the parable who refused to put on the wedding garment, thinking his old attire was good enough, was quickly detected and cast out. No; "the former manner of life" must be given up in the school of Christ.

The apostle also defines another mark of the old garment of sin: "which waxeth corrupt according to the lusts of deceit." By this he means to point out the inner process of corruption and disintegration that belongs to the sinful life, and also its progressive nature. Paul says elsewhere (2 Tim. 3:13): "Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." As Christians cannot stand still in the life of grace, but must be making progress upwards, so with the life of sin; it is marked by constant decadence and its progress is ever downward. All history and experience prove this to be true. The carnal, worldly life is always on the down grade and the sliding scale.

## **II. What Occurs Between The Acts Of Putting Off The Old And On The New Garments.**

After enjoining that the "old man" shall be put off, the apostle introduces a different figure of speech, saying, "And be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind." Having said that, he resumes his previous metaphor by commanding something to be put on. Whatever the rhetorician may think of this mixture

of metaphors, Paul's doctrine is correct. He proved himself a good theologian; he understood the order of salvation, namely, the several movements of the Holy Spirit in applying redemption. And what is that order? First God by His Spirit through His Word and sacraments, calls and enlightens the sinner, showing him his sinfulness and his need of a Savior; then he makes him willing to "put Off the old man," the old garment of sin, and to "put on the new man," or the new life. But right there something is needed to enable him to put off the one and put on the other. This he cannot do by his own power. A work must be done within him that will give him this ability. Conversion is not natural or psychical evolution. It is not a mere stimulation of man's natural powers. No; Paul knew the order of salvation too well from his own experience to omit a very essential link in the process; therefore he placed the renewal of the mind between the putting off of the old nature and the assumption of the new. God's Spirit must come into the soul with regenerating grace and power to create that faith which will lay hold on Christ as the Savior and put on the heavenly robe of his righteousness. So regeneration — here called renewal — must come after vocation and illumination, that the sinner may be spiritually enabled to exercise faith in Jesus Christ.

Note the depth of the apostle's thought: "Be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind." What does he mean by "the spirit of your mind." He means the innermost part of our being, our heart, our conscience, our motive, our most secret self. That is why the Holy Spirit is given. He is the member of the Holy Trinity who performs the innermost work in human hearts, in order to make them spiritually minded, thus enabling them to know God truly, for we must always remember that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth."

When this inner renewal has taken place, what is the next step in the sacred process? This we must now consider.

### **III. The Garment To Be Put On.**

There is to be an exchange of spiritual garments. The soul is not to cast aside the old ragged suit, and remain unclothed. No; it is to be "clothed upon;" it is to put on a beautiful apparel. And what is it? "And put ye on the

new man, which after God has been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.”

What is meant by “the new man?” It means the new nature that is wrought in a sinner by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul elsewhere describes this change of disposition in a most vivid way: “He that is in Christ Jesus is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” The Psalmist also, in his way and to his degree, knew about this experience; for he prayed: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” Both the Psalmist and the apostle support the teaching of Christ, who said: “Except anyone be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot inherit the kingdom of God.”

In the text Paul uses the metaphor of a garment. Just as we want the body becomingly clad, so we ought to desire the best kind of attire for the soul. What are we to think of the person who dresses the body very finely and expensively, but is content with the old, soiled and tattered apparel for the soul? Is that consistent? Does it indicate nobility of mind? What will it profit a man if he wears all the gay bodily appointments that wealth can buy, and then, at the last day or at death, must stand in frayed and indecent raiment before God and His angels? Oh! let us try to get the right evaluation of things. Let us put first things first. Let us get the emphasis of life correct. What would you think of a man who would engage in playing frivolous music on his violin while his wife and children were perishing in a burning building?

The vital importance of putting on this new raiment is stressed by the description of it in the text: “which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.” Every word here is significant. “After God” means that God ‘is the copy or standard. Our renewed nature is to be like God’s nature. Since we are to dwell in fellowship with Him, we must be like Him. Any dissonance between Him and us would mar our happy communion. Then this new nature has “been created.” It is not evolved out of the natural man “by means of resident forces.” Indeed, no! It is a divine bestowment. We cannot manufacture this heavenly garment ourselves. We have no goods of the right kind with which to make it; and even if we had the material, we would not have the skill to put it together and fit it to our being and need. No; it must be conferred upon us. The righteousness of Another — that is, of Christ — must be imputed to us by faith, and true holiness of disposition must be created within us by the Holy Spirit. For ob-

serve that it is to be a garment of “righteousness and holiness of truth.” It is not an ordinary garment. It is to be put upon us like a garment that clothes and beautifies the body, and is to be put into us like a temper or disposition that beautifies and purifies the soul. Oh, may all of us wear this beautiful robe!

“Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress.”

Spurgeon was a strong believer in justification by faith and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness. Hence he always emphasized man’s moral inability. In one of his books he says: “Men might as well hope to invent perpetual motion as to present a perfect righteousness of their own, having already sinned. If a man should try to hold up a ladder with his own hand, and at the same time to climb to the top of it he would have less difficulty than in causing his evil nature to attain to holiness... Unregenerate men, before you can serve God, you need a new nature, which only the Spirit of God can create in you; the ‘old man’ cannot serve the Lord. An impure fountain will pour foul streams. The tree must be made good, or the fruit will not be good.”

This leads us logically to consider —

## **IV. The Results Of The Change Of Raiment.**

A man cannot make this change of spiritual raiment without attaining results of a highly important nature. By following the text we shall see what they are, and how vital. What, then, are some of the constituents of the new garment with which the regenerate person is clad?

### **1. Veracity.**

That is a necessary fiber in the very warp and woof of the Christian’s dress. Paul connects it directly with the putting off of the old garment and the putting on of the new; for he says: “Wherefore” — what a logical “Wherefore” it is! — “Wherefore, putting away lying, speak ye truth each one to his neighbor, for we are members one of another.” Falsehood is part of the

old Adamic garment, whereas its opposite, truthfulness, belongs to the new Christlike nature. The new garment is a very ethical garment. Morality is an integral element of our holy religion, and can never be dissevered from it. People who go around spreading falsehoods about their neighbors prove, by that very fact, that they do not wear the garment of Christly righteousness. The Holy Spirit in the heart prompts to the utmost veracity, to the most pellucid honesty.

Besides, nothing is more destructive of social welfare than falsehood. More than one terrible feud has come from it, and more than one awful war. Even that arch evolutionist, Herbert Spencer, who never advanced beyond a mere utilitarian view of ethics, had discernment enough to see that lying was detrimental to society, and therefore was properly called wrong, even if no higher motive prompted to the telling of the truth among men. So Paul says, "We are members one of another," and therefore we should not injure one another by bearing false witness.

## **2. Self-control.**

This is another fiber in the fine fabric of the Christian raiment. "Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down on your wrath; neither give place to the devil," enjoins our text.

How much harm has been done in the world because people have not been able to control their anger! What terrible feuds and atrocities have been committed! In this country sometimes a mob grows excited over some crime, takes the law into its own hands, and commits as heinous a crime as the one it seeks to punish and avenge. This does not mean that the original crime should not be condignly punished; but the trouble is, a mob is apt to lose control of itself, and either seize the wrong person or torture the victim: of its wrath with atrocious cruelty.

What does Paul mean when he says, "Be ye angry, and sin not?" He means that, even though indignation against wrong should rise in our hearts, as it should, yet we must not let it get beyond our control. Some people begin with righteous indignation, but they soon let it flare forth into rage and vindictiveness, and then they are in a mood to commit a heinous wrong which they will afterward regret. It is better to retain one's self-poise, and never let the sun go down on one's wrath. He who does not do this, will

give place to the devil, and will prove that. he has thrown off the spiritual garment of righteousness and true holiness.

### **3. Honest work.**

Paul names some very practical matters here to show the character of the new life: “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is most good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need.” As a rule, those who do not want to work are given to thieving in some form or another. They want to “live by their wits” rather than by honest toil. Hence they resort to an easy and dishonest way of securing a livelihood. There has been a great deal of “profiteering” in recent years. While thousands of our best and noblest young men were giving up home, comfort and even life itself in the world war, and while other patriotic citizens were making vast sacrifices for the sake of their country, many selfish persons were taking advantage of the abnormal situation to gain vast wealth. That is what we call “profiteering” — securing an enormous and unnatural profit, and that, too, through the misfortunes of others. Oh, the shame of it! What a despicable character it has displayed! What is profiteering? It is only another name for stealing. To call things by their right name, the man who made money in that way is a thief. How much more honorable it is to follow the guidance of the great apostle, who enjoins us to work with our hands, earn an honest livelihood, and help others who are unfortunate. Yes, the garment of true religion is one that contains the choicest material — material of which no one ever needs to be ashamed. God grant that we may all wear that heavenly attire now and forever!

# 57. How To Walk Circumspectly. Eph. 5:15-21. The Twentieth Sunday After Trinity.

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. (Ephesians 5:15-21)

“SEE, THEN, that ye walk circumspectly,” says Paul in the opening sentence of our Epistle for today. Though the revised versions do not use the word “circumspectly,” we like the word. It suggests a sense that is not conveyed by the weaker word “carefully,” which is used by the revisers. The word in the original (*akribos*) may very well contain the idea of. “circumspectly,” especially when taken in connection with the earnest words of the apostle, “Take ye heed how.” Webster defines the word “circumspect” in this way: “Attentive to, or marked by attention to, all the circumstances of a case or the probable consequences of an action.” We do not see how a better or a stronger word could be employed. It indicates precisely how Christian people should behave themselves — with a view to all the circumstances and consequences of their action; how it will affect themselves, how it will affect others, how it will affect the cause of religion. So we shall retain the cogent English word, because it seems to embody the full meaning of the original word used by the inspired penman. Let us note several vital considerations.



# **I. The Importance Of Walking Circumspectly.**

## **1. How it will affect ourselves.**

It is wise — that is, circumspect — to think of this matter. You and I are valuable in God’s sight. Christ says-that the angels of God rejoice over one sinner who repents; also that He knows His sheep individually, and by name. So each . one of us is infinitely precious in His sight. Therefore we should not despise ourselves, nor be indifferent to our own well-being. In the eyes of God one person is as valuable as another, for all have immortal possibilities. That includes you and me. So for our own sakes we ought to walk circumspectly — that is, we should take heed how our lives and conduct will affect our own welfare. If we believe and behave according to the will of God, it will promote our well-being both here and hereafter. On the other hand, careless and sinful living will endanger our present welfare and our future destiny. Surely for our sakes we cannot afford to do that. Conscientious and sentient beings, do we want to exist in a state of corruption and misery forever? Certainly we do not; nor does God desire such a doom for us. He sacrificed His only Son on the cross to save us from so dire a fate. Ah! for our own sakes there is ample reason why we should walk circumspectly. Let us try to get God’s appraisalment of us, and that of His holy angels. Then we will never sell our immortal birthright for a mess of pottage, as poor Esau did.

## **2. How a circumspect walk will affect others.**

Even if we do not care for ourselves, we ought to think of our influence over others. How often Christ and His apostles sound out this note of warning! Christ declared that, rather than give offense to or lead astray a little child, it would be better to have a millstone bound about one’s neck and one be cast into the sea. Again and again Paul warns against putting a stumbling-block in another’s way. He also said that Israel’s inconsistent conduct caused the way of God to be “evil spoken of.”

Infidels are often made through the lack of uprightness in the lives of professing Christians. Nothing nauseates people more than pretention and hypocrisy. Many persons would rather be known as outbreakingly wicked

than be looked upon as hypocritical. True, hypocrisy is not the only sin that will carry people to perdition; but it surely is one of the worst and most fatal transgressions. No arraignments of our Lord were more trenchant than those He spoke against hypocrisy. Perhaps many professed Christians are called hypocrites by the people of the world, who, are not really pretenders, but are only humanly weak; nevertheless, their inconsistent conduct does much harm. They are not as “circumspect” as they should be. They should be careful about their walk, talk and manner of life, so that others may be led to Christ and the Church. As Christians, we are to “have a good report of them that are without.” Says the apostle, “Let not your good be evil spoken of,” which means that we should shun the very appearance of evil; we should avoid doing or saying anything that may even be misunderstood. Sometimes we hear people say of a Christian, “He did nothing wrong; he was simply injudicious.” Let us remember, however, that even to act incautiously is to disobey the mandate of the text, “Take heed that ye walk circumspectly.” Let us hear and heed Paul’s cautioning words: “It is good neither to eat meat, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth or is made”weak.” “Now walkest thou not charitably,” said Paul to those who insisted on all their rights, no matter what the effect of their conduct might be upon their fellowmen.

## **II. The Elements Of A Circumspect Walk.**

Let us put the rest of the text in the form of precepts to give more directness and point to our presentation.

### **1. Be wise; avoid folly.**

If we translate the passage accurately, though not quite literally, we will see how crisply the apostle puts it: “Take heed, then, that ye walk circumspectly, not as unwise people, but as wise people.” The word “people” is not in the original, but it must be supplied to make good English; for as you know, it often occurs that what is good idiom in one language is very awkward in another, if you translate literally.

So if we would walk circumspectly, we must be wise; we must avoid unwise conduct. To be imprudent is also wrong. Why? Because the Bible

commends prudence again and again. We also know that sometimes people do the cause of Christ a great deal of harm simply by being injudicious. They do not mean to do wrong; they are not purposely wicked; they may even be honest; but the trouble is, they do so many incautious things that give unnecessary offense to the people around them. If they would only exercise good sense in what they do and say, their sincerity and earnestness would be a great asset in accomplishing good. So let us cultivate this element of circumspectness. A saying of our Lord is relevant at this place: "Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." Let us try to get that happy combination in our Christian walk and conversation.

## **2. Redeem the opportunity.**

This is Paul's next admonition to people who are bidden to walk circumspectly. To translate from the original, he says: "Buying up the opportunity." That word "buying up" is a strong and emphatic word. It means that Christians shall be energetic and alert, watchful for every chance, and willing to make sacrifice to improve any opportunity for doing good and furthering the cause of Christ.

The ancient Greeks in their mythology, which contains some useful suggestions, represented "Opportunity" as an old man who had a tuft of hair on his forehead and the top of his head, but was entirely bald on the back part of his head. So if you wanted to get hold of him and secure a favor, you had to seize the tuft quickly as he came forward, because, after he had passed, you would grasp at him in vain. We may learn a useful lesson from this myth — to "buy up the opportunity" before it is gone. In youth, for example, is the time to learn, to form character, to prepare for a good and useful life. Solomon said, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." Then he goes on to speak of the evil days which shall come when you will be compelled to say, "I have no pleasure in them." But those who are older ought to be on the alert for every opportunity for growth in grace and in the knowledge of Christ.

## **3. Avoid strong drink.**

"But be not drunken with wine, wherein is profligacy," is Paul's next exhortation. The word here translated "drunken" does not mean merely to drink

as one would drink water, but to be intoxicated. So it might be translated in this way: “Do not become intoxicated with wine, for it will lead to excess of all kinds.” Who is it, anyway, that riots, and carouses, and often endangers the welfare of the community? It is the people who drink’ intoxicating liquor. Every neighborhood is better off if its people leave liquor alone, for it is dangerous to tamper with. The person who desires to walk circumspectly before his fellowmen and give a good account of his Christian example will be willing to forego some things that will harm others, even though they might not harm himself. There is something better to be filled with, according to the text than alcoholic drinks, and that is what the apostle enjoins next.

#### **4. Be filled with the Spirit.**

We doubt whether the two kinds of spirits can dwell together in amity — the spirit of liquor and the Spirit of God. Our observation is that where the one is, the other is not likely to be in evidence. The indwelling of God’s Spirit is necessary to the circumspect life. No man can live in such a way as to do no injury to his neighbor and to the cause of Christ without the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The natural man cannot live righteously before God; hence he will harm himself and his fellowmen, because his example will be contrary to the gospel. But if he is filled with the Spirit, that gives him strength to resist evil and live uprightly, and wisdom to do those things that are wise and helpful. Nothing so corrects and elevates the judgment as to submit to the direction of the Holy Spirit, who knows the mind of God.

The infilling of the Holy Spirit will lead to another characteristic of the circumspect Christian life.

#### **5. Engage in true worship.**

The way it is put in the text is rhythmic and beautiful, proving that the apostle possessed something of the poetic spirit. He says: “Speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts unto the Lord, giving thanks always in all things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.” This kind of spiritual exercise which results from being filled with the Holy Spirit, is put in contrast with the coarse hilarities of those who become riotous with wine. How

much more beautiful it is to worship than engage in drunken orgies! How much more becoming to creatures who have been made in the image of God!

True Spiritual worship of God is an essential part of an influential life. Those people who do not go to the house of God for worship, who think that they can be “good without going to church,” never win others to Christ. I challenge you to bring me a non-church-goer who is a soul winner. No; he does not engage in work of that kind. He sits at home and extols his own merits, and finds fault with the people who go to the church services.

What is the benefit of going to the house of prayer and praise? “Speaking to one another,” as the text says — that is one of the benefits. We need encouragement and help, and the way to help one another is to meet together for social worship. How much cheer comes from reading the Psalms together! The psalter speaks right out from the experiences of the ancient saints who knew God face to face. So profound was their experience that they lead us today in our devotions, and express for us the thoughts and feelings that we are unable to express for ourselves. What clear proof this fact furnishes that these patriarchs, who lived so long ago, were not the result of mere evolution! Through their direct communion with God they reached heights of spiritual experience that few people reach even today with all our boasted wisdom and advancement. If evolution is true, we ought to be far in advance of them.

But we are also to use “hymns and spiritual songs.” Notice that the music of the sanctuary is to be simple and dignified. The exact words of the Bible need not always be used, but the sentiment and thought should be Biblical. Sanctuary music should never lose its dignity, never become over-familiar; neither should the tunes be of so roistering and lightsome a character as to suggest the dance-hall or the songs of ribaldry. Sober, joyful, dignified music, modeled after the poetry of the Bible, is the most worshipful. Our hymnology should not be too subjective, but should be surcharged with the spirit of praise and thanksgiving.

The worship of Christians should also be hearty and sincere. “Singing and making melody in your hearts unto the Lord.” Why does Paul phrase his thought in that way? He means that the singing should not be merely with the lips; the melody should also be in the heart. Even if a person cannot sing audibly, he can sing in his heart, and God will hear music; and per-

haps He will appreciate it just as much as if the sweetest melody flowed from the lips.

The church choir occupies a most important position in the house of God. What is their chief function? To lead the congregation in worship; not to parade talent or millinery; not to win human plaudits, but to make the service more worshipful by efficient and skillful leadership in the music. Hence those who occupy such a position should be true worshippers; they should have the spiritual mind, that they may appreciate the spiritual songs and help to render them properly. One of the most beautiful methods of which we know anything is used by a pastor of our acquaintance. He always meets with the choir a few minutes before the service begins, and has prayer with them, asking God to bless them and him, so that they may lead the congregation in true spiritual worship. As they issue from that solemn season of prayer, they feel subdued and reverent.

The worship of the sanctuary should be filled with the spirit of thanksgiving. The text says: "Giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." So many blessings come to us from our God and Savior that we should thank Him more than we petition Him. Hence we believe in a large proportion of objective praise in the Lord's house. Somehow, our hearts are upbuoyed more by recognition of the goodness and greatness of God than when we supplicate so much, and ask for so many things that we do not need and often do not desire very intensely. Let us often strike the note of thanksgiving. "Giving thanks always for all things" — that is the comprehensive direction of the apostle.

"Come, ye that love the Lord,  
And let your joys be known;  
Join in a song with sweet accord,  
While ye surround His throne.

"Let those refuse to sing  
Who never knew our God;  
But children of the heavenly King  
May speak their joys abroad."

The true spirit of worship will create a spirit of mutual goodwill among those who are trying to walk circumspectly.

## 6. Make mutual concessions.

The apostle's way of putting it is a little different, but it means the same thing: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ." How often it occurs that people who bear ill-will to one another are reconciled when they come together in God's house to worship Him. They know that they cannot give Him spiritual worship while they cherish a grudge. Hence they often shake hands and become friends again, even though there may be no formal reconciliation. They simply agree to "let by-gones be by-gones." And that is a good way, and sometimes a much quicker and simpler way to arrange to "talk it over," for then there is always danger of mutual recrimination arising again. At all events, social worship in the sanctuary tends to make good will among the worshippers. But the people who stay at home, and pout and nurse their anger do not give the Holy Spirit a chance to cure them of their spiteful emotions.

In this world mutual concession must be made if people want to live together amicably. We cannot be too exacting with one another, and yet keep peace. All of us have our faults, and if we cannot overlook people's defects, we will be in constant turmoil. The trouble with poor, sinful human nature is, those who have the most faults themselves see the faults of others most clearly, and are the least inclined to pass them by. Church people who harbor ill-will and are quarrelsome do not give religion a good name among those "who are without," but rather put a stumbling block in their way, or discourage them from becoming Christians. A Christian who desires to walk circumspectly before his fellowmen will avoid jangling and wrangling as far as possible. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

Oh, may we, by our circumspect walk, adorn the doctrine of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and thus prove His precepts all divine.

# 58. The Christian Soldier And His Panoply. Eph. 6:10-17. The Twenty-First Sunday After Trinity.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: (Ephesians 6:10-17)

"Soldiers of Christ, arise,  
And gird your armor on,  
Strong in the strength which God supplies,  
Through His eternal Son.

"Strong in the Lord of Hosts,  
And in His mighty power,  
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts  
Is more than conqueror.

“Stand, then, in His great might,  
With all His strength endued;  
And take, to arm you for the fight,  
The panoply of God.”

TODAY we have what might be called a militant text. We need not be frightened, however, by the word “militant” in this connection, for we shall see



that Christian militarism is something very different from warfare among worldly nations for worldly place and power. The apostle Paul, who is the author of the Epistle for the day, was fond of portraying the Christian life under various figures of speech. Some Sundays ago he taught us that the Christian life is like a race. Last Sunday it was represented as a walk. Today the Christian is to be represented as a soldier. Hence we choose as our theme, "The Christian Soldier and His Panoply." Whence does the Christian soldier derive his strength? Who are his enemies? What are his proper accoutrements? These are the questions that are most effectively answered in our text.

## **I. The Christian Soldier's Source Of Strength.**

We come at once to this part of our subject: "Finally, brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." At the outstart, this counsel indicates sharply the kind of militarism in which God's people should engage. It is not a contest of physical Strength or intellectual prowess. Had it been of that character, the apostle would have enjoined upon the Ephesians to develop and train their natural powers, as the soldier does in the camp and on the field. No; here the apostle goes to a higher source, and bids the Christian fighter to be strong in the Lord, who is the true source of all spiritual power. He agrees with what the prophet had said long centuries before: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." This is the only way to keep up the morale of the Lord's army.

Just why does Paul use this apparently tautological language: "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." Here are three different words, "strong," "power" and "might," which mean practically the same thing. This is not only true of the English translation, but also of the original Greek which Paul used. Evidently Paul multiplied words for emphasis to set forth the urgency of the case. He saw beforehand what he was going to say about the power of the enemies of the Christian soldier, and so he piled up words on top of one another in exhorting them to go to the real source of strength. The first phrase says imperatively, "Be strengthened in the Lord;" as if to say, "draw your strength from God." Then he adds, "and in the power of His might;" that is, the God to whom you go for strength is omnipotent; if you have "the power of His might," you will be endued with in-

finite strength, and thus will be able to cope with all the enemies, however powerful, who may assail you. Taking the urgency of the case into consideration, there is no redundancy in Paul's vigorous speech.

And why do we need divine power in our militant Christian life? Because we have been weakened by sin, and hence are no match for the ethical and spiritual foes with which we are to wage battle. Surely no general in a war would pit a company of disabled soldiers against an enemy that was strong and well disciplined. So our commander bids us first go to the source of healing, and be made well and strong, so that we may enter the conflict with a sure prospect of victory. Our own little powers are not equal to the power of our foes; but God's omnipotence is more than a watch for them. This was the thought and experience that led Luther to write the heroic lines:

“With might of ours can naught be done,  
Soon were our loss effected;  
But for us fights the Valiant One  
Whom God Himself elected.”

Oh! Christian warrior, you must first go to Christ for His Spirit, that He may slay the traitors within your own heart, and endue you with supernatural power to overcome your powerful antagonists. This will be seen to be all the more necessary when we come, in the next place, to note the character of the foes.

## **II. The Christian Soldier's Enemies.**

The apostle was an expert in delineation. He issued this graphic command and description: “Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; for our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against authorities, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavens.”

Do you wonder now that Paul, before he depicted the powerful enemies of God's people, admonished them so earnestly to go to God for strength? Without faith and hope in God and His omnipotence the character of the foes would be enough to daunt any heart; and faint hearts have never won great battles. Was it wise to forewarn the Christian soldier of the real

strength of the enemy? It surely was, for to forewarn is to forearm. All the eloquence of Paul's inspired rhetoric is employed to set forth the characteristics of the foes. Let us note them.

## **1. There are “the wiles of the devil.”**

This should always be remembered by the Christian warrior — that the devil is wily; that he will never fight fairly and honorably and openly, but will always resort to strategy and deception. And he is a more expert strategist than you and I are. We never can match him with guile and mendacious tactics. Therefore we have all the more reason for going to God for strength and wisdom; He alone can ferret out the ruses, disguises and deceptive schemes of the evil one. But, thank God, He can. He who is infinitely wise is more than a match for Satan. With Luther we must admit —

“The old, bitter foe  
Means us deadly woe:  
Deep guile and great might  
Are his dread arms in fight:  
On earth is not his equal.”

However, with Luther we may also claim the victory:

“A mighty fortress is our God,  
A trusty Shield and Weapon;  
He helps us free from every foe  
That hath us now o’ertaken.”

## **2. “We wrestle not with flesh and blood.”**

Says the Lutheran Commentary: “The apostle is describing a battle; but this word (wrestling) indicates an individual, hand-to-hand conflict.” And that is a significant truth: no matter how many other soldiers may be fighting in the conflict, each one of us must have a direct contest with the arch-foe of our souls. So here again Paul used the right word in the right place. “Flesh and blood” means men. “But is not the Christian warfare against men and organizations of men? Yes; but the real enemy is invisible, fighting through men and their organizations” (Lutheran Commentary). You. may rely upon

it, Satan will always use camouflage, and try to make the Lord's soldiers believe that they are contending only against other men who are their equals. Let us not be deceived by his wicked wiles.

### **3. "Against principalities."**

No doubt there are different orders of evil spirits. It stands to reason, that if they desire to do injury to God and His people, they must have some kind of an organization, just as a band of robbers must have their chief, their secondary officers and their rank and file. Perhaps in the world of demons Satan is the Chieftain, and the "principalities" are those individual demons who stand next to him in rank and power. It is against such foes that you and I must fight. But let us remember the Source of our strength: "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

### **4. "Against authorities."**

In the organized administration of the world of evil spirits there may be something like our supreme courts, from which are issued the mandates to be carried out by the executive department. At all events, this word "authorities" indicates the supernatural power of the enemies of righteousness against whom we are to wage war.

### **5. "Against the world-rulers of this darkness."**

This seems to be according to the best original text. In every age, including the apostolic age and our own age, the demoniacal spirits seek to rule the world. Satan offered all the kingdoms of the world to Christ in the great temptation, and there is no doubt that the world is largely dominated by wicked personalities and principles, and this will account for the present moral and spiritual darkness, as well as that which characterized every other critical age. All this entanglement in public, civic, social and industrial affairs, when no two men seem to be able to agree as to what is the best and wisest policy, is no doubt largely due to the intrigue of the "world-ruler" in the realms of darkness. They are simply using men as their tools, while they themselves are slyly hiding their hand.

## 6. "Against the spirituals of wickedness in the heavens."

That is a literal translation of the original. As Greek idiom, it is linguistic and grammatical; but to make proper English we must supply some words: "the spiritual beings in the super-terrestrial regions." These evil hosts against which we contend are not confined to the earth, but occupy regions above the earth. "Heavenly regions" here does not mean heaven, the dwelling-place of the redeemed, but the upper regions of space, which demons try to control, so as to prevent God's kingdom from coming to the earth. Hence Christ taught His disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." When we remember how difficult it is for God's kingdom to be established on the earth, we can readily believe that there are malevolent personalities between the earth and heaven that are trying to balk the will of God. All the more reason, this, to be clothed upon with more than human power in order to win the victory.

Now, what follows all this? We are hidden to go to God for strength and courage. Does that mean that God will fight our battles for us, and permit us to conceal ourselves in a safe place of ambush? No! no! we are to get strength from God in order that we may enter the contest and fight the battles of the Lord.

"Must I be carried to the skies  
On flowery beds of ease,  
While others fought to win the prize,  
And sailed through bloody seas?"

"Are there no foes for me to face?  
Must I not stem the flood?  
Is this vile world a friend to grace,  
To help me on to God?"

"Sure I must fight if I would reign:  
&nbsp;   Increase my courage, Lord!  
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,   Supported by Thy Word."

Besides inner strength and courage for the conflict, the Christian soldier must put on the right kind of armor and employ the right kind of weapons.

Thus we must consider —

### **III. The Christian Soldier's Panoply.**

How is the warrior in the battle for righteousness to be accoutered? In delineating the Christian's armor the apostle naturally used the figures of speech that were apropos in his day. They do not agree so well with the modern soldier's paraphernalia, but are very suggestive for spiritual warfare, and bring the Christian warrior clearly out into the open field of conflict where his own individual prowess comes into view. The older methods of warfare afford a better illustration of the Christian contest than do, the modern. Paul enjoins twice in the text: "Put on the whole armor of God." By this he means: Do not leave any place unguarded. Remember the joint in Achilles' armor through which the arrow of Paris penetrated to his heel and gave the chivalrous warrior his fatal wound. The apostle gives the Christian soldier's panoply in detail.

#### **1. The girdle of truth.**

"Stand, therefore, having girded your loins with truth." The girdle was placed about the soldier's loins to keep the rest of his attire in place, and prevent his action from being impeded. In the Christian's warfare it is important that he have a clear conception of truth, so that he may know precisely for what doctrines and principles he is fighting. If his coat and other garments are permitted to flap about unbound by the girdle of real knowledge of the truth, he will find himself sadly handicapped. No person can, put up a strong and effective fight unless he knows explicitly what he is fighting for. For intelligent soldiers in the Lord's battles, it will not suffice to say, "Not theirs to question why: theirs but to do and die." If soldiers know why they are fighting, and are persuaded that theirs is a great and worthy cause, they will fight all the more willingly, heroically and effectively. There are to be no wavering, half-convinced or blindly superstitious soldiers in the hosts of Israel.

#### **2. The breastplate of righteousness.**

This is a necessary part of the Christian warrior's equipment. The breastplate was placed over the chest to protect the heart, lungs and other vital organs from the darts and arrows of the enemy. So must our hearts, my Christian friends, be protected from sinful assault. Very often our chief danger lies in wicked feelings, such as anger, envy, avarice, lust; and so here we must present to the enemy an armor that is impenetrable. The righteousness of Christ, which has no flaws and joints, is our breastplate, and a sure protection it is from the fiery darts of the enemy. "The man who is filled with God's truth is ready for action; the man who is covered with Christ's righteousness is secure against the thrusts of the adversary" (Lutheran Commentary).

### **3. Greaves for the feet.**

"Having your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." What does this mean? Could the soldier, who had to fight on all kinds of battlefields, afford to take the risk of going barefoot? Surely his feet had to be protected from thorns, briars and sharp stones, and also from the arrows of the enemy. Remember Achilles' heel. The soldier who was lamed could not continue his fighting with effectiveness. Thus we Christians must have our spiritual feet properly protected, so that we may stand bravely in the fight, and be quick and sure in action. Some people today make poor soldiers because they go limping along with all sorts of doubts about the gospel. The spiritual hand cannot say to the foot, "I have no need of you."

What does the apostle mean by "preparation of the gospel of peace?" That is a very poor translation; it obscures the apostle's clear and inspiring meaning. The original word (*hetoimasia*) means readiness. The Christian warrior is to have his feet always shod with the gospel, and thus be ready for action every moment; always alert, supple, swift; always to stand or to run. It is the same figure of speech that the prophet used (Isa. 52:7): "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" When the waiting people in Jerusalem, in great distress from oppression and fear, first saw the feet of the swift runner out on the distant mountains, and knew from his demeanor that he was bringing good tidings, how beautiful those swift feet

must have appeared to them! So the Christian soldier must always be shod; must always be ready for service.

#### **4. The shield of faith.**

“Withal, take up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the enemy.” The other parts of the soldier’s armor were stationary. He needed also a movable weapon, one that could be turned. this way and that, to catch and ward off all the missiles of the foe. Thus the soldier would be protected everywhere. No metaphor could be more apt. Faith is an equipment of the Christian which he can turn in any direction from which the foe may strike. With it he can shield his head, his heart, his loins, his limbs and his feet. No wonder the inspired writer of the letter to the Hebrews called the brave roster of the heroes of faith, for without faith it is impossible to please God and to fight in his army.

#### **5. The helmet of salvation.**

A helmet is for the head. The breastplate protected the heart, the emotions; the helmet protected the head, the intellect. Today there are people, some of them in our pulpits, colleges and theological schools, who need the helmet of salvation to protect their heads from doubt. The experience of conversion, which includes both the heart and the head, is the sure guarantee against intellectual skepticism.

#### **6. The sword of the Spirit.**

This is the last weapon mentioned in the list, but not the least. It is a weapon for both defense and offense, and the Christian soldier must engage in both kinds of warfare. He must defend himself and the Christian cause against assault, and he must also attack sin and error wherever he finds it. He is not merely a negative person. Paul defines the sword of the Spirit: it is “the Word of God.” That was the weapon with which Christ beat the devil; it was the weapon which Luther used so powerfully and victoriously; it is the weapon for you and me, my fellow soldiers in the Lord’s army.

Is not all this a marvelous array for Christ’s veterans? Let us put on the whole armor of God that we may be able to withstand the evil one, and hav-



ing done all, to stand firmly for truth and righteousness until our Captain shall crown us victors.

"Ne'er think the victory won,  
Nor lay thine armor down;  
Thine arduous task will not be done,  
Till thou obtain thy crown.

"Fight on, my soul, till death  
Shall bring thee to thy God;  
He'll take thee at thy parting breath  
To thy divine abode."

# 59. Joyful Thanksgiving And Prayer. Phil. 1:3-11. The Twenty-Second Sunday After Trinity.

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:3-11)

“EVERY TIME I think of you, I am filled with gratitude to God.” That is what Paul said, in the Epistle for today, to the Philippians, only we have turned his more solemn form of speech into modern idiomatic and everyday language. He had a peculiar affection for the Philippians, perhaps because they had remembered him more kindly and substantially than any other churches had, and because they had proved themselves staunch and faithful to the gospel. In the lesson for today he assures them of his love, his gratitude on their account and his earnest prayers in their behalf.

I desire to have you notice the deeply spiritual character of his thanksgiving and prayers. Paul did not live on a worldly and materialistic plane. With him the things of sense were not the chief things. His spirituality is a rebuke of the materialism of the day and the worldly temper of its pleasure-seeking. This age would, it seems, reverse Christ's order. Instead of saying,

as He did: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,” the present age would put it in this form: “Man shall not live by the Word of God alone, but mainly by bread.” The world today wants the maximum of worldly comfort and pleasure and the “irreducible minimum” of religion. “How little religion can I have and yet escape perdition?” that seems to be the crude maxim of many people today.

Not so the truly converted and spiritually minded apostle who wrote the lesson for today. Let us observe —

## **I. Why The Apostle Was Thankful.**

### **1. For the fellowship of the Philippians in the gospel.**

Let us translate literally what he says, giving his precise meaning: “Every time I think of you I am grateful to God, and I offer all my prayers for you with great joy because of your cooperation in the promotion of the gospel from the very first day until the present moment.” It was their fidelity and steadfastness and activity in the cause of the gospel that filled him with such deep gratitude. They had not been wavering as had some others. They had not followed other teachers and sought for another gospel. They were satisfied with the holy and saving doctrines that he had preached to them when he established the little church in the city of Philippi. They did not “love doctrines strange, nor e’er to other teachers range.” Is not that sufficient cause for gratitude in the experience of any pastor? Nothing gives him so much joy as to know that the people to whom he has proclaimed the gospel are steadfast in their faith, and are not “tossed about by every wind of doctrine”; when, as Paul puts it elsewhere, they “hold fast to the form of sound” words.” “A rolling stone gathers no moss,” and that adage is just as true in the religious sphere as in the sphere of worldly economy.

Not only were they faithful to the pure doctrine, but they were also active in helping the apostle to further the gospel cause. They were not mere doctrinaires, not mere scholastics, but their faith, while orthodox, led them to active service and cooperation. Just as faith without works is dead, so doctrine that does not produce activity in Christ’s service is a dead thing — a corpse rather than a living power.

## **2. God's fidelity to the Philippians.**

Not only was Paul grateful for the steadfastness and activity of the church at Philippi, but also, as he says, because he was "confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Here again Paul plows deep into the soil. While he thanked God for the fidelity of the Philippians, he knew that fundamentally the success of their Christian lives did not depend upon themselves. No, indeed, or they, like other unstable people, would have been "driven by the wind and tossed." There is something for us to do if we would inherit salvation. We must continue to trust in Christ and to serve Him; and when we fail, as we so often do, we must not give up the contest, but must go to Him for pardon and renewal of strength; yes, these are necessary conditions that we must fulfill. But, remember, all our faith and all our efforts would be futile if it were not for the faithfulness and keeping power of God. Never could our poor faith hold out in the midst of world-wide skepticism; never could our puny strength cope with our powerful foes, did not God's omnipotence intervene to preserve us in the true faith and service. Let us get this idea: Submission to God is only the condition on which He places almighty power and grace at our disposal. It is not we who have the power; we only let God keep us by His power. With our free consent He will bestow upon us all His divine resources; but one thing He will not do: He will not force them upon us.

This is precisely Christ's teaching as well as Paul's. Christ said: "I am the vine; ye are the branches; without me ye can do nothing;" yet He also said: "Abide in Me, that ye may bring forth much fruit;" "Every branch that abideth in Me bringeth forth fruit abundantly." The branch 'does not furnish the life and the power; yet the branch must abide in the vine which does furnish them. So the work which God has begun in our hearts in regeneration will be perfected by Him against all opposition, if we simply continue to trust in Him. He will not begin a good work and leave it incomplete.

## **3. They were partakers of his grace.**

He says: "It is right for me to think of you in this way, for I hear you affectionately in my heart." And why? "Because both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel you are partakers of my grace."

Paul had been in prison; he had been in bonds. Yet the Philippians had stood by him in his affliction. Their affection for him had not grown cold; their faith in him and in the gospel had not waxed weak; and they had extended material help to him, even when it was unpopular and dangerous to show him their sympathy. They took the risk of being arrested and persecuted themselves by extending him aid. Peter denied Christ under similar circumstances. But the Philippians remained loyal to Paul in his affliction and even while he was under the cloud of suspicion.

They did more than that, more than merely minister to his bodily needs: they also stood with him in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. They were real Christian apologists, as was Paul himself; as were Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origin, Arnobius, Augustine, Luther and many other bold and faithful defenders of the faith. Some people seem to think that defense of the gospel is never necessary. They aver that “the truth will take care of itself; it needs no vindication.” And so they let the liberalists, rationalists and infidels have their own way, no matter how many souls they destroy by their arguments. But Paul and his fellow-Christians at Philippi were not of this lackadaisical type; they set themselves for the defense and confirmation of the gospel. It was no more Peter’s policy than Paul’s to sit down and fold his hands supinely before the gainsayers of the truth, but he gave this vigorous advice: “But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord; ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear.” Note that Peter here enjoins upon the disciples of Christ to be so well informed regarding the basis of their hope as always to be ready to give their reason for cherishing it. That means that all Christians should post up on Christian evidences, and should not depend on’ mere dogmatic assertion as to their convictions. True enough, reason will not save people, yet people can not be saved without reason; for no one can believe what seems to him to be incredible; therefore it is our business as intelligent Christians to remove as many obstacles to faith as we can in our’ great work of winning converts to Jesus Christ. Paul’s motto was to “become all things to all men, that he might by all means save some.”

#### **4. Paul cherished a tender affection for the Philippians.**

His protestation of love for them is a part of his expression of gratitude to God. In one verse he says, "I have you in my heart." In a subsequent passage he adds, "For God is my witness how I long after you in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus." Why does he include these expressions in his outburst of thanksgiving? Because God is the source of all love. "We love Him, because He first loved us." Paul was filled with gratitude to God because God had filled his heart with this tender, yearning love for his brethren. Is it not our own experience, my brethren, that, whenever our hearts are filled with love toward our fellow-men, we are grateful to God for shedding His love abroad in hearts by the Holy Spirit whom He hath given unto us? The more we can connect God with every right and joyous feeling of our hearts, the sweeter will be our relation to Him and the warmer our gratitude. Here is a hymn that describes the true source and cause of genuine Christian love:

"O God, I love Thee — not that my poor love  
May Win me entrance to Thy heaven above;  
Nor yet that strangers to Thy love must know  
The bitterness of everlasting woe.

"How can I choose but love Thee, God's dear Son,  
O Jesus, loveliest and most loving One!  
Were there no heaven to gain, no hell to flee,  
For what Thou art alone I must love Thee.

"Not for the hope of glory" or reward,  
But even as Thyself hast loved me, Lord,  
I love Thee, and will love Thee and adore,  
Who art my King, my God, for evermore."

Having now examined Paul's reasons for joyful gratitude, we must, in the next place, consider his prayer for the Philippians. This will be the second main division of our theme:

## **II. What The Apostle Prayed For.**

His petitions for his brethren were of as exalted a spiritual character as was his gratitude in their behalf. Paul was no groundling, selfishly asking for

blessings of a worldly order. The precise opposite was the case. Thanking God for the love of the Philippians, he prayed that —

### **1. They might have still more love.**

“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more.” Was that a presumptuous and selfish prayer? Not at all, looked at from Paul’s viewpoint. He knew well enough that no Christian can stand still. He must either move forward or backward. There must be either progress or regress. Therefore he desired that the Philippians should make progress in love, so that they might grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ; for as long as they moved forward and upward, there was no danger of their slipping backward. So our prayer should ever be, “More love to Thee, O Christ, more love to Thee.” But Paul’s petition went up for something more in behalf of his friends at Philippi; he prayed —

### **2. For an increase of their knowledge and discernment.**

Observe that these objects of his prayer are directly connected with love: “I pray that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and in all discernment.” The order here is beautiful and logical, for Paul was a close reasoner. The love of the Philippians was to be intelligent, illumined with knowledge; it was not to be a mere emotion, a mere sentiment. A feeling that is only a feeling, and that is not based on knowledge, can never be strong and enduring. Blind love is a poor kind of love. Even sexual love should not be blind. It was a mistake for the Greeks to represent Cupid, their god of hymeneal love, as blind. No other kind of love should have better and keener eyes than the love of men and women for one another. The same is true of Christian love; it should glow and grow in the light of increasing knowledge; for it certainly is true that the more we know about the goodness and grace of God in His redemptive plan, the more our hearts thrill and throb with love for Him.

On the other hand, mere knowledge is not sufficient. If a person had all knowledge and yet had not charity, which is the same as love, it would profit him nothing. There are people who are great scholars, but they are selfish; no love for God and their fellow-men glows in their hearts. It benefits them not, all their erudition. If the colleges and universities of our land

educate mere egotists, men and women who seek only their own aggrandizement, and do not produce philanthropists, willing servitors and true patriots, they will prove a bane instead of a blessing to the country and the world. Let every instructor in our schools be a lover of God and the race, and implant a generous affection in all his teaching, and thus incite in his pupils a willingness to spend and be spent in the service of mankind.

Why does Paul add, “and in all discernment”? Because Christian people should develop that keenness of mind and spirit that will enable them to distinguish truth from error and right from wrong, so that they will not be led astray by every pretended prophet who comes to them with a smooth and plausible philosophy. Do you suppose for a moment that a Christian person who has cultivated real spiritual discernment will take up with the numerous religious fads that come along? Will he be likely to exchange Christianity, with its clear and rational teaching, for Theosophy, or Buddhism, or Baháism, or Rationalism? No. Christ said, “I know my sheep, and am known of mine.”

Their abounding in love, knowledge and spiritual insight was to lead to something high and noble according to the text, and that was the next object of Paul’s prayer:

#### **4. For approval of all moral excellence.**

“That ye may approve the things that are excellent,” is Paul’s apt way of stating this truth. Would not such a gospel transform the world? Let us simply suppose for a moment that all people would approve the things that are excellent, what a transformation would occur in human society? Can you imagine that there would be any more debauchery, drunkenness, grafting, profiteering, licentiousness, murder and lynching? Let me tell you again, my people, as I have so often told you, Christianity holds up before us the highest standards of excellence, and if its principles were made dominant among the nations of the earth, all our social, civic, economic, national and international problems would be dissolved as the mists of night melt away before the rising sun. Oh, that all people would learn to approve of the things that are morally and spiritually excellent!



“Our flesh and sense must be denied,  
Passion and envy, lust and pride;  
While justice, temperance, truth and love  
Our inward piety approve.”

## **5. For sincerity and blamelessness.**

Here are still more graces for which Paul prayed: “That ye may be sincere and void of offense unto the day of Christ.” Nothing is more important in Christianity than the utmost sincerity. No religion is so intolerant of hypocrisy as the Christian religion. Everywhere in both the Old and the New Testaments is it denounced as one of the chief and most repugnant sins. The inspired writer said, “The hope of the hypocrite shall perish.” Remember that Christ, though He gave the clearest revelation of the love of God for sinners, condemned sanctimonious pretension without measure. He called the Pharisees, with their outward garb of piety and their inward corruption, “whited sepulchers.” When He desired to portray the terrible doom of the unfaithful servant, He declared that he would receive “his portion with the hypocrites.” Everywhere in the Bible purity of heart and singleness of motive are insisted on.

Paul adds that Christians should be “void of offense unto the day of Jesus Christ,” which is the same as what he wrote in the Epistle we considered a few Sundays ago, when he enjoined upon the followers of Christ to “walk circumspectly” — that is, in such a way as to commend the principles of the gospel.

Finally, Paul brings his lesson to a climax by announcing that he also prayed for the Philippians to “be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” Thus he prayed —

## **5. For the fruits of righteousness.**

You might have expected so fundamental and ethical a thinker as Paul, particularly as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit, to end his declarations about prayer in this climactic way. What is the whole purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ? It is to save people from sin and bring them to righteousness in order that they may be fitted for fellowship with God forever and ever. This is the deepest and most distinguishing characteristic of the Christian

religion. Other religions are based on expediency and selfish interest, never rising above the utilitarian view of ethics. The Christian religion is based, strong and deep, on the principle of righteousness.

“Blest are the undefiled in heart,  
Whose ways are right and clean;  
Who never from Thy law depart,  
But fly from every sin.”

Happy that congregation whose faith is so fixed and strong, and whose lives bring forth the fruitage of righteousness to such a degree, as to merit such joyful thanksgiving and fervent prayer as Paul offered to God for the church at Philippi!

# 60. The Earthly And The Heavenly Mind. Phil. 3:17-21. The Twenty-third Sunday After Trinity.

Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. (Philippians 3:17-21)

FROM THE EPISTLE for the day we deduce this theme, “The Contrast Between the Earthly and the Heavenly Mind.” Relevant to the theme, we quote the opening paragraph of one of Gerhard’s “Sacred Meditations,” a book of rare spiritual quality:

“Do not, O my soul, set thine affections on things that are upon the earth. For ‘the world passeth away’ (1 John 2:17; 1 Cor. 7:31); ‘and all the works that are therein shall be burned up’ (2 Pet. 3:10); where then will be thy love? Love the good that is eternal, that thou mayest love the life that is eternal. Every creature was made subject to vanity (Rom. 8:20): if thou therefore lovest the creature, thou thyself shalt be made subject to vanity. Love that which is truly and lastingly good, that thy heart may enjoy enduring peace and rest.”

Although this meditation was written over three hundred and eighty years ago (1606), it is germane today, as it is to all time. If we desire to have a stable and enduring peace — that “better part which shall never be taken away” — we must not set our affections on the vanishing things of

the world, but upon the perduring things of eternity. Our text today brings out this truth by drawing a contrast between the earthly and the heavenly mind. Let us follow the text somewhat closely in our analysis of the subject. First, we shall point out some of the features of the worldly mind; then some characteristics of the heavenly mind. Paul prefaces his delineation of the two by this exhortation: “Brethren, unite in following my example, and fix your eyes on those who are living by the pattern which we have set you” (Twentieth Century New Testament). This counsel was not presumptuous, for elsewhere Paul exhorted his fellow-believers to follow him as he followed Christ, and that is implied here. A pastor should always deport himself in such a way as to be a worthy pattern, for, as you will remember, Paul wrote to young Timothy: “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity.” So the minister can not excuse himself by saying: “Do not follow my example; follow my preaching.” He must make his preaching and his example accord. So the apostle enjoined on the Philippians to follow his example in discarding the worldly mind and cultivating the heavenly disposition.

## **I. Some Features Of The Worldly Mind.**

### **1. It is at enmity with the cross of Christ.**

Regarding this mark of worldliness, Paul is intensely in earnest, for he says — and you can feel the throb of his emotions in his words: “For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and tell you. now even weeping, as the enemies of the cross of Christ.”

How is the worldly spirit opposed to the cross of Christ? In this way: The cross of Christ means salvation from sin on the condition of repentance and faith. But the worldly spirit does not want to give up sin and its pleasures; it rolls them as a sweet morsel under its tongue. If it could continue to indulge in the pleasures of sin, it might be willing to have salvation in the sense of mere rescue from the penalty of transgression; but such salvation would be no salvation at all, and hence is impossible. Yes, as Paul puts it, “The cross is foolishness to them that are perishing.” Only to those who desire real salvation — that is, salvation from sin unto holiness — is the cross

a delight and an attraction. Depend upon it, the worldling wants none of the religion of the cross. It is too humbling to his pride; too destructive of his selfishness. Says Gerhard: "He who fills himself daily with swine's husks has no taste for the delightful repasts of the heavenly kingdom." Here Paul may be quoted effectively: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him."

## **2. Its end is perdition.**

Some people think that the wicked will gradually vanish away into nothingness. In Christian lands there are advocates of this doctrine. Some of the liberal books of recent years promulgate it. This means that the ultimate desire of the poor pagan Buddhist, which is final extinction of being in nirvana or parinibbana, is to be realized merely by being sufficiently rebellious and degraded to bring it about. The Buddhist saint must win this goal by the most ascetic self-denial, by pursuing the "Noble Eightfold Path" with much labor and travail and by means of many painful transmigrations; but, behold, here in America, in the blazing light of the gospel of Christ, we have men who believe that this goal can be won simply by being as wicked and beastly as possible. But be not deceived: God is not mocked. The Bible gives no encouragement to such a belief. The text says of worldlings, "their end is perdition," and we can find nowhere that "perdition" is a synonym for "annihilation."

Permit me to say that annihilation has no terrors for people who are steeped in sin and worldliness; they rather welcome it. We have heard people make declarations to that effect; they would rather, they averred, be totally extinguished than to go to the heaven which the Bible portrays. We heard one crass infidel announce that he thought such "an eternal sleep would be very sweet." However, he omitted to explain how he would know that it "would be very sweet" after his consciousness had been blotted out! Remember this terrible warning of the text: "Whose end is perdition."

The mind of worldlings is further characterized in this way in the text:

## **3. Their god is their appetite.**

The Twentieth Century New Testament translates the phrase in this way: "Their appetites are their god." The word "appetites" may stand for all

kinds of bodily desires and passions. How true it is that many people “live to eat”! You see them gormandizing everywhere. While many people in the world are starving, they are stuffing. Some people can not even attend the church service on Sunday morning because it will interfere with their “Sunday dinner,” which must be the biggest feast of the week. Sometimes the women of the household must work all Sunday to prepare sumptuous meals for their gluttonous men folk. Our sympathies go out toward the hard-working women, who should have Sunday for a day of rest and worship if anybody should. Oh! let us live simply and plainly. We have a right to eat enough to satisfy a normal appetite and to keep us in good health, but we have no right to be so coarse and selfish as to gormandize. We plead for “plain living and high thinking.” Far too many people reverse the adage, making it “plain thinking and high living.” Their god is their stomach. They live but to gratify their corporeal desires. Oh! let us remember that we have minds to be informed and souls to be nourished and saved, as well as fleshly corporeity to be fed.

#### **4. They glory in their shame.**

This means that there are people so degraded that they boast of things that are most disgraceful. Is not this only too true? You can see them giggling over the most shameful things, and that which suggests the prurient and salacious brings from their coarse lips the loudest guffaw. One thing is characteristic of the worldling’s life: he more and more loses his sense of the refined and refining, and cares more and more for things that are crass and gross. The questionable dance, the suggestive show, the obscene picture, the ethically compromising book — these are the things that please him most. No wonder the Christian conception of heaven, with all its pure and simple pleasures and its holy worship, does not appeal to people of such banal and earthy proclivities!

Paul names in the next phrase the outstanding mark of worldlings:

#### **5. They mind earthly things.**

Do you know that there are people today who call themselves “secularists”? They have their coteries in many communities in this country and in England. Their boast is that they are concerned only for the present life. “This-

worldism” might aptly describe their principal tenet. One of them, who spoke in this city not long ago, seemed to think it “smart” to say that he and his crowd “did not deal in futures.” He used a gambling term in the stock market to define the principles of his class. Is not that a “broad” view? Are not people who “mind earthly things” and who have no vision of a future life — are they not “exceedingly broad-minded”?

Well, if that is what it means to be “broad-minded,” namely, that in this life only we have hope, with no outlook into the future, the less we have to do with “broad-mindedness” the better off we shall be. But is it a mark of breadth of thought, sympathy and vision to believe that “it is all of life to live and all of death to die?” We cannot see that it is. Whether it is true or untrue, it is absurdly and irrationally narrow — to believe that we shall live here in this world for a few years, in the midst of sorrows and perplexities, and then sink into oblivion forever. The narrowest and smallest and meanest philosophy in the world is that which declares a winding sheet and a grave to be the end of all our hopes and aspirations.

A noted unbeliever once made the following boast: “I have all I can do to take care of one world at a time. So I propose to take care of this life, and let the future take care of itself!”

Was that a smart saying? He thought it was, and the crowd that applauded him seemed to agree with him. But certainly it did not display great acuteness. We reply, he should not have tried to measure everybody else’s caliber by his own defective yardstick. Granting that he had not enough mental and moral ability to “take care of more than one world at the same time,” he ought not to have thought everybody else was afflicted with a like impotency! I make no boast for Christian people, for they should be modest and humble, but I do maintain that we, by the graCe of God, have the capacity to take care of this present life in the best and highest sense, and at the same time to prepare for a noble and eternal destiny in the world to come. If boasting were in order, then, who would have the better reason to boast? But we do no bragging, we Christians. We admit that our sufficiency is not of ourselves, but of God and His gracious revelation. The Bible, gives us our broadness of vision, our ability to look out into the future, and to prepare for the life to come. What does the Good Book say? “For Christ hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” “In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you.”

But time flies, so we must leave this part of our theme and attend to the next:

## **II. The Attractive Features Of The Heavenly Mind.**

Before we name the marks of this life, so beautifully set forth in the text, we must make a discrimination. The Bible does not teach that we should despise the present life. Indeed, the same apostle who wrote our text also declared that “godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” Christ taught that His disciples should be “in the world, but not of the world.” In the Bible the true life is a matter of emphasis: the present life and earthly good are condemned only when we place the chief stress upon them; when we care only for them, and do not regard them as preparatory to a better and higher condition, which shall endure forever. Money is a good thing when rightly gotten and used; but if men set their affections upon it, and put their trust in it, it becomes a ruinous evil, a despot without mercy. So with all merely temporal things. If we look upon them as temporal, and use them only as temporal, they will serve us well for an eternal purpose. Let us apprehend clearly this distinction; then we shall be able to appreciate what Paul says in the latter part of the text about the heavenly life.

### **1. Our citizenship is in heaven.**

That is the first statement that Paul makes regarding the true Christian life.- Was Paul too other-worldly here? Some people are very much afraid that Christian people will become so much engrossed in contemplating the future life ’ that they will neglect present duty. But there is little danger from that source. Every pastor knows that he seldom, if ever, needs to warn his people against being too heavenly minded; he must constantly admonish them against the precise opposite — worldly mindedness. Your speaker has been a preacher of the gospel for some forty years, but he cannot now remember a single parishioner who laid too much stress upon heaven and its attractions, and who, on that account, neglected his farm, his earthly business, his money-making. He can recall scores and scores who had to be



counseled to think more of the claims of eternity. Indeed, he frankly confesses that his own temptations have been to worldliness far more than to other-worldliness.

But Paul was right, and not only right, but also sensible and sober, when he made the assertion: "Our citizenship is in heaven." Everybody knows that we are only pilgrims and sojourners in this life; that our abode here is only temporary; that soon we must all leave these earthly tenements. So our real and abiding commonwealth is not here. If it is not here, where is it to be found? Where is the country of which we shall be naturalized citizens forever? Surely it must be heaven. Therefore our real and enduring citizenship is there.

Gerhard has a meditation on "The Transitoriness of Life," from which we quote this impressive section: "Do not, therefore, O beloved soul, devote thy highest thoughts to this life, but rather aspire to the joys of the life which is to come. Contrast the very brief space of time allotted us in this life with the infinite and never-ending ages of eternity, and it will sufficiently appear how foolish it is to cling to this fleeting life to the neglect of that eternal life. Our life here is transitory, and yet in this life we either win or lose eternal life; it is filled with pain and misery, and yet in it we either win or lose the eternal happiness of heaven; it is full of dire calamities, and yet in it we either win or lose eternal joys. If, then, thou dost aspire to eternal life, desire it with thy whole heart in this fleeting life. Use this world, but, oh, set not thy heart upon it! Carry on thy temporal business in this life, but, oh, let not thy mind be fixed upon this life! Using the things of this world will not harm us, if we set not our hearts upon them. This world is simply thy lodging-place; but heaven is thy fatherland. Do not take such delight in thy daily sojourn in this earthly lodging-place that thou wilt abate for a moment thy longing desires for the heavenly fatherland."

## **2. We wait for the coming of Christ.**

Since our real commonwealth is in heaven, it is from there that we "wait for our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." He is the King of that heavenly commonwealth, and therefore we look for Him to come to hear us, in His own good time, to our celestial and abiding home. It is the Father's house of many mansions, and He has gone to prepare a place for us; and he has

promised to come again, and receive us unto Himself, that where He is there we may be also.

"Upward, where the stars are burning,  
Silent, silent in their turning  
Round the never-changing pole;  
Upward, where the sky is brightest,  
Upward, where the blue is lightest,  
Lift I now my longing soul.

"Far above that arch of gladness,  
Far above those clouds of sadness,  
Are the many mansions fair!  
Far from pain and sin and folly,  
In that palace of the holy,  
I would find my mansion there."

### **3. We expect a marvelous change in our condition.**

An inspired pen was required to describe the transformation that will take place when we exchange our temporary pilgrimage for our eternal residence; so we defer to Paul in the closing part of the text: "Who will fashion anew the body of our humiliation, in order that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself."

There is so much majesty in this declaration that we would fain close our sermon with it. It is used at the grave . of our loved ones when we lay their bodies in the quiet tomb to rest until the resurrection morning. We cannot even conceive of the glory which Christ has at the right hand of the Majesty on High. We do not understand the nature of glorified substance. The inspired writer tells us that "in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily"; but of that wonder we have but a faint conception. Of one blessed, uplifting fact, however, we are assured — that our humiliation shall be translated into His glory: "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Such are the characteristics of the heavenly life. Even here on earth we may experience satisfying foretastes of its bliss and purity. God help us to cultivate the heavenly mind, so that we may feel at home in the heavenly commonwealth when we become citizens there!

"No graves are there;  
No willows weep above the grassy bed  
Where sleep the young, the fondly loved, the fair,  
The early dead.

"No funeral knell  
Blends with the breeze of spring its mournful tone,  
Bidding henceforth the balmy breezes tell  
Of loved ones gone.

"We praise. Thy name  
That from the dust and darkness of the tomb  
We can look up in faith, and humbly claim  
Our future home."

# 61. A Prayer That Was A True Prayer. Col. 1:9-14. The Twenty-fourth Sunday After Trinity.

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: (Colossians 1:9-14)

FEW SELECTIONS in the cycle of the Christian Year have been made from Paul's letter to the Colossians; yet it is a very important epistle, and we are glad that our pericope for today is taken from it. For good introductions to this epistle we recommend Dr. E. T. Horn's article in the Lutheran Commentary and Dr. C. S. Lewis's analysis in "The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia." The city of Colossae was situated in the province of Phrygia in Asia Minor, about one hundred and fifty miles east of Ephesus, and was on the main line of travel and traffic from the west to the east. Perhaps Paul was never there. It is believed that the church of the place was established by Epaphras and Timothy. Epaphras came from there to see Paul, and brought a report of the fidelity of the Colossians to the gospel, and also of the danger that threatened them from certain false teachers who proclaimed a gospel modified by gnosticism, which was a mixture of the doctrine of Christ with mysticism and philosophy. These facts will help us to understand why Paul prayed so earnestly for the church at Colossae, and also

why he was so thankful for tidings of their steadfastness in the pure doctrines of the gospel.

Two weeks ago we studied a similar prayer by Paul for the church at Philippi. However, there is enough difference in the two lessons to preclude repetition, showing how aptly Paul adapted his teaching to the varying needs of the people to whom he wrote — an example of versatility and application that we may well imitate. In the prayer for the Philippians the thanksgiving came first, then the petitions. In our lesson for today this order is reversed.

## **I. The Petitions Of The Text.**

Paul was most earnest in his prayer. He said: “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it (the news of your danger and faithfulness) do not cease to pray for you, and to desire,” etc. Those phrases, “do not cease” and “to desire,” indicate the intense concern he felt for their spiritual welfare. Now if we will stop to consider the several items of Paul’s supplication for the Colossians, we shall learn from an inspired apostle what things are most important — what things ought to be the chief objects of our intercessory prayers. We fear that many of us are more concerned for the temporal welfare of our friends than for their spiritual welfare. Not so Paul. It is significant that nearly all his prayers are for spiritual blessings. In view of the tendency of many churches today to put the chief emphasis on suppers, social welfare, economic betterment, athletics and light entertainment, we are constrained to call them back to Pauline seriousness and Pauline principles. “Back to Paul!” might well be a slogan today. What were the things he prayed for? Let us quote his precise language in each petition.

### **1. “That ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”**

That is something very different from the whistling stunts, boxing matches, sleight-of-hand performances and comical stories that constituted the program of a brotherhood meeting in a church of one of the denominations only a few weeks ago. The report said that “fun” was the chief element of the evening’s service. It seems that many people nowadays cannot get

enough “fun” elsewhere; they must needs have more of it when they meet in God’s house. I do not myself believe in being sanctimonious and long-faced, no, not even in a church service, but I cannot help thinking that the time has come .to get back to Pauline solidity and seriousness. Jesus declared, “My house shall be called a house of prayer.”

Indeed, Paul is so much in earnest that he multiplies words: “Filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” There is nothing light and trivial about that petition. Note that he was not concerned about the latest sporting news or social scandal, but wanted his friends to be filled. — not half-filled or quarter-filled, but entirely filled. And with what? Not the current news or gossip, but “with the knowledge of God’s will.” Observe that it was not scientific or speculative knowledge for which he prayed. No; people could get that kind of knowledge by study and observation; but he wanted them to know God’s will, so that they might be able to perform and obey it. Blessed are the people who try to find out the will of God by prayer and the faithful study of His Word!

But Paul plows still deeper into the soil of spiritual reality. He adds, “in all wisdom.” What does he mean? He does not want his brethren to have mere knowledge of God’s will, but also wisdom to obey it fully and intelligently, and to adapt it to all the circumstances of their lives. There are people, as you know, who have much knowledge, but little wisdom; they do not know how to make practical use of their vast stores of erudition. “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom.” “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”

Still Paul adds something more: “And spiritual understanding.” That is very important. Knowledge and wisdom are not to be merely human and intellectual. Of worldly wisdom the world has enough, for the world by its wisdom never found out the will of God. Therefore the mind must be spiritualized, for “spiritual things are spiritually discerned.” Why is it that some minds, even highly cultured minds, make such sad havoc when they undertake the task of “Biblical criticism”? It is partly because of lack of “spiritual understanding.” The Bible is a spiritual book, and so cannot be truly apprehended by the mind which has never experienced the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Thus far we have found Paul’s prayer a model one. But there is more.

## **2. “To walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, in every good work bringing forth fruit, and growing into the knowledge of God.”**

Paul certainly prayed for the best things. The Colossians were surrounded by worldly people, by people who held to other religions and to no religion at all; therefore it behooved them to walk worthy of Christ, who was Himself pure and holy and whose teachings were characterized by the same ethical purity; they should walk in this way, so that they might bring no reproach upon Christ, but might commend him by the nobility and rectitude of their demeanor. A bad representative of a country will injure the standing of that country in the estimation of other nations. So a misrepresentative of Christ will do His cause untold harm. But if His disciples are “fruitful in every good work,” as the text enjoins, their influence will be potent for Christ and His holy cause.

Sir Isaac Newton, the great scientist and Christian believer, must have exemplified the principles of religion before his fellow-men, for Rev. Daniel Baker, in his “Addresses to Young Men,” relates this incident: Saunderson, who was a great admirer of Sir Isaac Newton’s talents, but who made light of his religion in health, was, nevertheless, heard to say in dismal accents on his dying bed, “God of Sir Isaac Newton, have mercy on me!”

Paul offered another important petition on behalf of the Colossians. It is this:

## **3. That they might be “strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory, unto all endurance and longsuffering with joy.”**

Patience and longsuffering are not easy virtues to practice. They are not in the class of what are known as the “heroic virtues.” They do not make much noise and show, nor win much applause from the world; there is little chance to make a “grand-stand performance” of them. But they are necessary graces of the Christian life, and their very difficulty makes divine help imperative. Patience is endurance and resignation under long-continued and trying circumstances. How difficult it is to be patient! So important is this

Christian virtue that John Bunyan, in the second part of his immortal allegory, "The Pilgrim's Progress," gives one of his chief characters the name of Patience, and a most beautiful personage she is. Longsuffering means patient endurance with people who malign and persecute us. Luther comments in this way on this passage: "He (Paul) distinguished longsuffering from patience as something greater and stronger. When the devil fails to overcome a heart with suffering and plagues, he tries to wear it out, so that patience seems too long tried and to have no end. That is knightly strength that can withstand the devil's many great and various attacks and sustain them without wavering."

How essential it is for Christians to cultivate patience and longsuffering in order that they may prove the sustaining power of the gospel. If under trial we are as impatient as other people, what is the benefit of our religion?

"Ever patient, gentle, meek,  
Holy Saviour was Thy mind:  
Vainly in myself I seek  
Likeness to my Lord to find:  
Yet that mind which was in Thee  
May be, must be formed in me.

"Days of toil, 'mid throngs of men,  
Vexed not, ruffled not Thy soul;  
Still, collected, calm, serene,  
Thou each feeling couldst control.  
Lord, that mind which was in Thee  
May be, must be formed in me."

Mr. Spurgeon tells of a Puritan preacher who, with his family, was in great need. They sat down to a meal of nothing but herring and potatoes. But the minister was equal to the occasion, for in asking grace he said: "Lord, we thank Thee that thou hast ransacked sea and land to find food for Thy children."

But for the practice of these virtues divine grace is needed; hence Paul prayed that the Colossians might be "strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory." Is that using words ambiguously? Not in the least. Simply bend your thought upon them, and you will realize their greatness. "Strengthened with all power" means that believers shall be endued with adequate power to bear all trials patiently and overcome every adver-



sary that may assail them. But whence comes such power? The next phrase gives its source: “according to the might of His glory,” which is the Greek idiom for “His glorious might.”

God’s might is not mere omnipotence, not mere infinite power; it is ethical power, righteous might; might that is radiant with glorious beauty and grace. My brethren, if such resources are placed at our command, why can we not endure our trials with longsuffering and “run with patience the race that is set before us?” God grant that we may be able to obey the apostolic injunction: “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” Another apostle speaks these comforting words: “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed.” Among all the Christian virtues none does more to rinse, discipline and refine the soul than patience.

These, then, were Paul’s great petitions for his Colossian brethren: that they might be filled with knowledge of God’s will, might walk worthy of the Lord, might be endued with strength to endure trial with patience and joy. Thus we see how Paul emphasizes the major things, knowing that they include all other things of minor importance. The second part of the lesson contains Paul’s reasons for gratitude, and is set to just as high a key.

## **II. The Thanksgiving Of The Text.**

### **1. “Giving thanks unto the Father.”**

How often Paul calls God “the Father.” With him the Fatherhood of God was a familiar conception. It was his native atmosphere. Of course, it was not a sentimental idea with him, as it is with some people today; for he also represents God as a strict Judge, who cannot look upon sin with any degree of allowance. Paul was not afraid of combining the ideas of the family and the court of equity in God’s dealings with mankind. However, no Biblical writer refers more tenderly to God as the Father of His people. He says that the Spirit of Christ within us cries, “Abba, Father.” How often he calls believers the children of God! So here in the text he gives thanks to the Father

as lovingly as the child. says, "Thank you," to its parent. Paul's doctrine agrees with that of Christ who taught us to say, "Our Father who art in heaven."

But the heavenly Father whom Paul worships does great and unusual things for His children. Observe:

## **2. "Who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."**

Bear in mind that the note of eternity always sounded Out clear and strong in Paul's theology. He was no groundling, to use a term from Shakespeare. Paul never could have held membership in a so-called "secularist" society in the United States or Great Britain. Well he knew that he was not merely the creature of a day. With his experience of salvation through the redeeming blood of the Lamb, he had assurance that God would not blot him out forever. It was Paul' who wrote the throbbing lines: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Hence in the text his heart glowed with gratitude to God who has 6'made us meet to have a share in the inheritance of the saints in light." Were he living today, he would join in the song of our beloved American poet, Whittier:

"I long for household voices gone,  
For vanished smiles I long;  
But God hath led my dear ones on,  
And He can do no wrong.

"I know not what the future hath  
Of marvel or surprise,  
Assured alone that life and death  
His mercy underlies.

"And so, beside the Silent Sea,  
I wait the muffled oar;  
No harm from Him can come to me  
On ocean or on shore.

“I know not where His islands lift  
Their fronded palms in air:  
I only know I cannot drift  
Beyond His love and care.”

### **3. “Who hath delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.”**

Thankful as Paul was for the promise and prospect of future bliss he was no less grateful for present deliverance. Even now in this life we are delivered out of the power of darkness; already we have been transferred to the kingdom of Christ. The present is an earnest of the future; the future will be the fruition of the present. Potentially the kingdom of Christ is here and now. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life” — a salvation of the present tense. And how thankful we should be for this transfer of residence! Once we lived under the dominion of Satan; in the dark and noisome desert of a hard taskmaster. But God has released us, has granted us blessed extradition, and brought us into the goodly and fruitful land of His redeeming love.

Note that “the power of darkness” is contrasted with “the kingdom of the Son of His love.” This means that Satan’s kingdom is a kingdom of hatred, wrangling, crime and war; whereas the kingdom of God is a kingdom of love, peace and good will. The selfish strife that marks and mars this world pertains not to the kingdom of God’s dear Son. It certainly will not be known among the saints of light in heaven. Mr. Spurgeon clips the following from a suggestive book:’ “The great cry with everybody is, ‘Get on! get on!’ just as if the world were a traveling post. How astonished these people will be, if they arrive in heaven, to find that the angels, who are much wiser than they, are laying no schemes to be made arch-angels!”

### **4. “In whom we have the redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”**

The second phrase defines the first. The great redemption which Christ wrought for us consists chiefly in the forgiveness of sin. The word “redemption” means a buying back. The Greek word which Paul used has the

same meaning. It is the same word that Christ used when He said, “The Son of man came... to give His life a ransom for many,” only here Paul attaches an intensive prefix. We have here again the doctrine of atonement — the same doctrine which the apostle taught elsewhere when he said: “Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price.” And the price is the precious blood of Christ, the Lamb of God. Indeed, without this redemption no forgiveness of sins would be possible; hence no transfer from the kingdom of darkness to light, no hope of sharing the inheritance of the saints in light. Therefore all the items of Paul’s gratitude are bound together by the words, “In whom we have the redemption.”

To sum up, enumerate the fundamental things for which Paul prayed and was grateful. Was not his prayer a model one for us? If we have the same high and holy aspirations, we shall receive the same rare and eternal blessings.

# **62. The Resurrection Hope. 1 Thess. 4:13-18. The Twenty- Fifth Sunday After Trinity.**

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

OUR THEME for today, based on the Epistle, is, “The Glorious Resurrection Hope.” Again Paul bids us look into the future. The Holy Spirit, through the Sacred Scriptures, is determined to save us from “secularism,” if that is possible. God does not want us to be “of the earth, earthy.” Warning us against setting our affections too much upon this life, He bids us set them on “the things that are above.” Christ bade us lay up for ourselves “treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal.” Christianity and secularism are two antagonistic systems. The one is the groundling view, the other the heavenly. They are antipodes.

In the text Paul refers to the resurrection hope as a means of comfort to believers. Perhaps he himself thought that the resurrection was not far away, for in one place in the text he says, “Then we who are alive and remain.” No doubt he thought that he might be among the living at Christ’s second coming. But some one asks whether the Holy Spirit would lead him to make such a mistake. No; the Holy Spirit revealed some things to Paul, but not all things. For example, He caused Paul to know that there would be a resurrection of the body and a day of judgment, but He did not see fit to

make known to him when those events would occur, whether in the near or the distant future. The same is true of us today. Through the Scriptures we know that Christ will come again — but who knows when? The doctrine taught in the Scriptures is this: the hour is always impending, but we know not when it will strike. “Therefore be ye always ready, for ye know not the day nor the hour when your Lord will appear.”

However, assured of the certainty of the resurrection, let us comfort one another with the cheering words of the text.

## I. Hope For Those Who Have Gone Before.

All of us have lost friends. With the poet we may say:

“Friend after friend departs;  
Who hath not lost a friend?  
There is no union here of hearts  
That finds not here an end:  
Were this frail world our final rest,  
Living or dying, none were blest.”

Now let us remember that the Thessalonians, to whom Paul wrote this epistle so many centuries ago, were real people, with real experiences and real sorrows just like ourselves. Some of their friends were dying; and yet contrary to their expectations, the Lord had not returned. What was the fate of those who died? That was the question they put to Paul. We must remember that the gospels were not yet written, and no one had yet had opportunity to explain to them the full doctrine of the future. So Paul explained the doctrine to them as far as the Holy Spirit had revealed the facts to him. He said: “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are falling asleep, so that you do not sorrow as others who have no hope.”

Let us pause here a moment to ponder these beautiful and soothing assurances. Paul does not want believers to “sorrow as those who have no hope.” He does not say that they shall not grieve at all. He does not mean to reprove natural grief for the loss of friends. Grace is not opposed to nature, but sanctifies and sublimates it. On this subject Luther makes wise discrimination (see Lange’s Commentary): “Holy Scripture not merely indulges, but commends and praises those who are sorrowful, and who lament for the

dead (Abraham, Joseph, the people at the death of Aaron and Moses). The apostle simply distinguishes between the mourning of the heathen and that of Christians.” Again: “It is an artificial virtue and a fictitious fortitude of heathens and schismatics, when they pretend that we must entirely extract what is creaturely in us, and hold no terms with nature. Such a hard heart has never truly loved, and would fain dissemble before people. He is a Christian who, while experiencing sorrow, yet so restrains himself therein that the spirit rules over the flesh. We are allowed to weep for death. It is one thing when Christ, who wept Himself, dries our tears, and another thing when men would forbid them to flow.” No; Christianity does not make stoics of its adherents, nor cause them to be dead to all natural feeling. Matthew Henry (see his Commentary) says: “All grief for the death of friends is far from being unlawful; we may weep at least for ourselves, if we do not weep for them; weep for our own loss, though it may be their gain. Yet we must not be immoderate or excessive in our sorrow.”

I need hardly say that affected grief, grief that is put on for show, at the death of friends is entirely wrong and un-Christian — a relic of the old heathen custom of hiring mourners to wail and lament at the death and burial of people.

But what a consolation it is to know that we need not “sorrow as those who have no hope!” How often it occurs that death invades a home and takes away the loveliest and the best, and those who can least be spared! and yet, if they have been Christians, those who are left behind need not surrender themselves to despair. They may weep and sob for their own loss, but for the dead they know that all is well. Some of us can bear witness to the comforting power of the gospel when we stood by the open grave of our loved ones, and looked forward to the resurrection hope. I never ramble out through the fields and woodlands in the autumn without conning to myself the touching lines of Bryant, “The melancholy days have come, the saddest of the year;” and over and over again the closing stanza of the poem comes to me with all its depth of pathos:

“And then I think of one who in her youthful beauty died,  
The fair meek blossom that grew up and faded by my side:  
In the cold, moist earth we laid her, when the forest cast the leaf,  
And we wept that one so lovely should have a life so brief:  
Yet not unmeet it was that one, like that young friend of ours,  
So gentle and so beautiful, should perish with the flowers.”

Only we would amend the poet's touching lines by saying that our loved ones who live and die in the Lord do not "perish," but live on in "the land of pure delight, where everlasting spring abides, and never withering flowers." Hence Paul, in the next sentence, gives this assurance to the Thessalonians, and through them to us today: "For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

Paul does not deal here with the intermediate state, that is, the state of the soul between death and the resurrection. Of that doctrine he treats elsewhere (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23). Christ also treats of the intermediate state in His parable of the rich man and Lazarus and His assuring words to the penitent thief; also when he speaks of the Father's house of many mansions. There is also perhaps a hint of the doctrine in the text when it says of those who have fallen asleep that God will "bring them with Him," as if He had taken their spirits to Himself in heaven, and would now bring them with Him to clothe them with their resurrected bodies. But whether that is implied in the text or not, we do have here the positive assurance that our loved ones who have gone before shall appear in glorified life and beauty on the morning of the resurrection. More than that, they will be at no disadvantage, but will receive equal glory with those who are alive at the second advent. Listen to Paul's clarion statement: "For this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall not precede them that are fallen asleep; for the Lord, Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Thus we see that to die before the Lord's second coming is no disadvantage, no handicap whatever; the dead will be raised, and will receive the same glorification and joy as those who shall be living at that time.

"Our beloved have departed,  
While we tarry broken-hearted,  
In the dreary, empty house:  
They have ended life's brief story;  
They have reached the home of glory,  
Over death victorious.



"Hush that sobbing: weep more lightly;  
On we travel daily, nightly,  
    To the rest that they have found:  
Are we not upon the river,  
Sailing fast to meet forever  
    On more holy, happy ground?"

"Ah, the way is shining clearer,  
As we journey ever nearer  
    To the everlasting home:  
Friends who there await our landing,  
Comrades round the throne now standing,  
    We salute you, and we come!"

However, let me pause here to utter a word of solemn warning. The text speaks of a sorrow that has no hope. Ah! sad to say there are many people who are without hope and without God in the world. They are just as apt to be summoned hence as are Christian people who have made their peace through Jesus Christ. And they, too, must have burial services. What shall be said to comfort their friends who are left behind? Who will be able to utter a word to assuage their grief? My friends, it is not right to live in that way. It is not treating yourselves rightly; it is not treating your friends and loved ones kindly. Let me implore you to come to Christ, so that those who are left when you are called away will not need to "sorrow as those who have no hope."

Not only for the dead is there a resurrection hope, but also for us who are still alive; for if we die before the Lord's coming, God will also bring us with Him with the rest of those who have fallen asleep in Christ. But if we should be alive at the great assize of the world, what then?

## **II. Hope For Those Who Remain.**

What Paul says here in the way of assurance is as wonderful as it is consoling and uplifting: "Then we that are alive, that are left, shall, together with them (that is, with those who died previously), be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." These are rapt words; inspired words; heavenly words. Oh, what a hope the true believer cherishes, both sure and steadfast, like an anchor to the soul, penetrating to that beyond the veil, even to the throne of God! If we believe that

Christ died and rose again, we, too, shall have glorified bodies and spirits; for Paul says elsewhere (1 Cor. 15:51-53): “Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible; and we, too, shall be changed; for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory! O grave, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?”

Oh, blessed eschatology! Oh, happy future! “Our humble bodies shall be made like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.” “We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.” “I shall be satisfied when I awake in Thy likeness.”

And what is this wonderful doctrine about being “caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air”? It means that our resurrection bodies shall be glorified bodies, “pneumatical” bodies, as Paul tells us in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians. They will be material substance, but in its finest and most subliminal form; probably like the ether of space; certainly not like coarse and ponderable substance. So they will have true levitation, buoyed up on the wings of the air, lifted above the earth, able to move at the dictates of the sanctified will through space: Perhaps such an elevation in the upper atmosphere will be necessary for a time at least; for the inspired word tells us that the earth shall be on fire, and “all the elements shall melt with fervent heat.” By this refining process all bacilli and noxious germs will be destroyed, and perhaps the ions, atoms and molecules will be brought together again in a new and glorified form, and the earth thus made a fit place again for the habitation of redeemed people. And so “we shall ever be with the Lord,” whether on the re-Edenized earth or in the glorious stellar spaces. With our ransomed souls we shall have fellowship with God and all other spiritual intelligencies; with our glorified bodies organic relation to the glorified cosmos.

### **III. Comfort From The Resurrection Hope.**

The text closes in this way: “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” What are some of the grounds of comfort?

### **1. Our religion is one of heavenly consolation.**

God does not want His children to go sorrowing hopelessly through life. There is no other religion that affords so much mitigation of grief. In the Old Testament we read (Isa. 40:1, 2): “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem.” Christ said to His disciples: “Let not your heart be troubled;” “I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you.” The apostle exclaims (2 Thess. 2:16): “Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.” Be our sorrow what it may, our holy religion meets us with the needed consolation.

### **2. We have comfort on account of those who have fallen asleep in Christ.**

From our text we know that they will suffer no loss because they have died, for they will be raised from the dead, and receive glorified bodies. Their status will be the same as that of those who are living at the Lord’s second coming, and thus all God’s people will dwell forever in holy fellowship with the Lord.

### **3. It will be well for us.**

As for ourselves, we know that it will be well with us, whether we shall die before our Lord’s second advent, or shall still be living in the flesh at that time. In the first case we shall experience the resurrection of our bodies; in the second place, our present bodies shall be transfigured, and made fit temples for our sanctified souls forever and ever. Surely we may derive much comfort from this heavenly doctrine.

### **4. We shall dwell with Christ.**

Our text assures us that in a pure realm somewhere, no matter where, we shall dwell in happy fellowship with Christ. If we shall have bodies, we shall also have souls; for there never is a body without a soul as its tenant. Thus we are assured of a happy, conscious, immortality. The question of Job, which has also been the question of all peoples and of all ages, "If a man die, shall he live again?" is answered in the Christian system of truth and revelation.

"Whether to live or die,  
I know not which is best;  
To live in Thee is bliss to me,  
To die is endless rest.

"Living or dying, Lord,  
I ask but to be Thine;  
My life in Thee, Thy life in me,  
Makes heaven forever mine."

So sings the mystical poet, while the apostle exclaims: "For me to live is Christ; to die is gain."

No; for the Christian looking out into the future there are no obstructions shutting off his view. Listen, my Christian friends: there are no horizons to the ken of Christian faith. Have you ever climbed a lofty mountain? Your speaker has scaled a number of the lofty heights in this country and other lands. One day in June, some years ago, he and a young friend climbed old Gray's Peak in Colorado, fourteen thousand, four hundred and forty-one feet above the level of the sea. Up and up we scrambled, part of the time on hands and knees, until at last, with a long pull and strong pull, we drew ourselves up on the mighty summit. Closing our eyes, we lay there a few minutes gasping for breath; then, with eyes still closed, we lifted ourselves to our feet; then opened our eyes. Oh, what a panorama of snow-filled gorges and snow-capped mountains broke upon our vision! Seventy-five, ninety, a hundred miles away we could identify towering peaks with whose forms we were familiar. Oh, how far we could see in that rarefied, transparent Colorado atmosphere! And yet — must I mar the picture? I fear I must in the interest of truth. Far as we could see, there was ever a line all around the circle where the horizon came down to the earth, and shut out our vision of all that lay beyond. It is so with all earthly sight. But not so with the vision

of Christian faith. We can look out into the eternal future, and not even a fleck of a cloud obscures our vision. We can gaze on and on up to the throne of God, in whose presence there is fullness of joy forevermore.

May all of us who are here this morning, with all our loved ones, receive comfort, cheer and exhilaration in contemplating the glory of the resurrection hope! Amen.

# 63. The Scoffer's Creed Versus The Believer's Creed. 2 Pet. 3:3- 14. The Twenty-sixth Sunday After Trinity.

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. (2 Peter 3:3-14)

FOR TODAY the Church gives us a choice between two pericopes, the one from Second Peter, the other from Second Thessalonians. Evidently, however, the first selection is preferred, for it is printed in full in “The Common

Service Book,” while the second lesson is merely cited. We will therefore deal with the lesson from Second Peter.

I desire to call your attention for a moment to the verses preceding our selection, because they are most significant. Peter says he wants to stir up the memories of his fellow disciples. Why? Because he wants them to “remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles.” Observe this point: he places the words of the prophets of the Old Testament and those of the apostles of the New Testament on a par. He makes them coordinate, connecting them by means of the conjunction “and.” But what does he say about the Old Testament prophets? In the first chapter of this same epistle he declares that “no prophecy of the Scriptures is of private interpretation; for no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.” And now here in the third chapter Peter makes the [same claim for the apostles. Thus according to Peter’s teaching, both the Old and the New Testaments are the inspired Word of God.

The opening verse of our text tells why Peter desired to stir the memories of his correspondents. He wanted to recall to their minds the true doctrine, because of scoffers who would come in the last days. In this lesson he informs us, first, what the scoffers believed; then what ought to be held by believers. So this suggests our theme, “The Scoffer’s Creed Versus the Believer’s Creed.” We will treat them in the order named.

## **I. The Scoffer’s Creed.**

### **1. The scoffer has a creed.**

No matter how much he may gird at creeds, he himself has a creed. He believes something, and he does not believe something else; and that is his creed. People who scorn creeds are inconsistent. They may say that they do not believe some creeds, but they should be logical enough to admit that they hold to some creed of their own. We Christians are more consistent and logical, for we frankly admit that we are confessional believers.

### **2. No one should scoff.**

It is always wrong to scoff at other people's beliefs. I would even go so far as to say we should not scoff at the scoffer. Let us treat him kindly and graciously, and try to win him to Christ. More than one man has gone to a church service to scoff, has remained to pray, and has gone away praising God. It was because he was treated kindly by the preacher and people, and not with contempt. We have never known an unbeliever to be won to Christ by harsh and derisive speech. But the kindly method has more than once been successful. The only way to win people is to be winsome. By angering them we will simply drive them into deeper sin and unbelief.

It is also a great mistake for skeptics to ridicule the faith of Christian people. Christians hold to their creed most sacredly. It has been a help and a solace to them in many a sorrow, and has often strengthened them for resistance in an hour of temptation. It has lit up the dying couches of many of their loved ones who have departed this life. It affords them the only hope they have of reunion with those who have gone before. Is it any wonder that they are grieved and shocked at anyone who is so thoughtless and wanton as to hold up their sacred beliefs to ridicule? My skeptical friend, permit this word of kindly advice: whatever you do, whatever you believe or do not believe, refrain from jeering at the faith of Christian people.

### **3. The basis of scoffing.**

Peter puts it plainly: "In the last days scoffers shall come, walking in their own lusts." This may not apply to the honest doubter who, notwithstanding his doubts, treats the convictions of his fellowmen with respect and consideration; but it is true of those who scoff at religion. Of lust Bengel says, "This is the origin of error, the root of libertinism." On the same subject Luther speaks trenchantly: "These are our Epicureans and Sadducees, who believe neither one thing nor the other, who live as they think best and walk after their own lusts, considering permitted whatever suits their pleasure." How true it is that some people scorn the religion of Christ because of the moral obliquity of their desires and lives! Its holiness rebukes them, and so they have recourse to ridicule. Even with unbelievers who may not live disgraceful lives, but who pride themselves on their outward morality, it is often the lust of the mind for holding its own haughty positions, and an unwillingness to be "humble and penitent before God, that leads them to despise and contemn religion.



#### **4. What scoffers believe.**

According to St. Peter in the text, this is what they say in their derisive way: “Where is the promise of His presence? For, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” This language has a familiar sound. It is quite modern. Today there are many clamorous voices insisting on the “uniformity of nature,” “the reign of law,” “the impossibility of miracles.” Their slogan is to rule out the supernatural. You will find their claims in a number of American and English books published within the last twelve months. They do not believe in nor expect anything “apocalyptic,” because they see everything in nature going along as it always has, according to uniform laws and evolutionary processes. So they cry, “Where are the signs of the divine presence or of the second coming of Christ?” Resurrection, judgment, parousia — all are ruled out of their creed, and they scoff at people who are so simple-minded as to believe in these superstitions! We are not replying to their arguments, but are only calling attention to the realistic portrait of them drawn by the inspired apostle. “Let us get rid of the supernatural,” is their slogan and watchword.

#### **5. What scoffers forget.**

Says the text: “For this they willfully forget, that there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the Word of God; by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same Word ’have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and the destruction of ungodly men.”

This means that these scoffers overlook three important facts: The first is that the heavens and earth were created by the command of God. That the universal fluid mass, which science call the “primordial material,” Peter here calls “water,” just as it is called in Gen. 1:2, “the face of the waters” over which the Spirit of God brooded. Will the scoffer at the Bible, who avers that all things are as they always have been, tell us how the original material came into existence? Did it just “happen along?” If so, why has it unfolded into an orderly universe instead of into chaos? Is not divine creation the only rational way to account for the cosmos? What other hypothe-

sis is adequate? If the universe was created, that was one of the greatest conceivable miracles, and proves that God can intervene in His creation whenever he has sufficient reason for doing so. Therefore all things have not continued as they were from the beginning. Even if they had, how are you going to explain the beginning? Is it not true, too, that much of the original gaseous material, according to science, was “compacted” (see the text) into the solid material of the earth, and also that a very large part of it was turned into water? Thus Peter’s statements agree with the decisions of science.

The second thing of which scoffers are forgetful is that another great providential epoch occurred in the history of the world to break the uniform order — the Noachian deluge.

Since the aqueous element in the world is so large, more than two-thirds of the earth’s surface being covered with water, it was easy for God to cause sufficient precipitation from the atmosphere, combined with the sinking of the land and the bursting forth of the Sea, called in Scripture “the fountains of the great deep,” to inundate the earth, so that all life except that in the ark perished. Nearly all nations have a tradition of a great flood, proving that sometime in the World’s history such a catastrophe must have occurred. Thus, after all, all things did not continue from the beginning in a uniform way.

The third thing which the scoffers forgot was that the universe is stored up with potential fires, as the science of today teaches, and that sometime the uniform order will again be broken up; the fire will consume the earth; the day of judgment will come, and ungodly men will be destroyed. Those who so glibly deny the supernatural, and want to bind everything to the “uniformity of law,” should remember these solemn warnings.

## **II. The Believer’s Creed.**

There is a direct antithesis between the creed of the scoffer and that of the believer. The one is mostly negation, the other position. Let us observe the various articles in the believer’s creed.

### **1. Concerning God’s relation to time.**

“But forget not this one thing, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” That is the cheering assurance of the inspired apostle. The scoffers had grown bold because Christ delayed His coming; declared that He would not come again; everything was going along in the usual way, and it would continue to do so. But Peter warns his fellow-believers that God does not measure time as men measure it; that a thousand years are as one day with Him. Therefore He can wait and be patient. But because He does not act speedily, men must not conclude that He never will act. Speaking of miraculous interventions, Dr. Mombert says, in Lange’s Commentary: “Instances of this kind, it must be confessed, are rare: however, those few which have been afforded us are enough to alarm the sinner. Men should not flatter themselves that their crimes are forgotten, because they are yet unpunished, but should rather dread the delays of vengeance. Though mercy spares them for the present, yet this very mercy, if slighted, will increase their future ruin.” Another pointed writer in the same commentary reasons in this way: “Why does God defer the full punishment of the ungodly to the day of judgment? 1. Because the measure of their unrighteousness is not yet wholly filled; 2. Because it is His will to accord to sinners room for repentance; 3. In order to set His longsuffering towards all men in the clearest light; 4. In order to make more manifest the wickedness of those who will not be converted. Let us take heed not to abuse the longsuffering of God, but to know the time of our visitation.”

But the believer takes no advantage of God’s delay, knowing that in His own time He will bring to pass all His promises and all His threatenings. With Him a thousand years are no longer than a day. Hence He can wait without strain or anxiety. Logically this fact leads to the next article in the believer’s creed:

## **2. Concerning God’s promises.**

The inspired apostle phrases the believer’s creed in the aptest way: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering toward you.” He means by this what another Biblical writer says: “The promises of God are yea and amen to them that believe.” Also: “He is faithful that promised.” Thus the believer does not fret and worry about the promises of God, though their fulfillment sometimes seems to be

long delayed, because he knows that God cannot lie; it would be contrary to His very nature, which is absolute veracity, to promise and not perform. Since He sees all the processes, all the difficulties, all the exigencies, we must believe that His delays are always for a wise purpose, and will bring only the richer fulfillment.

### **3. Concerning God's mercy.**

This is another article of the believer's creed, derived from the text: "God willeth not for any to perish, but for all come to repentance." This is a most precious doctrine. God does not elect anyone to eternal retribution, nor does He decree to pass anyone by; but His earnest desire is that all shall be saved. This is proved by the fact that He so loved the world as to send His Son to redeem all men. Some people get a wrong conception of God's attitude toward sinners, namely, that He hates them, feels vindictive toward them, and takes pleasure in sentencing and punishing them. The trouble with such thinkers is, they read their own feelings into God's emotions. But they are in error. Christ came into the world, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. "The Son of man came to seek and to save the lost." Let us listen to God's own entreaty: "As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from His way and live; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel" (Ezek. 33:11; also 18:23, 32)?

### **4. Concerning the end of the world.**

While the scoffer believes that everything shall continue in the old groove without mutation and intervention, the Christian believes that, in His own good time, Christ will come to change the present order and establish all things on a better and higher plane. This plank in his creed is also based on the text: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the world and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

Thus the creed of the Christian includes an apocalyptic coming of the Lord, not merely a gradual parousia and an ordinary event. When it will occur no one knows; and no one needs to know, and no one ought to know.

That is the very reason why both Christ and His apostles warned us that it will come as a thief in the night. God wants us to be ready at all times; hence He makes every generation feel that His coming is impending.

And what is meant by the passing away of the heavens and the dissolution of the elements. In the twelfth verse, which follows the verses just read, Peter repeats his description of the cataclysmic character of the day of as-size: "Looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

It may mean that the present universe, which has been the scene of so much sin, sorrow and tragedy, will be annihilated, and a new one created for the habitation and delight of God's faithful people. If that should be God's will, surely we ought to be satisfied. However, such words as "pass away" and "destroy" often have only a relative signification, both in the Bible and in other speech and literature. Sometimes they mean that only the present form of things will pass away or be destroyed. For example, in verse six of our lesson for today Peter says that "the world perished" in the Noachian flood. It was only the form that passed away; the material of the world remained. Perhaps this is the teaching respecting the destruction of the cosmos by fire at the final judgment; all the elements will be dissolved, and thus all dross and corruption will be consumed, and the electrons, atoms and molecules will be brought together in new and glorious combinations; then shall be fulfilled the last verse of the text: "But, according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Just as when the Bible speaks of a "new heart," it means the old heart renewed and transformed, so here it may mean that the old form of the universe shall pass away, and it shall be transfigured in a fashion that shall go beyond our highest conceptions. Again if this shall be God's way, you and I will have no occasion to find fault; for whatever God may have in store, the children of the Kingdom shall be "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ."

Peter leads our thought into this exalted realm of doctrine for a practical purpose and for a practical application.

In the eleventh verse he says: "Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in' holy living and godliness?" How pertinent is this appeal! If old things shall pass away, ought we to set our affections on them? If we do, we shall pass away with them, On

the other hand, if all things shall be made new, pure and beautiful, ought we not to seek that purity and beauty of character which will fit us for the new order? Let us lay these things to heart. Meanwhile do you not think that the Christian has a great and inspiring creed? What will be the reflex influence, think you, of holding such a belief? It will surely be what the apostle of love sets forth (1 John 3:3): "And every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

"Great God, what do I see and hear?  
The end of things created!  
The Judge of mankind doth appear,  
On clouds of glory seated.  
Beneath Thy cross I view the day  
When heaven and earth shall pass away,  
And thus prepare to meet Thee."

# **64. The Lord's Second Coming — An Impending Crisis. 1 Thess. 5:1-11. The Twenty-Seventh Sunday After Trinity.**

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)

OUR PERICOPE for today again calls our attention to the second coming of our Lord. This is a subject of perennial interest. Sooner or later every person feels some concern regarding that “far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves.” What it will be many people do not perceive, but there seems to be a feeling in the universal human heart that a crisis is impending, and that sometime an event will occur that will be of tremendous importance to the destiny of the race. It is well that this feeling should dwell in the human heart; for there is little danger from over-seriousness, but constant peril in a flippant indifference to important and solemn matters. If everybody in the world should accept the belief that there will be no judg-

ment-day, no time of reckoning, men surely would become careless and lethargic about their moral and spiritual responsibility. God certainly knows best in making us seriously conscious of an impending crisis and a day of assize.

There are certain features of the second advent of Christ that are emphasized in our text from which we deduce the theme, "The Lord's Second Coming." Following the order of the lesson, we find three distinct facts brought out relative to that momentous event: 1. When it will occur; 2. How it will overtake the wicked; 3. How it will come to God's people.

## **I. When It Will Occur.**

On this part of the subject the text is most instructive. However, we must forewarn you that it does not satisfy idle curiosity. Let us always remember that the Bible reveals to us as much as is necessary for our temporal and eternal well-being, but does not go further. As for what lies beyond God's clear revelation, He leaves one of two courses open to us: one of them is that we shall wait patiently and trustfully until He sees fit to make further revelation; the other is that we shall discover by our own efforts what further truth He wants us to know. The first class of divine dealings disciplines our faith, the second our intellectual and ethical powers. To which class does the time of the second advent belong?

Evidently to the first class. For reasons of His own, God does not intend that the human family shall know the precise time of our Lord's second coming. Had the Holy Spirit meant to reveal anything definite on this subject, here in the text would have been His opportunity. However, instead of designating any specific time, Paul was moved simply to say this: "But concerning the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that ought be written unto you; for ye yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night." That is all he says about the time of the second advent. He continues to amplify on the fact and its contingent ethical circumstances, but says not a word more about the time.

In this indefiniteness about the times and the seasons his teaching coincides with that of our Lord. When His disciples asked the curious question, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He replied: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath set



within His own authority.” Then He gave them practical direction to tarry at Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. We know the result — Pentecost, the baptism by the Holy Spirit — but no revelation of the time of the second coming of the Lord. At another time His disciples inquired of Him, “When shall these things be?” He rejoined: “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only” (Matt. 24:36).

It is significant that Christ Himself, while here in the state of earthly humiliation, disclaimed knowledge of the time of His own coming in judgment. Does not that fact prove that we, too, while here in the state of partial knowledge should be contented with God’s present revelation, and should not pry curiously into His secret counsels?

Let us reflect for a moment about it. Would it be best for us to know the precise time of Christ’s coming? If we knew, would we not take advantage of such knowledge? Would we not be careless about our salvation until the time of judgment drew near, and then try to make speedy preparation? Are we not inclined to be too indifferent about our eternal welfare even when we know that death and judgment may come upon us at any moment? Let us reflect further. Suppose God had revealed the precise time of the end of the world. It has not yet come. Then through all these waiting centuries the people of the world would have said: “The Lord delayeth His coming; so let us eat, drink and be merry, for there is no danger!” Thus we see, when we come to think soberly and deeply, that God’s way is best.

## **II. How The Second Advent Will Overtake The Wicked.**

While no one needs to trouble himself as to the precise time of our Lord’s second coming, yet there are some people who have need of solemn warning — the wicked, the careless. Since the Lord will come as a thief in the night, it behooves people always to be prepared; for, the apostle goes on to admonish, “When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no wise escape.” In his second epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul says: “The Lord Jesus shall come from heaven with the angels of His power with flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that

obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might.”

And what shall be the state of mind of wicked people when the dread assize shall arrive? They will not be boastful then. They will not “stand up and argue their case like a man,” as one flouting infidel avowed he would do if he found himself mistaken at the last day. No; Christ Himself tells us what they will do (Luke 23:30): “Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.” A most majestic description of this event is given by John in his apocalyptic vision (Rev. 6:14-17): “And the heaven was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up; and all the mountains and islands were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and rocks of the mountains; and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?”

There are far too many people today who act as if a judgment day would never come, and so they pursue their sinful ways in carnal security. Calvin said: “Their thought is: It will not fare so ill with me; I shall be sure to look out for myself; I am sharp enough.” With approval we quote these cogent words from Starke in Lange’s Commentary: “Here in the world the ungodly escape many a deserved punishment, since God looks on, and they who should have punished the wrong often fail to do so; but in that great judgment-day there will no longer be any forbearance.” Let us remember that, though the day of adjudication may be long delayed, it will come to each one of us sooner or later. “For,” avers the apostle, “we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.”

“Day of wrath! that day of mourning!  
See fulfilled the prophet’s warning,  
Heaven and earth in ashes burning!  
O, what fear man’s bosom rendeth,  
When from heaven the Judge descendeth,  
On whose sentence all dependeth!”

May none of us who are here today fall into the hands of an angry God! Nor need we, for our text brings this happy assurance: “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief.” This leads us to consider the third part of our theme:

### **III. How The Lord’s Second Advent Will Come To God’s People.**

#### **1. It will be in the day, not in the night.**

Did you notice that expression: “Ye are not of the darkness”? The thief almost always comes in the night. Very few house-breakers and robbers ply their trade in the daytime, but under cover of darkness, when people are asleep and are therefore off their guard. Now Paul says that God’s people are of the light — that is, they walk in moral and spiritual radiance, in harmony with God’s will and His law of righteousness; therefore, while sinful people are sleeping in the darkness of sin, and therefore are unable to protect themselves from the ravages of thieves and robbers, the people of God are surrounded with light, and so the day of the Lord can never overtake them as a thief in the night. They will always be ready. They may be taken by surprise, but not unprepared. Living in spiritual light, they will be ready for Christ’s coming, no matter when His voice resounds over the earth, calling the living and the dead before His judgment-bar. How comforting it is for Paul to say to God’s children, as he does in the text: “For ye are all sons of light and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of the darkness.” Here Paul teaches that Christian people walk in the light of life, and hence can not be taken unawares.

#### **2. It will find them sober and watching.**

Paul is quite urgent and solicitous here: “So then let us not sleep as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober; for they that sleep sleep in the night, and they that are drunken are drunken in the night; but let us, since we are of the day, be sober.”

Sleeping is mostly done in the night, when people are off their guard against danger. So people who sleep the sleep of carnal security, right in view of the impending judgment of God, prove by that very fact that they are still in the realm of spiritual darkness.

Then, too, those who drink to excess usually hold their orgies in the night. So it is in the spiritual realm: those who become intoxicated with sinful pleasure live in spiritual darkness, and hence may very easily be robbed of their characters. But Christian people should live soberly and watchfully, and thereby prove that they are living in the light of truth and salvation. Our manner of life and the strength of our faith will determine whether we are the creatures of darkness or the children of light. Happy, indeed, is that church of whose members it can be said, “Ye are all the sons of light.”

### **3. They are to be well protected.**

After saying, “But let us, since we are of the day be sober,” the apostle adds, “putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.” We might ask, Shall we need such accouterments on the day of judgment? Surely we will not be expected to fight on that day. No, not then; but before that day comes, we shall need to continue in the militant spirit and attitude. There are many foes for us to fight now, and if we do not conquer them, they will overcome us, and then, when Christ comes to judge the world, we shall not be able to stand before Him.

The kind of armor Paul mentions here is the very kind that we need in the strife, in order to prepare us for the great day of aSsize. You will recall that, a few Sundays ago, we considered a lesson from another epistle which enjoined upon the Christian soldier to “put on the whole armor of God,” and then the apostle named all the various parts of the Christian soldier’s panoply. Why does he not give the entire list in this instance? Perhaps because, having mentioned the breastplate and the helmet, he felt that all the others would be implied. However, in this place he was giving special instruction regarding readiness for the second coming of Christ. Therefore the parts of the armor just mentioned were the most necessary. There is the “breastplate of faith and love” — how needful that is in order that we may keep ourselves always ready for our Lord’s coming! A “breastplate?” Yes, we need something to protect our hearts from the assaults of evil. Perhaps they are in more danger than our heads, for the people of today are not es-

pecially noted for their deep and vital thinking, but rather for their pursuit of light and flippant worldly pleasure; and if we Christians do not want to be carried along with the swirling tide, we must have our hearts well guarded; for the heart is the seat of the affections and emotions. And today people are so accustomed to gratifying self that they know little of the virility of self-denial and sacrifice.

But what kind of breastplate should the Christian wear? Precisely the kind denoted in the text: “the breastplate of faith and love.” And why of faith? Because in our day so many things occur both in the human and the natural worlds to raise the question, Why? More and more insistently that question comes to the fore. There is the great problem of the recent world war. How many times we have asked the question, Why? regarding it! The world does not seem to have profited religiously to any appreciable extent by “the terrific experience through which we have passed. Indeed, fleshly indulgence, unbelief and liberalism seem to be more rife than ever. In such days the Christian must have a steady and virile faith —”a faith that will not tremble on the brink of any earthly woe;” especially a faith that trusts God and His wisdom and goodness in the presence of the perplexing problems of life. When we are tempted to give up our Christian faith, let us always stop and ask ourselves the question, What then? Will loss of faith solve our difficulties? Not one. They will remain just the same; and, besides, then there will be no hope that they shall ever be removed; and that will simply increase our misery. But in all the darkness of life the star of Christian faith will shine undimmed and undimnable to guide us on our way. “This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.”

But the text also calls this part of the Christian’s armor “the breastplate of love.” It is correct to give it this double title. In these days people find it easy to hate. Many people today are cherishing the most resentful feelings, and know nothing of love except for their favorites. As a people, we have never passed through a period of darker and deeper acrimony. How needful, therefore, is the exhortation to put on the breastplate of love! Do you think that our Lord can pronounce the sentence, “Come, ye blessed of my Father,” upon those whose hearts are filled with rancor? What kind of a heaven would it be if He should admit people who willfully indulge resentful feelings? Oh, my friends, if we, desire to be ready for Christ and His piercing judgment, we must put on the breastplate of love.

There is another part of the Christian's armor that is especially necessary — "a helmet, the hope of salvation." As we have said, the vast majority of people today are satisfied with superficial thinking, and are bent merely on worldly pleasure; yet there are some who think more deeply, and yet many of them think wrongly; lost in speculation, they grow skeptical and cynical; hence they need something to protect their intellects from despondent doubts. What could be better than the helmet of the hope of salvation? Such a hope, in order to be of any value whatever, must be based on a strong faith and clear experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ; it must be an anchor to the soul; it must penetrate beyond the veil. Based on a sturdy faith, it will protect the intellect from becoming clouded with useless and blinding speculations, and will cling to the revelations in God's Word respecting the ultimate triumph of righteousness and truth and the assurance of personal and conscious immortality.

#### **4. They will ever live with Christ.**

Our text here is germane: "For God hath appointed us, not unto wrath, but unto the achievement of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, 'we should live together with Him.'" There could be no better state of preparation for the Lord's second advent. "Whether we wake or sleep" evidently means, whether we shall be living in the flesh or only in the spirit when He comes, we still shall be living in harmony with His will and in communion with His person. So, in any case, We shall be ready for His coming, and may echo the apostle John's rapt petition, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus; come quickly."

#### **5. They will cheer and encourage one another.**

Those who are waiting and ready for the Lord's coming will not be idle, but will heed the apostle's last injunction in the text: "Wherefore encourage one another, and edify one another, even as also ye are doing." Therefore, we who are trying to be ready ourselves must warn the careless, cheer the faint and strengthen the weak in the faith, so that the whole Church of Christ may be looking patiently and joyfully for the coming of the Lord to restore all things and bring in the era of universal peace and good will. Let us not

cease to be mutually helpful. If we are engaged in such work, no matter when the morning of the judgment breaks, it will find us prepared.

# 65. The Festival Of The Reformation. The Central Principle And Its Results. Gal. 2:15-21.

We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. (Galatians 2:15-21)

WHAT IS KNOWN as Reformation Day occurs on the thirty-first of October, because on that day, in 1517, Martin Luther nailed his well-known Ninety-five Theses on the door of the Castle Church of Wittenberg, Germany. The rubrics of the Common Service Book (see page 159) give this information: “The Sunday preceding this festival may be observed as Reformation Sunday, except when October 31st falls on Saturday, in which event the following day may be observed as Reformation Sunday.”

At the beginning of our celebration today let us remember one important truth — that the Reformation was born out of the experience of Luther. It might be put tersely in this way: the Reformation was born by Luther’s being born again. Never must it be supposed that the Protestant Reformation arose merely out of intellectual processes, or the revival of human learning, or mere doctrinal conceptions and controversies. No; had not Luther experienced that man is justified and reconciled solely through faith in Jesus Christ, the world might still be toiling and suffering under a regime of legalism, work-righteousness and ecclesiastical tyranny.



Therefore the central and dominating principle of Protestantism is justification by faith alone and salvation by grace alone. And why is this the central principle? Because when Luther began to study the Bible, he soon discovered that the Roman Church was teaching many errors, and for that reason its doctrines could not satisfy the human heart when it asked its crucial question, “What must I do to be saved?” His own dissatisfaction of soul spurred him to find in the Holy Word the solution of his problem. After some years of struggle and study, he found one dominating principle in the Holy Scriptures, namely, that men are justified before God, not by the works of the law, or, indeed, by any works of human merit, but solely through faith in the merits of Jesus Christ. When he grasped this principle, the blessed experience came, and he rejoiced in the assurance of pardon, peace and salvation. In time the other parts of the Biblical system of doctrine fell into their proper places, all of them radiating from and revolving around the central and pivotal truth.

In harmony with this historical fact, the Church has selected for the Epistle for Reformation Day a section from Paul’s great letter to the Galatians, which teaches this cardinal principle in a most positive statement. The selection should really begin with verse 15, instead of 16, of the second chapter. Let us translate: “We, by nature Jews, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ — we also believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law.” By this Paul teaches that the Jews, having the Scriptures of the Old Testament and the direct manifestation of Christ among them, should have known, even though the Gentiles did not, that men are not justified by the law, but by faith in the Messiah. Now let us note the chief points of the text, and see how they were wrought out through the central and regulative principle of the Reformation.

## **I. How Men Are Justified.**

Nothing could be clearer or more decisive than the teaching of the text on this doctrine. It is stated in various Ways, as you have observed from the verses already quoted. We are justified through faith in Jesus Christ.

And what is the meaning of “justified”? It does not mean made righteous, though that may be the meaning of the Latin word from which it is derived. The original Greek word which Paul used means to pronounce righteous, to acquit, pardon and release from judgment. It is used by Paul throughout in the forensic sense, because in dealing with sinners God is a Judge as well as a Father. Therefore the first thing for the sinner to do is to secure pardon. Is that not true in all courts of justice? Unless a criminal is to be punished by the law, a free pardon must be granted him, so that his status as a citizen can be established. So with the sinner before God. But just as the criminal cannot make amends for his violation of the civil law, but must be freely pardoned, so with the sinner in his relation to His Supreme Judge. After the criminal has been restored to the status of a free citizen, then he may, if he will, live a good and honorable life and be an obedient and useful subject of the state. The same is true regarding the sinner in his relation to God.

But as long as the sentence of condemnation is hanging over him, and he is incarcerated in the prison of sin, he cannot serve God 'acceptably. Do you not see how necessary it is, first of all, to determine the sinner's legal and ethical relation to God?

What special elements are involved in justification? One is the imputation of Christ's merits and righteousness to the sinner on the condition of faith. But some men in the Roman Church, and also some liberals in other churches not yet out of the bondage of the Roman doctrine, object to the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the sinner. But why object? Is it not true that, if Christ lived and died for sinners, whatever He did for them will be counted over to their benefit, if they are willing to accept the gratuity? Surely! surely! Well, that is precisely what “imputation” means. If you should deposit a sum of money in a bank to my benefit, to liquidate a debt which I cannot pay, will not the money be counted over to me when I accept your benefaction? That is the simple, plain meaning of “imputation” as Luther and his fellow-reformers understood and explained it. Then, of course, if Christ's merit is imputed to the believer, his sins are pardoned. Pardon is the negative side of justification. Thus the sinner is freed from the condemnation of sin for Christ's sake through faith.

But why does it come through faith alone? Because faith is the receptive faculty of the human soul. It receives everything, but contributes nothing. Every other psychical act gives something; but faith does nothing but ac-

cept. Hence if salvation is to be by grace alone, it must come only through faith, which gives nothing but only receives. Faith has no merit; indeed, it accentuates the sinner's demerit, because merely to accept a gratuity is much more humiliating than to be able to do something to deserve it. Thus we see that the Biblical doctrine, so clearly apprehended and taught by the Reformers, is profoundly based on the very structure of the moral economy and on sound fundamental psychological principles.

When Luther apprehended this central principle in the order of salvation, and felt its truth and power in his experience, the Reformation was born.

The text also teaches positively and in so many words —

## **II. How Men Are Not Justified.**

Again and again it says, "Not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (verse 16). Then verse 21 says: "For if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for naught."

Nothing could be plainer. This was the great battle that Paul had to fight with the Jews; it was also the battle-ground of the Reformation of the sixteenth century under Luther and his coadjutors. It would seem that sinful man is ever filled with pride. He wants to earn salvation instead of merely accepting it, and then wants to boast afterward of his achievement. Hence the doctrine of justification by faith and salvation by grace was so unpalatable to the proud Jewish heart in Paul's day; hence, too, it was so repugnant to the proud paganish heart of Luther's day. Let us remember that the Roman Church, with all its civil and hierarchical power and dominion, was not disposed to be humble, but proudly thought it could merit favor from God by its finely articulated and humanly wrought scheme of salvation. To come down to simple faith in Jesus Christ and His merit for salvation was too humbling to the proud prelatical institution.

And why cannot man be justified by the works of the law? For the simple reason that he cannot keep the law. No further reason is needed. The law is good and holy; it holds up a standard of absolute moral perfection; it requires purity of heart and uprightness of conduct. Can a being who is congenitally sinful keep a righteous law? Can a being who is inherently corrupt keep a pure law? Therefore to be justified by the deeds of the law is an ethical impossibility. But suppose one could keep the law perfectly, would that

justify him? It would not, because it would still be of God's grace and goodness that he had been so constituted as to be able to keep the law inviolate. How much less could a person who cannot keep the law be justified by the deeds of the law! No; since men are sinners both by nature and practice, they can be justified only by grace through faith; in a Messiah who could and did uphold the moral law in all its high and holy requirements. And that was our Lord Jesus Christ. If you and I humbly and gratefully accept what He did for us, then of course the condemnation of the law is removed from us.

Luther tried for years the way of legal righteousness. He went through the whole system of penances, flagellations, ascetic practices, voluntary poverty and monkish observance that had been devised by the Roman hierarchy; but none of them could allay his conscience and give him the sense of pardon. Men who are not morally in real earnest might have had a kind of satisfaction akin to pride and self-approbation in all these legalistic services; but not so Luther, who sought, not the approval of his own mind, but the approval of God. As he says, he never could feel that he had done enough; and he also realized that everything he did was colored and distorted by a sinful motive. So it is with every one who seeks the way of Sinai instead of the way of Calvary to win divine assurance of pardon and salvation. Only Christ, who has made perfect satisfaction to an Outraged law, can speak the word of peace and pardon to the soul; just as Paul puts it: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

### **III. This Method Brings Real Deliverance From Sin.**

Let us look further into our text to see how truly Luther grasped the central principle of the plan of redeeming love and grace.

#### **1. There is no antinomianism.**

This is rather a long word, and somewhat scholastic, but it means anti-law, or against the law. There were people in Paul's day who taught that, since Christ kept the law for us and saves us purely by grace, therefore we can sin

against the law as much as we please, and still be saved by faith. Their motto was, "Let us continue in sin that grace may abound." So there are always perverse people who take advantage of every beneficent principle. Here they took advantage of the goodness and grace of God. It was just as if, because your father is kind-hearted, you should trample on his kindness in order to prove and test it still more. What kind of spirit would that reveal? Surely a very evil one.

Now, the doctrine of justification gives no sanction or encouragement to the practice of the antinomians. Note how Paul in the text opposes this fearful heresy (verses 17, 18, free translation): "But if, while we sought to be justified through Christ, we ourselves were found to be sinners, would that make Christ a minister of sin?" Here he is replying to the antinomians; note his answer: "May it never be so! For if I build up again those things which I threw down, I thereby prove myself a transgressor."

The meaning is perfectly plain. Paul had a deep idea of faith, not a superficial one. He means that, in the act of true faith in Christ, he had cast down the old building of sin, and forsaken it, so that he might erect a new building of salvation. Now, he argues, if he went back to the old place, rebuilt the old sinful structure, and took up his residence there, he would prove by that very act that he was still a sinner, and had not been saved at all from sin by Christ; that is, that his faith was no true justifying and saving faith. If salvation means anything in the Christian system, it means deliverance from the evil and establishment in the good. You cannot be a willful sinner and a Christian at the same time. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what part hath Christ with Belial?" If you have accepted Christ as your Savior, that means that you have renounced sin, and are no longer dwelling in it. On the other hand, if you are living in sin, that very fact proves that you have not accepted Christ as your Savior.

## **2. The true order of salvation.**

Sometimes Luther and his contemporaries and followers are accused of making the method of salvation too mechanical and external; of laying so much emphasis on justification by faith that the sinner is merely pronounced righteous without being changed in ethical and spiritual character. If there ever was any ground for such an allegation, which we very much doubt, it no longer exists; for more study of the Word of God has caused

Lutheran theologians to understand better the whole order of salvation, so that now they point out clearly the place and relation of the several steps or movements in that order. They set forth clearly the relation of objective righteousness and subjective grace, of justification and regeneration. In doing this, they are not changing the doctrines of the Reformation, but are simply developing them according to their organic structure. Now we see the relation of imputed to inherent righteousness. The former comes solely through faith in Jesus Christ, and is the meriting cause and basis of salvation; the latter is the work of the Holy Spirit in man's heart in regeneration or the new birth.

This is the relation. True justifying faith is first begotten in the soul by the Holy Spirit in regeneration, imparting new spiritual life. Without such an inner work, saving faith, which is a spiritual act, is impossible. However, the new life thus implanted is not the basis of salvation, but simply an enabling of the soul to get upon the true basis. When faith is thus divinely begotten, it looks to Christ, accepts His atoning work and His perfect righteousness; then follows justification, which is the clearing of the penitent and believing sinner from the condemnation of sin. Thus justification and regeneration are vitally connected. It is not a dead and mechanical process, but a living and organic one. The sinner is never justified without being renewed, and never renewed without being justified. There is order in the process, but no ethical and spiritual break or fissure.

Perhaps you are wondering whether all this doctrinal analysis is based on the text for today. It is, I assure you. Note how Paul puts it: "For I through the law became dead unto the law that I might live unto God." This is Paul's figurative way of saying that when the Holy Spirit through the law brought to him the knowledge of sin, he saw that the law could not save him, but could only condemn him; so he renounced the way of the law, or, as he phrases it, "became dead to the law," and turned to God that he might receive the true life from Him. This involves what we have said — vocation, illumination and regeneration, bringing true and living faith in Jesus Christ.

Again Paul says: "I have been crucified with Christ;" which means that, as Christ died for sin, so he, Paul, died unto sin; therefore he could live no longer in sin. But that is not all; he adds: "So it is no longer I that live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and, as for my present earthly life, I am living it by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Thus

we see that all through Paul's discussion it is assumed that an inner process of renewal has been going on, while at the same time God is crediting the work of Christ to the renewed and believing sinner. The faith begotten within Him is not dead, mechanical belief, but a newly implanted principle which truly lays hold upon the Lord Jesus as the Savior from sin and not in sin. Therefore how can the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in Christ work into the hands of antinomianism? It would be like saying that a man can be saved and not saved at the same time; that at the same moment he can be both black and white, both corrupt and pure. No; Paul's doctrine, which was also the doctrine of the Reformation, is the only doctrine that truly saves from sin and leads to truly good works — the works of righteousness and love.

Let us thank God today for the true light that broke upon the world. when the Reformers discovered in the Holy Scriptures and experienced in their lives the central principle in the plan of salvation. Let us pray to Him to save us from going back to legalism and becoming again entangled in the old yoke of bondage; and then let us use our wills by heeding Paul's urgent admonition: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free." Amen.

# 66. Luther A Chosen Vessel Unto The Lord. Acts 9:15. Luther's Birthday.

But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. (Acts 9:15)

THESE WORDS were spoken by the Lord to Ananias, who was then in Damascus, and who was instructed to go to Paul to lay hands on him and teach him concerning the way of life and salvation. Paul, as you know, had been stricken blind on the way to Damascus, and was now in that city praying for light. At first Ananias hesitated to go to Paul, because he had heard of his fierce persecution of the Church; but the Lord assured him, and bade him go to Paul without fear, for he was “a chosen vessel.” You know the sequel: Ananias went, laid his hands on Paul, instructed and baptized him, and Paul arose, the scales fell from his eyes, and, now, a truly converted man, he started forth on his marvelous career, proving that he was indeed a chosen vessel of the Lord.

This text, with its surrounding circumstances, may well be used as a parallel, in some respects, to the case of Martin Luther, the anniversary of whose birth we are observing today, with many of our fellow-churchmen the world over. Luther was born at Eisleben, Germany, November 10, 1483. Between him and the apostle there are some interesting analogies. Both were men of force and character; both had courage and sincere conviction; both passed through a deep, revolutionary religious experience; both found peace of soul only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, after failing to obtain it through works of human merit. However, there is one special feature of this parallelism to which we desire to call attention at this time. That is that each of these men, Paul and Luther, was —



# I. A Vessel Of Election.

The literal translation of our text is: “But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a vessel of election unto me.”

This text teaches that God elects certain persons as special instruments to carry out His purposes; He raises them up. Foreknowing perfectly their courage and persevering faith, He has, no doubt, elected them from eternity for the work that needs to be done in executing His plan for the redemption of the world. God did not create the universe at a venture, nor does He work in a hodge-podge way. “He is from everlasting to everlasting;” He sees the end from the beginning. What comfort this truth ought to be to all of us, and how it furnishes the key to the course of Christian history! At every crisis, at every exigency in the unfolding of His plan, God raises up suitable instruments to meet the situation.

Twice we heard Henry Watterson deliver his classical lecture on Abraham Lincoln. At the most dramatic point in the address the speaker discussed the problem, how to account adequately for the great president. After analyzing his ancestry and all his environments in a keen and discerning way, Mr. Watterson exclaimed: “The only explanation of Abraham Lincoln is” — then pausing solemnly and impressively, lifting his hand and pointing upward, he repeated, “The only explanation of Abraham Lincoln is — God!” It was a most thrilling moment in the address. No hearer could doubt that God raised up this great and good man for the time and exigency in which he lived. It has ever been so in the world’s history. We need only to think of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Paul, and many others who came into the world’s history at the critical moment, and wrought their work, then passed from the scenes of earthly action. They seem to have had no adequate ancestry to account for them, nor could their progeny take their place. How seldom does real greatness rise twice in the same family! Every genius seems to be more or less isolated, seems to stand out lonely and alone. The only adequate explanation is God’s elective grace, wisdom and power. We cannot help feeling that Martin Luther, whose natal day we are now celebrating, was a chosen vessel of this kind. How else will you account for him? Trace his ancestry; you will find no adequate explanation there. The same is true if you consider his surroundings. Other men of his day lived in the same environments, and were touched by the same in-

fluences; but they lived and died without rising to the heights of genius. Luther was unique. God needed him then and there, and so God raised him up for His specific purpose. When we realize how much we owe to Luther and the tremendous historical and spiritual movement of which he was the main inspirer and guide; when we remember the blessings of spiritual deliverance, civil liberty and ethical enlightenment that we enjoy as the result of the Reformation, we can all the more readily believe that God's election is the only sufficient explanation of his person and his work.

Others besides Lutherans have come rightly to estimate the divinely selected place of Luther in the great world movement of the Reformation. The following testimony is from Dr. George A. Gordon: "Luther gave a new direction, to the subsequent development of European life; he was the master of his age, and turned its best forces to fresh and ' momentous expression. To write the history of the Reformation and leave Luther out of the account is impossible. Granted that great ideas were concerned in the movement, still those ideas were centered in the strongest personality of the time, and through that dauntless manhood were wielded with elemental energy upon the imagination and heart of Europe." In order to fit Luther into the strategic place he occupied in that great world-movement, we must have recourse to the divine election.

It is not to be thought, however, that the divine election in such cases is arbitrary, any more than is His election of the believer unto salvation. His wisdom is equal to the marvel of foreseeing all possible contingencies, foreknowing which of His rational creatures will be best fitted for His purposes, which ones will freely choose by His grace to do, His will, then electing them for His purpose, calling them in His own good time, and enduing them with the genius required for accomplishing His wise designs. If He could not foreknow and provide for every crisis, the world would long ago have been hurled to ruin, and all the divine plans would have been thwarted. In so vast a universe, with so complicated a mechanism and such an infinite number of contingencies, God could not afford to make a blind adventure. He had to see the whole course of events clearly from the beginning to the end.

Is there not sweet and precious comfort in this doctrine of the divine decree and foreordination? There is indeed! It gives us confidence that God's purposes cannot be balked; that He will carry out all His wisely ordained plans. On account of man's free moral agency, the process may be pro-

longed, the mills may grind slowly, but the divinely appointed end will be accomplished; and so we may take our stand firmly and confidently on the promise: "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose."

"This, then, is our general lesson for today, the natal day of the great reformer — that God has chosen vessels, vessels of election, for the various epochs in the history of His kingdom here on earth. As we are celebrating Luther's birthday, let us note in his life and work —

## **II. Some Of The Special Features Of The Divine Election.**

### **1. The seat of authority in religion.**

In Luther's day this was a live question; it is also a live question today. In his day the seat of authority was the Church, the Roman hierarchy, the decisions of the pope and the councils. True, some deference was shown to the Holy Scriptures. Many times they were appealed to, and when they seemed to confirm the teaching of the Church, they were appealed to as authoritative. But the trouble was so many things that were extra-Biblical and even anti-Biblical were imposed upon the people as necessary to salvation. In many instances the authority of the Church superseded that of the divine Word. It can be readily seen that a hierarchy that arrogated to itself so much authority in the political and religious sphere would fall into numerous errors and practical abuses, and consequently that the time would come when, if the Church of Christ was to be saved from utter deterioration, it would have to be purified and reformed by being brought back to the true seat of authority.

For this purpose God evidently raised up Luther. We do not mean that he was God's only instrument, but that he was the chief agent, the outspoken and competent leader of a great movement, in which the others were helpers and followers. And how did God lead Luther to his epoch-making vocation? By creating within him a dissatisfaction of soul "and enduing him with an inquiring mind. Thus God led, him to find a complete copy of the Bible, which he studied with deep interest and increasing avidity. When

Luther discovered the Bible and began to peruse it, the Reformation was conceived, for the Word of God is the basis of all true faith and doctrine.

As he studied the Word, his mind became enlightened. By degrees he grasped the true doctrine. In his own experience he proved what the Word says of itself: “The entrance of Thy words giveth light;” “Thy Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my pathway;” “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word;” “If ye abide in my Word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Then, as he pondered the chief question of his perturbed mind, “What must I do to be saved?” he found the answer in the Book: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;” “He that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life;” “The just shall live by faith;” “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” As Luther perused and pondered these thrilling statements, his heart burned within him, and he discerned the true doctrine — that sinners are saved solely through faith in Christ, the Redeemer. And note — he knew that he had received this light and experience through the Word; not in any other way; not through the penances and machinery that had been devised by the Romish Church. He had tried those ways, but they had failed. Now he found peace, pardon and assurance of salvation through the reading of God’s Word. What would any logical mind have concluded from such empirical data? Nothing less or other than that the Bible was the norm of authority — the standard by which all doctrines, practices and teachers were to be judged.

Hence we are justified in holding that God raised up Luther for the purpose of bringing Christendom back to the pure inspired Word, from which it had so sadly departed with consequences that could be seen in the errors and corruptions of the age. By a study of the Word, Luther discovered the true doctrine, which discovery meant that he also found that the Romish Church was teaching many errors. Hence he became a reformer with both a positive and a negative message and commission from God. Let us remember: it was by going back to the Holy Scriptures that the Protestant Reformation was initiated, developed and accomplished. Bear in mind, everybody, that this great and beneficent result was not achieved by appeal to human reason, human learning, human speculation, human authority, but solely by appeal to the inspired Word. Let our age and every coming age take this fact to heart and learn the all important lesson it teaches.

## 2. The true idea of God.

Last year, in our sermons on the Reformation and Luther's Birthday (*vide* "In the Redeemer's Footsteps," Vol. II) we discussed several facts that would logically belong here, but we shall try to avoid repetition. We believe that God called Luther to his strategic place in history to restore to the world, from the Holy Scriptures, the true conception of God. As is always the case with human reason and speculation apart from God's special revelation of Himself in His Word, the Roman hierarchy had greatly misconceived the character of God and His attitude toward mankind. With that institution He was very stern, very harsh, an implacable Judge. Christ was also looked upon as a stern arbiter. Hence the whole Roman conception was built upon the error that men had to do something to reconcile God to them; therefore the whole intricate machinery of penances, good works, monastic vows, ascetic practices and works of supererogation. All these, we repeat, were devices contrived by human genius to placate and reconcile God, overcome His displeasure, and induce Him to be willing to pardon and save.

What a misconception of God, our Heavenly Father! What a travesty on His grace and goodness! No wonder Luther, who was really in earnest about his salvation, trembled before so rigorous and inexorable a Judge! No wonder he felt that he could never do enough to please and satisfy His demands!

But now mark! When Luther studied God's Word, he began to discern the real doctrine of the gospel, and, lo! he found that God does not need to be reconciled; that, indeed, He is reconciled. He read: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself;" "But God commendeth His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, being now justified through His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him; for if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more shall we be saved by His life; and not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation;" "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

These luminous and inspiring passages of Holy Writ flashed a new light into Luther's soul, proving to him that God is already reconciled, in that He gave His Son to die and make reparation for sin, and therefore the sinner

need and can do nothing to reconcile Him, except to accept by faith the expiation that God Himself had made. It was this new conception that filled Luther's heart with joy and assurance, and gave him the victory over sin and despair. The basis and motive of his life after this change in his experience was the doctrine of a reconciled and gracious God, who freely justifies every one who believes on His Son. This experience in Luther's life was the real birthday of the Reformation.

The doctrine of Holy Scriptures was the formal principle of his epoch-making work, the standard by which all doctrines and practices were to be determined; while justification by faith in a reconciled and gracious God became the material principle, which gave assurance in experience, and life and consistency to the whole religious and dogmatic system which he held and promulgated. Let me add here that the same principle should be the regulative one in experience and theology today; if it is, the Church of Christ will not depart from the Holy Scriptures, and at the same time she will preserve and conserve the evangelical faith over against false mysticism, rationalism and negative Biblical criticism.

### **3. The true idea of salvation.**

Another fact is obvious: God appointed and anointed Luther to bring out from the Bible the true conception of salvation. Besides other corruptions, the medieval Church had also corrupted this doctrine, making it too much like the pagan and Mohammedan conceptions. Salvation was mere deliverance from the penalties of the law, from the wrath of God, from the misery of eternal perdition. While it is true that these ideas belong to the conception of salvation, they do not go to the heart of the matter. Luther saw that salvation was, first of all, an ethical and spiritual reality; it was rescue from sin itself, from its bondage and defilement; it was restoration to righteousness and harmony with the nature and will of the good and holy God. He saw that if men are saved from sin itself unto true righteousness, they need have no fear of the consequences of sin. To be right with God — that was the first and fundamental thing; all the rest would follow by inherent necessity in a truly spiritual plan and economy.

How much higher and holier was such a conception than the legalistic and self-centered view of salvation held by the medieval Church! How much more profound ethically, as well as religiously. Indeed, the Reforma-

tion joined ethics and' religion in an inseparable bond; or, to be still more exact, it showed ethics to be a real and integral element in the religion of Christ, without which it would be something totally different from that religion.

#### **4. The true view of good works.**

Great controversies raged in the time of the Reformation regarding the doctrine of good works. In no feature of that period was the hand of God more evident. The Roman Church had instituted a lot of factitious and ceremonial performances as special good works that were thought to be pleasing to God. To lacerate and starve the body, to enter a convent and become a monk or a nun, to beg on the streets, to make a pilgrimage to Rome, and to do penance in many other ways — these were regarded as works of special and superior merit. How foolish and puerile! How far from the mark of reality! Can you believe that God would really be pleased with such humanly imposed services?

Luther and his fellow-reformers deduced an entirely different conception of good works from God's holy Word. First of all, good works were the fruit of a heart cleansed by faith in Jesus Christ and in union with Him, the true Vine; then good works were real good works; not flagellations of the body, not useless forms of penance, not monastic seclusion — none of these; but to love God, praise, thank and worship Him, and gladly hear and obey His Word; to do kindly and helpful deeds to your neighbor and all mankind; to follow your daily occupation, if it was right and honorable, in the fear of God and do it well; to be a good citizen of the country — these, these are the real good works, flowing from the Spirit of God brought into the heart through faith in Jesus Christ. How different from the whole man-made machinery of the erring medieval conception!

What application may we make of the lessons we have learned on Luther's birthday?

[1] Let us be loyal to the Bible. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

[2] May we ever know God as our loving Father, who is favorable to us in Christ, and may we always come to Him freely for pardon and help, remembering that, through the atonement wrought by Jesus Christ, we are kings and priests unto Him.

[3] We should pray that we may have a real salvation, not a fictitious one: salvation from sin unto holiness of heart and of life.

[4] We should do real good works, knowing that such works only are pleasing to God and helpful to our fellowmen. A cup of cold water given to a needy person in the name of Christ is worth more than all the most elaborate and ostentatious ceremonial observances.

[5] Let us have abiding confidence in God's electing grace and wisdom, whether it involves our personal salvation, our individual place in His kingdom, or the choice of His great ambassadors and leaders for promoting His holy cause.



# 67. Bountiful Receiving, Bountiful Giving, Bountiful Living. 2 Cor. 9:6-11. The Festival Of Harvest.

But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

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"To Thee, O Lord, our hearts we raise  
In hymns of adoration;  
To Thee bring sacrifice of praise  
With shouts of exultation;  
Bright robes of gold the fields adorn,  
The hills with joy are ringing;  
The valleys stand so thick with corn  
That they break forth in singing.

"And now, on this our festal day,  
Thy bounteous hand confessing,  
Upon Thine altar, Lord, we lay  
The first-fruits of Thy blessing;  
By Thee the souls of men are fed  
With gifts of grace supernal:  
Thou, who dost give us daily bread,  
Give us the Bread Eternal.

“We hear the burden of the day,  
And often toil seems dreary;  
But labor ends with sunset ray,  
And rest comes for the weary;  
May we, the angel-reaping o’er,  
Stand at the last accepted,  
Christ’s golden sheaves for evermore  
To garner bright elected.”

MAY THE THANKSGIVING and the prayer of the hymn-writer be ours today as we gather once more to celebrate our Harvest Festival! We desire to thank God for the abundance of our crops during the past year, and also to petition Him to feed us on the true Bread of Life.

The text for today gives us our theme. We note therein God’s bountiful giving to us, His dependent creatures; we are also exhorted to give bountifully to His needy cause, and to live bountifully the life which He gives and blesses.

## **I. Bountiful Receiving.**

It is in the context, rather than in the text itself, that the bounty of God’s gifts to us is emphasized. We can give nothing that we do not first receive. Let us consider for a few moments some of our Harvest Home benefactions.

### **1. Temporal blessings.**

Seed time and harvest come from the Lord. He is just as much the God of nature as of grace. We may see His goodness and wisdom in the bountiful fields and orchards just as well as in His inspired Book and His revealed plan of redemption. The same God who sent His only begotten Son into the world for its salvation also created the heavens and the earth and watches over them. He who has prepared the house of many mansions for the eternal residence of His people also made the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field, knows the fall of a sparrow, and clothes the grass of the fields. The same Lord who taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come,” also taught us to say, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Thus we know that God gives us the abundance of the harvest when He sees that it is for our good. So today we should thank Him for the soil, the rain, the sunshine, the bland winds, and

the fecund powers of seed and grain that cause them to germinate and grow and bear the nourishing fruit and wheat and corn.

Nor should we forget that even the health and strength, the power of thought and will, that enable us to do our work, to plow and sow and cultivate and reap and gather — all these abilities come from God; and we thank Him for them at our Harvest Home festival. I like to think that God is in every good thing; that nothing that is good comes from any other source than from His providing love and care. This doctrine is taught in His Holy Word: “Every good and perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights, in whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning.” One of our hymn-writers has the right thought:

"We plow the fields and scatter  
The good seed on the land;  
But it is fed and watered  
By God's almighty hand;  
He sends the snow in winter,  
The warmth to swell the grain,  
The breezes and the sunshine,  
The soft, refreshing rain.

“He only is the Maker  
Of all things near and far;  
He paints the wayside flower;  
He lights the evening star;  
The winds and waves obey Him;  
By Him the birds are fed;  
Much more to us, His children,  
He gives our daily bread.”

I am sure that if we see Him and His goodness in everything, our temporal as well as our spiritual blessings, He will seem to be much nearer to us, and our lives will be much happier than otherwise. How poor are the lives of those who take all God's gifts without even so much as saying, “Thank you,” to the beneficent Giver! Oh, let us not live such sordid and ungrateful lives!

## **2. Spiritual blessings.**

The harvests of fruit and grain, now safely gathered and stored, and ready for our use when the storms of winter are howling about us, are tokens and symbols of God's higher and richer blessings, those of a spiritual character — What are they? One of them is the Bible. How dark and unsatisfactory would our lives be if we did not have that Book! How many of our problems would be unsolved! Just as we thank God for the light of the sun, the moon, the stars, and the artificial means by which we may turn darkness into day in our homes and cities, so our hearts should swell with gratitude to God that He has not left us to grope our way in spiritual darkness. Here in this Holy Book He has shown us whence we have come, why we are here, and whither we are going when we must leave these earthly scenes of action. That is, this Book tells us about our origin, our purpose, and our destiny. If we have those fundamental problems solved, we can be content, calmly waiting for lesser problems to be solved in God's own time.

With the Word of God we possess all other needed spiritual good: Christ and His marvelous way of salvation; pardon, peace, justification, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, strength in the hour of temptation, comfort in the time of trial, assurance in the hour of death, the promise and foretaste of eternal felicity at God's right hand.

So, you see, while we have been storing our material harvest for our winter's use, we have also been storing a harvest of spiritual blessings for all time and eternity. Let us be thankful for all God's good gifts. He delights to bestow them, for our Lord said: "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more doth your heavenly Father know how to give good gifts to them that ask Him!"

And, most of all, we should be grateful to Him for the hope of immortal life. Pleasant as our Harvest Home festivities are, we know that some day you and I shall hold our last celebration here on earth. Some of us are here today; we may not be here a year hence when our friends and neighbors gather in next year's celebration. But what then? Shall we be sad because that may be our lot? No, indeed! For we know that if we are not permitted to celebrate another Harvest Home in this world, we shall have the unspeakable privilege of sharing the greater joys and sweeter festivities of the eternal Harvest Home in heaven. Therefore the poet whom we first quoted closes his hymn with these lines:

“O, blessed is that land of God  
Where saints abide forever,  
Where golden fields spread fair and broad,  
Where flows the crystal river;  
The strains of all its holy throng  
With ours today are blending;  
Thrice blessed is that harvest-song  
Which never hath an ending.”

## **II. Bountiful Giving.**

Our text deals chiefly with this subject. The apostle was writing to the Corinthian Christians about what he calls “this grace also,” namely, the virtue of giving. He wanted all the gatherings for benevolent purposes to be done in an orderly, sane, prompt and abundant manner.

Now it is proper for us Christian people at our Harvest Home festival, when we are rejoicing over the abundance of our crops, to remember that God has blessed us in this way, not merely that we may use our gathered stores for our own gratification, but also that we may give all the more liberally to His needy ones in the world. While we have had such plentiful harvests, let us remember that in many parts of the world there is great suffering today. This is especially true in the war-ridden countries. Many of the people of our own faith in other lands are suffering from the pangs of hunger. Many of them have already died for lack of food. Many innocent women and children, and also many men, who are not in the least to blame for the terrible war, are in dire need. We ought not to sit down and selfishly use all our stores for ourselves. We ought to share with the stricken countries. Besides, the gospel should be sent to the heathen in their blindness and superstition. The missionary cause makes its own plea, and needs no argument to urge its claims on our beneficence. Christ’s commission, “Go, preach the gospel to the whole creation,” announced the, marching orders of the Christian Church. Yes, there are many people Who are in need of the gospel.

Our text lays down some excellent rules about giving. We will note them briefly.

### **1. Proportionate giving.**

“He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap: also bountifully.” So says Paul. He states a law of the farmer, who knows that if he scatters his seed scantily on the soil, he will have a scanty harvest, but if he sows plentifully, his harvest will correspond. Paul applies this law to the grace of giving. If one gives just as little as he can to the cause of God and the needs of humanity, he will receive little blessing. On the other hand, if he is liberal, he will receive rich and manifold blessings. True, he may not profit greatly in a material way, but he will receive rich spiritual blessings. One never does good, self-sacrificing deeds but he receives the answer of a good and joyful conscience toward God and his fellowmen. The other evening we were on our way to give a lecture. The car was crowded, but we managed to get a seat, though not a very comfortable one. Presently a working man, looking weary with his day’s toil, entered the car, but could find no seat. He stood leaning against the wall for a few minutes while the car moved on. Then we arose and, said: “Take this seat, Mister; you have been working harder than we have today.” He protested, but we took him by the sleeve and pulled him down on the seat, while we stood for most of the journey by his side in the aisle. We think we were happier than he, though he sat contentedly looking out the window. Had we selfishly kept the seat while he stood, we should have had a mean feeling all evening. Did we have a good time at the evening’s lecture? We certainly did. At the time we never thought what it was that made us feel so happy and self-possessed, but after we had had time to think of it more analytically, we concluded that it was because God had blessed even a small and simple deed like that. The “cup-of-cold-water” act never loses its reward. Ah! that is the greatest blessing of bountiful giving — the happy heart, the blithesome conscience.

So we may say that we should give in proportion to the prosperity which God has given us. This is the gospel rule, “as the Lord hath prospered thee” (1 Cor. 16:2), whether it requires one-tenth of one’s income or more.

## **2. Thoughtful giving.**

One should not give carelessly and indiscriminately. Harm may be done with the Lord’s money by such giving even though it be lavish. Gifts should be made where and when they will do the most good. Therefore Paul gives this wise injunction in the text: “Let each man do according as he hath pur-

posed in his heart.” That is, give the matter thought; don’t act on impulse. By carefully estimating how much you have been prospered, how great the need is, how urgent the call, and how much you can spare without injury to other important interests — by thus thinking the matter over carefully, you will know best how, when, where and how much you ought to give. Make up your mind to give it; then give as you have purposed in your heart. It would also be a good plan to ask God to direct you in your offerings, and help you to give most effectively.

### **3. Cheerful giving.**

Ah! that is one of the finest qualities — cheerful giving. Paul puts it precisely right: “Not grudgingly or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” After all, the value of a gift does not depend so much on the amount as on the spirit in which it is given. It is true, a scant gift from a wealthy person, who would declare that he wanted to give “the widow’s mite,” could not be called a cheerful gift; but it is also true that, if a poor person gives all he can, and gives it gladly, his willing temper will multiply the financial value of the offering many times. Elsewhere we read in this epistle (8:12): “For where there is a willing mind, a man’s gift is valued according to what he has, not according to what he has not.”

## **III. Bountiful Living.**

Wherever bountiful receiving and bountiful giving prevail, it follows that there will be bountiful living. “It is more important to make a life than to make a living,” says a current maxim. Of course, both are important, the one as a means, the other as an end; but to make a true life is the all-important matter. The Holy Scriptures make much of life. Christ said: “A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” Also: “The life is more than meat and the body than raiment.” And again: “I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.” How often Christ speaks of eternal life. So a conscious, happy, useful, abounding life in time and eternity — that is the paramount consideration. To this thought the text lends itself most pertinently.

## **1. Abounding grace.**

“And God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work; as it is written: He hath scattered abroad; he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever.” It seems that, when people are liberal in their gifts to the poor and distressed, that grace almost always carries with it the other Christian virtues. “The liberal soul shall be made fat.” The Christian virtues are bound together in a living organism, so that one fundamental grace “cannot live by itself, but involves all its fellow-graces. So if a person abounds in the grace of giving, he is very apt to abound in all the other virtues. Besides, the Christian graces are all beneficent graces; and, as bountiful and cheerful giving strikes at the very root of selfishness, it means that the grace of God has taken possession of the whole soul. Where divine grace abounds, there men will”abound unto every good work.” This is the way to make a true life, which is so much better than making a mere living.

## **2. Abounding supplies.**

Our text also teaches that, when we abound in giving, God will not overlook our labor of love. Listen to Paul in the text: “And He that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness, ye being enriched in everything unto all liberality.”

It is a well-known fact that giving to worthy causes never impoverishes the donor. For example, how many persons do you know who have gone to the poorhouse because they gave liberally to the cause of Christ? I confess that I do not know of a single instance. On the other hand, the people who give tithes, that is, the tenth of their income, almost invariably bear witness that God blesses them even in a temporal way, so that the more they give, the more they have to give, and the easier it is to give. We know several persons who declare that this is God’s way. In his vision Cornelius heard this commendation: “Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.” In the prophecy of Malachi we read this stern rebuke, followed by a gracious promise: “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye ask, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye rob me, even this



whole nation. Bring ye the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open unto you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there will not be room to contain it.”

Surely here is the promise even of temporal mercies if God’s people are liberal. The writer of the Proverbs (11:24) says: “There is that scattereth and increaseth yet more; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.”

### **3. Abounding gratitude.**

The remainder of the text and the verses following indicate that bountiful receiving and bountiful giving will result in bountiful thanksgiving. “Which worketh through us thanksgiving to God,” says the apostle, and then proceeds to amplify the thought. Let me ask you, have you ever known a niggardly and avaricious person to be a grateful person? No; he wants everything for himself; he deserves it, and so his heart never swells joyfully with gratitude to God. On the other hand, are not the liberal givers always thankful for their mercies? Is not that the chief incentive of their generosity — gratitude to God for His abounding gifts, material and spiritual? It is their recognition of God’s goodness for the abundance of the harvest that moves them to share with their less fortunate fellow-beings. Let this be the spirit of our Harvest Home festival today; then we may join the hymn-writer in his song of grateful joy:

"Praise, O praise our God and King;  
Hymns of adoration bring;  
For His mercies still endure,  
Ever faithful, ever sure.

"Praise Him that He made the sun  
Day by day his course to run,  
And the silver moon by night,  
Shining with her gentle light.

"Praise Him that He gave the rain  
To mature the swelling grain,  
And hath bid the fruitful field  
Crops of precious increase yield.

“Praise Him for our harvest store  
He hath filled the garner-floor —  
And for richer food than this,  
Pledge of everlasting bliss.”

# 68. Good Reasons For National Gratitude. 1 Tim. 2:1-8. A Day Of General Or Special Thanksgiv- ing.

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. (1 Timothy 2:1-8)

THE CHURCH has made appropriate selections from God's Word for our recurring day of National Thanksgiving. In the service we have already recited the inspiring introit, which begins in this way: "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord: praise ye the Lord." We have also read together the Gradual, which declares in choice lyrical lines: "The eyes of all wait upon Thee, and Thou givest them their meat in due season." Three lessons from the Bible are also selected, one from Deuteronomy (8:1-20), one from Isaiah (26:1-12), and the third from 1 Timothy (2:1-8). While the Old Testament lessons are very apt and suggestive, we shall choose as our text for today the epistle in conformity with the plan of the present series of sermons.

We are glad that the President of our great Republic and the Governor of our beloved State have again issued their annual thanksgiving proclamations, have pointed out some of the most salient reasons for individual and national gratitude, and have requested and urged the people of our nation to assemble in their wonted places of worship to praise God for His goodness and mercy. So long as there is enough of this spirit of thankful acknowledg-

ment in the hearts of our rulers and people, we may indulge the hope that God will continue to bless and prosper us as a nation. The nation that remembers God, that prays to Him, and gives thanks and praise to Him still has a preserving savor in its life and thought. But woe to the nation that does otherwise, for the Bible says, “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.”

In our text we are exhorted to offer prayers and render thanksgiving; so we will divide our theme, “Reasons for National Gratitude,” into two parts: 1. Petitions to be offered; 2. Thanksgiving to be rendered.

## **I. Petitions To Be Offered.**

The text points out —

### **1. For whom we should pray.**

“First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men, especially for kings and all who are in high places.”

We are first bidden to pray for all men. This is important, for in this country, where ultimately the people are the rulers, at least in a very important sense, it is necessary that they be divinely upheld and guided. How can they choose proper administrators and officers at the ballot-box unless they have direction from God and seek to do His will? We hope the time will come when every citizen will pray while he votes. If he will do that, he will be sure to vote for good men for office; he will not deposit a merely partisan vote, nor a selfish vote; he will vote for the candidates who stand for the highest principles and who will bring the greatest good to the greatest number of our people. Let us pray for all men that they may be true, upright, patriotic citizens, anxious for the triumph of righteousness in every cause.

Let us also pray for our president, our governor, all our magistrates, and for every one who occupies a place of authority. Surely they need divine guidance. They need, above all, pure and honest hearts, and the right conception of their positions, which is not to display selfish and autocratic power, not to get a great name and *eclat*, not to exploit the people for their own aggrandizement, but to serve the people and to lead them into the paths

of true civil and religious righteousness and liberty. The great temptation for the man in a high place is selfishness, self-interest. So many magistrates want to “lord it over others,” and display vast authority. We need to pray for them, that God will give them a humble and altruistic spirit, the spirit of Him who said: “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Christ also said that it was the “great ones” of the pagans who desired to exercise lordship; but it should not be so among His disciples, but rather: “He that would be the greatest among you, let him be the servant of all.” By all means let us pray for such a temper among those who have the rule over us in our beloved Republic.

## **2. Why we should pray.**

Here we appeal to our text again, for it is always the Word of God that must be our guide: “In order that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in a deeply religious and reverent spirit.” We have given the translation of the Twentieth Century New Testament. What an appropriate petition this is! If we have good rulers, we are likely to lead quiet and peaceable lives, and that will be conducive to religion. On the other hand, if our rulers are selfish and unwise and lead us into all kinds of national and international difficulties and entanglements, our religious experiences will be disturbed and the ordinances of religion will be interrupted and weakened. The late war furnishes only too vivid an example.

How many innocent people have had to suffer because certain rulers were unwise enough to precipitate the war instead of exerting all their powers to avert it, and to settle the difficulty by arbitration! How pointed and applicable are the words of Holy Writ (Prov. 29:2): “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when a wicked man beareth rule, the people sigh.” Could anything be truer than that? Oh! let us pray earnestly for righteous and unselfish magistrates and legislators, even as we pray earnestly that we ourselves may be good citizens. Let us hear in mind what God says in His Holy Word (Prov. 14:34): “Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” And again (Prov. 11:11): “By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted; but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.”

Let us remember this: If we desire to avoid the fate of the nations of the past who perished by their own wickedness; if we want to perpetuate our country's institutions of liberty, and survive the test of time and trial as a nation, we must be a righteous people, governed by wise and upright magistrates. One of our Christian poets (Henry Harbaugh) had the right conception:

“Let our rulers ever be  
Men who love and honor Thee;  
Let the powers by Thee ordained  
Be in righteousness maintained;  
Let the people's hearts increase  
Love of piety and peace;  
Thus united we shall stand  
One wide, free and happy land.”

### **3. How we should pray.**

The spirit or temper of our intercessions is all-important. The text again gives us the right conception: “I desire therefore that men should pray in every place, lifting up holy hands without wrath and disputing.” The reverent attitude of body and mind is here enjoined. We must not command God. We must not treat Him as if he were our servant or lackey or valet. Some people are not even respectful to God in their prayers. Such prayers will not bring down God's blessings. Over-familiarity is not becoming to the people of God. Jesus gave us the proper form and spirit when He told us to address God as “our Father who art in heaven.”

Then we should lift up “holy hands without wrath and disputing.” We have heard of some so-called prayers that were filled with rancor and vindictiveness. God will not answer such petitions. Whether we pray for friend or foe, no hatred should be in our hearts. We should by all means repudiate and condemn all wrongs and atrocities, but when we pray we should pray with love in our hearts. Christ, told us this over and over again, and said if we will not forgive men their trespasses, our heavenly Father will not forgive us. God is a God of love and justice, but not of revenge.

So much, then, for the petitions enjoined in the epistle for the day. Let us now turn to —

## II. The Thanksgiving To Be Rendered.

As a people, we have many reasons today for thanksgiving. While we are troubled with many perplexing problems, such as industrial disturbances, political disputes, high prices, grafting, profiteering, soviet agitation, lynchings and international issues of grave import, yet, on the whole, we are a happy and prosperous people, having suffered from no widespread failure of crops, no destructive tornadoes or floods or earthquakes, no widely destructive epidemics, no civil war and no contests with other nations. To a very marked degree, our prayers for a quiet and peaceable life have been answered. We may join in the poet's prayer, and feel that within the last year it has been largely and graciously answered:

“From all public sin and shame,  
From ambition's grasping aim,  
From rebellion, war and death,  
From the pestilential breath,  
From dread famine's awful stroke,  
From oppression's galling yoke,  
From the judgments of Thy hand,  
Spare Thy people. spare our land.”

These are general lines of thought for our national thanksgiving. Our text points out some specific causes for gratitude.

### 1. For the ordinance of civil government.

Not only are we hidden to pray for kings and magistrates, but also to offer thanksgiving for them. It is God's will that there shall be a state, a government, a mode of rule. As the Church is a divine institution, so is the State. Everywhere the Bible inculcates this law. In the Old Testament God established a government, and never approved of a condition when “every man was a law unto himself,” which would be a state of anarchy. In the New Testament Christ Himself obeyed the civil law, and told the people to “render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's,” as well as “to God the things that are God's” His parents enrolled themselves according to the law and paid their taxes, as did Christ and His disciples. His apostles enjoined subjection to the powers that be.

Yes, God wants the people to be under a government, not to be anarchists and lawbreakers. While He does not insist on a particular form of government for all time, it surely is incumbent on His people to try to formulate the best method of rule that is possible, that will promote good order, and give peace and tranquility to all the members of the community, and especially that the principles of true liberty and religion shall be conserved. Hence our people, thankful for a good republican form of government, should not permit anarchistic principles to gain a foothold. It may be necessary 'for the state to be firm and even stern in order to preserve our institutions, but so long as such self-preserving measures are done, not through wrath and vindictiveness, but for the highest welfare of the nation, including even the would-be lawbreakers themselves, that long we may look up to God and pray to Him with a clear conscience.

## **2. We should also be thankful for comparative tranquility.**

A time of peace is most conducive to religion and righteousness, for it gives people a chance to serve and worship God without disturbance. War is abnormal. It is a mistake for militarists to think that war is salutary, that it brings out the heroic qualities, that it saves the race from becoming tender and effeminate. The last war disproved this militaristic theory. Who were the best and bravest soldiers on the fields of battle? Our own boys, who were taken from the farm, the shop, the office, the college, who were not professional soldiers seeking glory, but who believed that they were fighting for a sacred principle. War is not a good thing in itself; it becomes necessary only when the rights and liberties of the people cannot be preserved in any other way. Let us thank God today, then, that the white dove of peace spreads her wings broodingly over our great and happy land; and let us pray and act in such a way as to make further resort to the arbitrament of the sword unnecessary and impossible.

“Lord God, we worship Thee,  
For Thou our land defendest;  
Thou pourest down Thy grace,  
And strife and war Thou endest.  
Since golden peace, O Lord,  
Thou grantest us to see,  
Our land with one accord,  
Lord God, gives thanks to Thee!”



With peace and good will come the blessings of liberty. We cannot be too thankful that our lines have been laid in such pleasant places; that we are not oppressed by tyrants; that as citizens we can go unmolested to the polls and deposit our ballots for whomsoever we please; that we can enjoy undisturbed so many of life's amenities, and especially that we may go to God's house and worship Him without hearing a jibe or a jeer and without perceiving even a curl of contempt or ridicule on any one's lips. Compare this happy freedom with the status of many people of past ages and with many in other lands even in our day.

### **3. How thankful we should be, too, for salvation and truth!**

Our text says that to pray and thank God will be "good and acceptable in the eyes of God, our Saviour, who would have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

What a boon it is to live in a country when we are free to learn about the true God, the God of the Bible, the God of love and good will, who wants all men to be saved! Some governments of other lands care only for the few. Their civil and social institutions are so framed that the few are favored, while the rest are oppressed and despised. Note the caste system in India. But here in America every man, every woman, every boy and girl, no matter what his place in the social and financial sphere, is taught that God is love; that He is not willing that any should perish, but desires all to come to repentance. He says: "Come unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved, saith the Lord of hosts." Yes, here in America we have the democracy of religion; every man has a chance; every one may belong to the universal priesthood of believers if he will. God is no respecter of persons. He has no favorites save those who trust Him and do His holy will.

Note: He also wants all of us to come to "a knowledge of the truth." Assurance of salvation and knowledge of the truth must go together. You cannot have the one without the other. When God comes to the human soul and assures it of His salvation, He also assures it that salvation is solidly based, and is not a mere emotion or a subjective spasm of imagination. No; God does not deceive His people with vain and delusive promises and impressions. How grateful we should be to be able to say, as we lay our hands upon our hearts, "We know that the salvation we have in Christ is founded

in the eternal truth of God.” In many countries people are in bondage to error, and error is never salutary. How happy is our lot in contrast!

#### **4. Let us thank God for the right way of redemption.**

This is aptly set forth in the text: “There is but one God, and one Mediator between God and men — the Man, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom in behalf of all men.” Then Paul declares that this must always be his testimony, because God has made him an ambassador and apostle for the express purpose of proclaiming the way of salvation to the Gentiles.

Without in the least discounting our many material and civil blessings, our greatest cause for gratitude on this day of National Thanksgiving is that God has made so plain and easy the way of salvation through His only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. And why do we say that? Because the gift of His Son, who came and took our place, suffered the penalty of our transgressions in our stead, and thereby brought pardon, peace and salvation to us, reveals to us more clearly the loving, self-sacrificing care of God than anything else that He has done or could have done. If God made that sacrifice for us, He will do everything else for us that is for our good. “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?” This greatest of all gifts includes all other smaller blessings and benefactions. So let us thank God for all material, civil and national blessings, but, most of all, let us exclaim with Paul: “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift,” Jesus Christ our ransoming Redeemer! Amen!

# 69. Our Lord's Missionary Program. Acts 1:8. The Festival Of Missions.

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

THESE ARE among Christ's last words spoken just before He ascended to the right hand of God. Hence we may call this passage His great evangelistic or missionary program. The first part of the text we shall treat in our introduction, and only in a brief way.

Christ had previously instructed His disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power, and told them that it would come upon them through the baptism of the Holy Ghost. After this outpouring of the Spirit upon them, they were to go forth as witnesses for Him into all parts of the earth. Why were they not hidden to go at once? Why wait for the enduement of the Holy Spirit? The reason is evident. Again and again they had displayed their human weakness. They had all forsaken Him and fled when He was arrested in the garden, and their leader had denied Him. So in their natural condition their testimony would have been weak and faltering, even if they had had the courage to bear witness at all. Therefore they needed a supernatural enduement; an inner assurance that would remove all doubt and would elide all cowardice from their hearts; also that wisdom and inspiration that would make their teaching true and inerrant. When they were thus equipped, their preaching and teaching would be reinforced with divine power, and thus would be effective in the conversion of sinners and the confusion of opponents.

This, as we know from the subsequent history, is what took place. By the power of the Holy Spirit they accomplished great works, and went forth un-

daunted by persecution to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. So today Christian people must not run before they are sent; they must not try to carry forward the missionary enterprise before they are endued with the courage and power to bear effective testimony to the saving grace of God.

Thus the first part of the text introduces us to the missionary program of our Lord. What were the apostles to do after they had received the endowment of spiritual power? They were not to sit down idly and hug their joy to themselves. Saved they were, but saved to serve. We will observe —

## **I. How The Program Is To Be Carried Out.**

Listen to Christ's simple instructions: "Ye shall be my witnesses." No force was to be used; no power of the sword was to be employed; no civil power was to be invoked; no persecutions were to be resorted to. No! but simply, "Ye shall be My witnesses." And Christ's teaching elsewhere corresponds with this simple program: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation;" "Go ye and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." In still another connection He said to His disciples, "Go preach My gospel."

Thus we see clearly the method of our Lord. And most literally did His immediate disciples carry out His directions. Everywhere they went they bore their testimony; they could not be silenced; they would not hide their light under a bushel or a bed, but set it out on the stand in view of the world. But, note, that is all they did; they never resorted to force, never made use of the sword, never advocated war or violence, never force, never appealed to the arm of civil power to propagate the truth. Theirs was purely a program of moral suasion. And did they succeed? History gives the answer. In spite of the most virulent persecution, the Christian Church never achieved such rapid and solid success, never won such golden triumphs, as she did during the first three centuries of her existence, when she used no physical force and claimed no political prestige, but relied solely on the spiritual power of testimony, preaching and teaching.

What a lesson for the Church today! Just as soon as the Church began to be linked up with material force and state authority, she began to grow cor-

rupt and worldly and ambitious, and lost her spiritual fervor and power, relying more on human agencies than on divine resources. Today there seem to be people who place more reliance on human machinery than on the endowment of the Holy Spirit. They want to convert the Church into a kind of worldly, industrial institution, whose purpose is rather to minister to people's bodies than to save them from their sins and beget within them spiritual life. Hence they are ambitious for a vast organization — one that can command the politician and enforce legal righteousness. Is it any wonder that we have rationalism and negative criticism in the Church today, when we forsake God and His simple program of evangelization, and depend on poor weak human skill and ingenuity? Let us remember this: the gospel all through the ages has been truly propagated only by witness-bearing, only by spiritual suasion. Wherever recourse has been had to worldly methods and principles, the Church has failed to achieve her true mission. Men cannot be saved by legal enactment, or by appeal to physical force, or by fear of social and economic ostracism. Men can be made Christians only by methods that will respect and call out their freedom of choice. Thus we have the answer to the "How?" of our text.

## **II. Where The Missionary Program Shall Be Carried Into Effect.**

Here our Lord's instructions are just as explicit as they are regarding the method. First He says, "Ye shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem." In another place (Luke 24:48) He directs, "Beginning at Jerusalem." And why begin there? Because the Christian is always to begin His Christian activity at home. Sometimes that is the hardest place to bear testimony and to live the Christlike life — right at home and in one's own community where he is best known and where his demeanor can be observed in every detail.

However, if he cannot endure that test, he is not fitted to go elsewhere to preach to others. A person who will do no Christian work at home will not make a good missionary in the home or the foreign field. "Beginning at Jerusalem" is the first number of the missionary program. Render that number well, and the rest will be sure to follow. In Jerusalem was the hardest place, too, for the apostles to bear their testimony; for there Christ spent His last days, there He had taught, there He had been crucified as a malefactor;

there, too, Judas had betrayed Him and played the coward, and Peter had denied Him. Considering all the circumstances, it would have been no wonder if those men had been daunted and afraid to bear their testimony right there in Jerusalem. But, endued with the power of the Holy Spirit, they undertook the hard task. We know the sequel — the conversion of thousands and the triumph of the gospel.

“And in all Judea,” Christ added. They were to begin at Jerusalem, but they were not to stay there. They were to go into the surrounding country. Christ’s instructions are marked by saneness and reality. He did not direct them to remain in Jerusalem a while, and then make an extended flying trip to foreign lands to see the country, and thus scatter and dissipate their efforts; but they were to radiate gradually out from the center and thus disseminate the gospel in an orderly and systematic way.

Here is the pattern for us today as churches and individuals. First we shall bear witness at home and in our immediate neighborhood; then in the community round about, pursuing our plan with persistency and system, so that no one will be missed. Let us remember that all souls are valuable in themselves and in the sight of God. A soul in your own vicinity is worth as much as a soul in faraway India or in darkest Africa.

Next they were to go into Samaria. This is also significant. The Samaritans and the Jews had no dealings with one another; in fact, the Jews despised the Samaritans, because the latter were a hybrid race, and could not boast of the pure blood of Abraham. Thus pride of ancestry held them aloof from their neighbors. But Jesus in His last commission broke down all racial and national distinctions, and gave His commanding orders to evangelize even the contemned Samaritans. The Spirit also led Paul to declare that God is no respecter of persons, and that, so far as the gospel is concerned, there is no difference between a Jew and a Gentile. The gospel is based on the mercy of God and the need of mankind, not on accidents of birth, ancestry and nationality.

Well may we learn the lesson today. The Christian Church must not pick and choose among the peoples of the earth, and extend her help only to friendly nations and intelligent peoples, but also to the despised, to those whom they may not naturally love so intensely. Even an enemy nation ought to have her help and sympathy. This is the spirit of Christ, and part of His great and wise missionary program. Let us not modify it by our prejudices and partialities.

“And unto the uttermost part of the earth.” What do you think of this part of our Lord’s evangelistic schedule? Was it not rather a big vault from little Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria to all the rest of the world? Why did He not mention Asia Minor, then Persia, and so on? Because He knew that if His disciples carried the gospel throughout Judea, and then proclaimed it in Samaria, they would be cured of this provincialism, and would be ready to go anywhere with their testimony. So at one bound He could give His program a world-wide scope.

Here is a direct marching order from our Commander-in-Chief — “the uttermost parts of the earth.” Begin at Jerusalem but do not stop there. Spread the news in Judea and Samaria, but do not stop there. “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation.” This commission is a complete answer to those one-sided people who declare that they do not believe in foreign missions. They simply deny the authority of our Lord, who enjoined again and again that His gospel should be preached to all nations. This leads us naturally to the next division of our subject:

### **III. Why Our Lord’s Missionary Program Should Be Carried Forward.**

While the reasons are not stated in the text, we may depend upon it that Christ’s commission was based on sound principles, and was not a mere arbitrary command. So we find the why of this program of world-wide evangelization in the very nature of God, of man and of the gospel. Let us classify our material here for more orderly treatment.

#### **1. God Himself has the missionary disposition.**

He is not indifferent to the salvation of the world, but, on the contrary, is intensely concerned about it. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” for its redemption. What God loves we should also love. And we will love what He loves if His Spirit dwells in our hearts. Then we will love the world, and will desire its redemption just as God does. “He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Nor is He interested in only a part of the world, but in all; for He sent His Son “to make propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of

the whole world.” If we are God’s true children, we will have His disposition, and therefore will carry out His world-wide missionary program.

## **2. Christ was a missionary to this world.**

There is a sense in which Christ was a foreign missionary. He might have continued in His state of glory amid the angels, but He was willing to come to the earth, to assume the form of a servant, to empty Himself, to teach the denizens of this poor world, and then to die for their salvation. Ought we not to be like Him? If Christ so loved lost and ruined sinners, ought we not to love them too, and bear to them as rapidly as possible the good news of redeeming grace? Surely if we belong to Christ, we will do this, and not raise any questions.

## **3. We have our marching orders from the King.**

He commands us to disciple all nations; to preach the gospel to the whole creation; to be His witnesses at home and abroad. One would think this ought to silence all objection to our Lord’s world-wide evangelistic program. When He said witness should be borne in Jerusalem and all Judea, He meant that home and inner missions should be promulgated; when He bade His disciples go to Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth, He placed His seal forever on the foreign mission enterprise. Depend upon it the missionary efforts of Boniface, Columba, Augustine, Ziegenbalg, Schwartz, Cary, Judson, Henry Martin, Livingstone, John G. Paton, and many more, all received their impetus from Christ’s express command to carry His gospel to the ends of the earth.

## **4. The apostles themselves were missionaries.**

They did not remain in Jerusalem. They carried out the Lord’s greater commission. Paul and Barnabas became foreign missionaries, and their tireless efforts brought the gospel to many heathen people, from Asia Minor to the east and the west. They did not say, “We have heathen enough at home!” Suppose they had cherished the idea that there was plenty to do at home, and would have remained in Jerusalem and Judea, you and I today would probably be groping our sorrowful way in the darkness of heathenism, bow-



ing down to stocks and stones. The apostles were under the immediate sway of the Holy Spirit, for Christ had promised to guide them into all truth, and bring to their remembrance the things He had taught them. Since, under such guidance and impetus, they carried the gospel to other lands, you and I will prove that we have the same spirit by following the apostolic method. Thus will we prove that we also are in the same true apostolic succession.

## **5. Our joy of salvation should impart to us the missionary spirit.**

We believe it to be true everywhere that the moment a person is truly converted, he wants others to experience the same joy and assurance. Nothing is more unselfish than the joy of salvation. By bringing it to others we do not diminish it for ourselves; indeed, the more we share the blessings of salvation with others the more our own joys are enhanced. If we do not care to bring others to Christ, it is a sure sign that we have not experienced the love of Christ in our own hearts.

“Can we whose souls are lighted  
With wisdom from on high —  
Can we to men benighted  
The lamp of life deny?  
Salvation! O salvation!  
The joyful sound proclaim,  
Till earth’s remotest nation  
Has learned Messiah’s name.”

## **5. The world’s need calls for our earnest endeavors.**

Everywhere we may hear the Macedonian cry, “Come over and help us.” When we read and hear of the misery of heathen people, of their terrible fears and superstitions, of their oppression under systems of caste and tyranny, of their degradation and squalor, our hearts ache with sympathy, and we feel that every effort ought to be bent to relieve them of their present distress, to say nothing of rescuing them from the peril of eternal death.

Compare our happy lot with that of many of the heathen. We have freedom, the privilege of schools and colleges, our women are honored as the

equals of men, we are oppressed by no terrifying superstitions; above all, we have the light of divine truth shining on our pathway from the cradle to the grave. Surely with all these blessings conferred upon us through divine favor, we cannot sit down selfishly and withhold the knowledge of salvation from the needy and desolate.

“Lord of all power and might,  
Father of love and light,  
Speed on Thy Word:  
O let the gospel sound  
All the wide world around  
Wherever man is found;  
God speed Thy Word.”

And does missionary effort benefit the pagan nations? This question need not be asked by those who are informed. Dr. Wu Ting Fang, a former Chinese minister to this country, bore this testimony: “I am glad to find the Christian people helping my countrymen, teaching them to behave themselves, to practice virtue and to be good citizens. We thank you for your work in behalf of our countrymen in this land. And we do not object to Christian missionaries coming to China, for we know that they come to teach our people to be good and to do good.” Mr. Winston Churchill, in his book entitled “My African Journey,” bears witness to the salutary effect of Christian missionary effort in Uganda, saying that it was the only country which he ever visited in which every person of suitable age went to Christian worship every Sunday morning. He also says that he never saw better order or happier homes than in this central region of the Dark Continent, where, only a few years ago, pioneer missionaries were mercilessly put to death by the natives. Hon. William Jennings Bryan, in his tour around the world, paid a good deal of attention to missionary work, and testifies enthusiastically to its salutary results. Ex-President Taft says that he was once opposed to foreign missions, but when he traveled around the globe, he came back a champion and defender of the foreign missionary enterprise. We can spare the time for only one quotation from Mr. Taft, among others that might be given: “No man can study the movement of modern civilization from an impartial standpoint and not realize that Christianity and the spread of Christianity are the only basis for hope of modern civilization in the growth of popular self-government. The spirit of Christianity is pure

democracy. It is the equality of man before God, the equality of man before the law, which is, as I understand it, the most God-like manifestation that man has yet been able to make.”

Citations of a similar character might be given indefinitely, but it is not necessary. Every one who has experienced the salutary power of the Christian religion in his own heart and life knows that it carries blessing, joy and moral uplift with it wherever it goes. Christ’s mission is to seek and to save the lost.

“Blessings abound where’er He reigns;  
The prisoner leaps to loose his chains;  
The weary find eternal rest,  
And all the sons of want are blest.”

Amen!

# 70. The Cure For All Our Trouble. St. John 14:1. In Memory Of The Dead.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. (John 14:1)

“MAN THAT IS BORN of a woman is of a few days, and full of trouble,” said the patriarch Job long ago; and the adage is reiterated today at every funeral service. The same pathetic note is heard in another of his sayings: “Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.”

It is true, there is much joy in life. We must not overstress the note of sorrow; we must not take a gloomy and pessimistic view of life. We have a right to its innocent joys and healthful recreations. And yet we must admit that, sooner or later, sorrow and disappointment come into our lives. No one is wholly immune; even the little children cannot entirely escape. Among the many sad experiences that come to us is bereavement, the loss of our loved ones by death. Just as the death angel has invaded this home in which we are now gathered to pay our last rites to a departed friend and neighbor, so that same angel will some day hover over your home and mine, and will descend and bear away some one who is near and dear to us; or, if it is not some one else who is taken, it will be ourselves, and then others will have to mourn our departure.

Now, since man has been born unto trouble, we may well ask, Is there a cure for our sorrows? Or we may voice our interrogation in the touching words of the prophet: “Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?”

To these questions, as we stand today beside the coffin of our beloved dead, we desire to give a positive answer, not the answer of negation or of agnosticism. Our reply, and a confident reply it is, is this: There is a balm in Gilead; there is a Physician there. Our text gives us a blessed assurance for

a time like this, and for all times of affliction and distress: “Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God and believe in Me.” These are the sacred and precious words of Jesus Christ. They suggest to us the subject of our reflections: “Faith in God and Christ the Panacea for Trouble.” In accordance with this text we desire to show you that “earth hath no sorrow that heaven cannot heal.” How thankful we should be that God has given us His Word to lighten our pathway, and Christ has so clearly and beautifully prescribed the cure for all our troubles. Let us note —

## **I. Faith In God The Cure For Trouble.**

“Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God,” said Jesus. How He always sounded the depths! He ever spoke the gracious word that was needed! And His prescription means a remedy, a specific, not merely a nostrum. How does it occur that belief in God affords so much assuagement for our griefs?

Let us put the matter in this way to make it as convincing as possible: Suppose we did not believe in God, then where would be our comfort in sorrow? What would your minister have to say to these bereft relatives in the presence of death? What could he say to the neighbors and friends and fellow-members of the Church, if there were no God, and if no faith in God dwelt in our hearts? Will the poor materialist and agnostic tell me what could be said in the way of comfort on this occasion, or on any other that calls for sympathy and words of condolence? We confess that if we did not believe in God, we would never preach another sermon; we would never again open our lips at a burial service. We would sit dumb in stolid despair.

Professor Clifford, a well-known Englishman, was once a believer; but he began to study science and human philosophy, and, unable to withstand the assaults of doubt, he lost his faith in God and in Christianity. What then? In a frank outburst he expresses his utter gloom and despondency in view of the joy and hope that had passed out of his life with the loss of faith, and ended with the despairing cry, “The Great Companion is dead!” Suppose he were here today in your minister’s place, what would he say to these sorrowing friends? He would be speechless, or at most he could only voice his hopelessness in the pathetic words of a well-known unbeliever of

the last century who said at the grave of his brother: "Life is but a narrow vale between the barren peaks of two eternities."

But, thanks be to God, we have faith today; we believe in God, and, moreover, we believe in the God whom Christ revealed to us, the God who loves us, who sent His Son to save us, who calls Himself "our heavenly Father." Reflect upon the solid ground of comfort Such a faith in God affords us. If there is a God, then the world has a Ruler, a Governor; then the world has not come by mere chance, and is not controlled merely by accident. So, whatever might occur, however strange and mysterious many casualties may seem to be, we still may know that the world cannot go beyond the divine sovereignty, but that God will be able to say to every adverse circumstance or power, "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther; here shall thy proud waves be stayed." Yes, faith in God causes us to feel that the world is safe and friendly, and that its ultimate destiny is assured. What a comfort such a faith affords us in sorrow! What consolation it gives us today! Since there is a God, He must also be the master of death, and therefore the fell messenger cannot defeat the divine will and purpose, but God must have some wise reason for this event in His great and beneficent plan.

Again, since there is a God who rules all things, there must be a purpose in the world and in our lives. Then we do not merely happen to be here with no wise and definite end in view. But suppose there is no God; then why was the world made, and why are we here? We find ourselves brought into the world without our volition; we remain here for a few years, and our lives are much checkered with joys and sorrows; then we are laid upon a bed of death without our choice. And so the human race goes on with varying fortunes from generation to generation, from millennium to millennium. What is the meaning of it all? What purpose is to be subserved? If there were no God, we could find none. The very meaning of life would be an insoluble and unendurable mystery.

But if there is a God, as we know there is by our Christian experience, then we may be assured that He has made the world for a wise purpose, has placed us here with wise design, and will in the end work out His beneficent plan. If you should ask me, How do you know that the existence of God implies a wise and holy purpose? Is not that a non-sequitur? I would reply, No; it could not be possible for the God who made this wonderful world, so marvelously adapted for human residence, development and disci-

pline, to make it without having in view a high and beneficent end. Such a supposition is so irrational as to be preposterous.

Yes, faith in God is our source of comfort today while we are called together to lay in the tomb the body of our friend. While we may not understand why he was taken from us at this time, we have confidence that God has a sufficient reason for He permitted his death, and that in the end He will work out His sovereign will, which will be for His own glory and the highest good of our deceased friend and all his bereft relatives. We may lay our hands in the hand of our heavenly Father and say trustfully, "Father, lead us in the way that we should go." We may have our sorrows assuaged by the assurance of the apostle: "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose." Yes, the voice of Jesus sounds sweetly and soothingly in our hearts as He says: "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God." A devout hymn-writer of the latter part of the seventeenth century, Samuel Rodigast, grasped the true idea of faith in God:

"Whate'er my God ordains is right;  
Holy His will abideth;  
I will be still what'er He doth,  
And follow where He guideth.  
He is my God;  
Though dark my road,  
He holds me that I shall not fall;  
Wherefore to Him I leave it all."

However, our Lord adds something that is very comforting in this brief but comprehensive text. Not only did He bid His disciples to believe in God, but also to believe in Him. "Believe in God, and believe in Me," He said. Therefore we are led to reflect on this theme:

## **II. Faith In Christ The Cure Of Trouble.**

Christ must have had some reason for adding these words. How is it that faith in Christ as well in God is the panacea for our sorrows?

### **1. Christ is the clear revelation of God.**

One reason why He came in the flesh was to make God plain, simple, real, concrete and personal to us. Note how explicitly this doctrine is taught in the Bible. “No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath revealed Him.” “The Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.” “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also.” He was “God manifest in the flesh.”

How true it is that we cannot form a clear conception of the infinite and absolute God! When we try to think of Him, we can go just so far, and then thought vapors off into obscurity. We try to think of God as personal, and we heartily believe Him to be so; yet how vague is our apprehension! But we can easily apprehend Christ, we can think of Him as real; we can see Him clearly in His whole career from His infancy in Bethlehem’s manger to His ascension to the right hand of God. Nor can we think of Him in any other terms than as personal.

That is precisely what the troubled heart needs for the assuagement of its griefs: to know that God is real and personal, knows all about our condition, and therefore feels an interest in our joys and sorrows. No heart can be satisfied with the conception of God as a mere “Inscrutable Force,” as Herbert Spencer apprehended Him. Standing here by the casket of our loved one, what comfort would you derive from my discourse if I were to tell you that the “Inscrutable Force” of the universe destroyed his life and ended his career forever? That would be giving you a stone when you asked for bread. It would answer every rational longing of the soul with the apples of Sodom, which would turn to ashes in the hand.

But Christ not only reveals God as real, concrete and personal, but also as a God of love; as our Father in heaven; as one who cares for us, and has a personal interest in our welfare; in our daily bread, our clothing, our earthly lives and our eternal destiny. How much comfort it gives to the human heart to regard God in that way! Today, in the presence of the mystery of death, the alleviation of our grief is this very thought — that God doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men, but that it is always for some righteous purpose. Christ tells us that our Father in heaven is both like and unlike our earthly parents, for He says: “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask Him!” When we know that the God



who rules all the universe is a God who cares for us, then we can cast all our care upon Him; then we may know that “He doeth all things well.” He can even convert the death of a loved one into a blessing. Then, too, no matter what happens to our physical being, we can say, “It is well with my soul.”

Oh, what a holy and loving disposition Christ reveals in God! How different from the god of deism, who, having made the world, forsook it, and takes no further interest in the welfare of His rational creatures; from the god of pantheism, who is not a person, but the impersonal universe, which can neither know nor feel our griefs; from the poor agnostic, who exclaims in the presence of every perplexity of human experience, “We do not know, and we never shall or can know!” No; Jesus Christ says, “Believe in God, and believe in Me.” That is the cure for all our troubles, the solution of all our problems. “I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you.” Oh, what a stay it is to the soul to trust in a real, personal and beneficent God, who is at the same time all-powerful, so that none of His wise purposes can miscarry!

"Father, what'er of bliss  
Thy sovereign hand denies,  
Accepted at a throne of grace,  
Let this petition rise:

"Give me a calm, a thankful heart  
From every murmur free;  
The blessings of Thy grace impart,  
And let me live to Thee.

“Let the sweet hope that Thou art mine  
My life and death attend;  
Thy presence through my journey shine,  
And crown my journey's end.”

## **2. Christ made plain the way of salvation.**

Perhaps the most important question that anyone can ask is this: “What must I do to be saved?” Every earnest soul must ask that question again and again until it is answered. Ultimately sin is the cause of all our woes. Had not sin come into the world, it would be a perfect world, with nothing to

mar our pure and holy joys. It may not always be our own direct and personal sin that brings trouble into our lives, but it is sin in the world that has wrought so much havoc, and often the innocent must suffer with the guilty.

One of the most troublesome problems of human thought is the origin of sin; but a more important problem is the cure of sin. However, Christ resolves both problems for us. He endorsed the Old Testament, and that informs us explicitly how sin came into the world; not by the will of God, but by the wrong choice of a free moral agent. But if it came in that way, not being eternal, not lying in the very structure of things, but was brought into actuality in time, then it can be canceled and destroyed. Here, then, is hope for sinful man even in the Biblical account of the genesis of sin. But Christ came especially and explicitly to reveal to us the remedy for sin. Said the angel of the annunciation to Joseph regarding the birth of Christ, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." Christ made this declaration: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." He also said that the Son of man came "to give His life a ransom for many." Again, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath life."

I need quote no further. Christ Himself is the remedy for sin, and to accept Him as our Redeemer is to appropriate that remedy. Now if Christ saves us from sin, He rescues us from the cause of all our troubles. That is why faith in Christ is the panacea. In heaven there will be no sorrow because there will be no sin. "There shall be no more curse." And this leads us to our final thought as to why faith in Christ is the cure of all our trouble:

### **3. He opened the gateway to the immortal life.**

Note the text, with the verses that follow; "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God and believe in Me: In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also."

Could anything be more comforting and assuring? "If it were not so, I would have told you. If there were no mansions for you in my Father's house, I would have told you; I would not have deceived you. But I came forth from my Father, and therefore I know what He has in store for you."

Death cannot be avoided. It comes to all sooner or later. "It is given unto men once to die, and after death the judgment." Says one of the Old Testament writers, "There is no discharge in that war," referring to death. But let us remember that to the believer death is nothing terrible. It is only the demise of the body; but it is release to the soul. Thus the gate of death is converted for the true believer into the gateway of life. "Christ hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." For this reason you and I today "need not sorrow as those who have no hope." We know whither our loved one has gone — to the Father's house of many mansions. There is no night there — no night of sin, no night of sorrow, no night of disappointment, no night of mystery, no night of insoluble problems. How true it is that the text affords the balm for all our sorrows: "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God and believe in Me."

Let good Richard Baxter bear his testimony to the upholding power of faith:

"Lord, it belongs not to my care  
Whether I die or live;  
To love and serve Thee is my share,  
And this Thy grace will give.

"If life be long, I will be glad  
That I may long obey;  
If short, yet why should I be sad  
To soar to endless day?...

"Come, Lord, when grace has made me meet  
Thy blessed face to see:  
For if Thy work on earth be sweet,  
What will Thy glory be?"

**The End**

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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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