

Concordia Theological Monthly



F E B R U A R Y • 1 9 5 7

HOMILETICS

Sermon Outlines on the Ranke Epistles

QUINQUAGESIMA

ROMANS 10:8-18

"Have faith! Have faith!" is the advice offered to people who are weary of life. Another way of saying: "Get a hold of yourself, pull yourself together." Like shaking hands with yourself, talk to yourself, have faith in yourself. Believe what *you* tell *yourself* with complete faith, and you have the answer to what you need.

This is a popular religion, the doctrine of self-assertion, heathenism in modern form, idolatry. Advises faith but offers nothing to have faith in. If I'm floundering in the sea, you yell, "Hang on, hang on!" I expect you will throw out something to hang on to, reach for, have faith in. Do not mock me with self-assertion, to pull up my feet with my two hands. This is religion, but not the Christian religion.

The text brings together two things, faith and the Word.

Faith in the Word Is the Answer

"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God [of Christ]" (cp. Greek v.17). I. *Where it comes from.* Ministry of Christ was not yelling, "Have faith, have faith," from place to place (Mark 2:2). "He preached the Word unto them" (Luke 9:6), and Acts 8:4: "They departed, preaching the Gospel." They brought something, not vague mouthings and empty phrases. With no Word of Christ, there is no Word of God, and vice versa. You cannot offer the two separately. No Word, no faith.

II. *What comes first*—faith or the Word? First comes what Paul invites the mind to think through in v. 14: How can anybody believe something he hasn't even heard about? The Word comes first. Again, first the Word. This needs emphasis. The Word does not drop out of the sky (v.14). It is not self-manufactured inner inspiration. Enthusiasm. It comes from outside yourself to you

Inside.—"The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is, the Word of faith, which we preach" (v.8). The Word produces faith. Not as though the Word were only a stimulator, a hypo that sends you into faith. Nor is the Word an aircraft carrier's catapult that whips you off into the wide blue sky. Rather the catapult-

ing power is built right in. The Word that transforms stays on for further forming, it never leaves. You do not switch depots. Faith comes from, and runs on, the same rail, which is the Word. Faith is a smooth express, with never so much as a click; an imperceptible weld in the silence of the heavenly foundry. Faith does not believe one thing and talk another. From the inside it moves to the

Outside. — "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (v.9). The Easter Christ is handled with the mouth in words. That is in summary the crucial fact, doctrine. The Word that converts is the same that talks. Faith has not brought God down to earth and up again (context); faith has but to accept the redemption as an accomplished fact. When you nod your head to this truth, you believe. Back to the theme: "Faith in the Word is the answer." Be impressed with the importance of this order.

Application. — What hurts faith is that we hold these facts of Scripture as they revolve around Christ incommunicado; that is, we have faith, but it is held in silence. It has a mouth, but there are few, if any, words coming out of that mouth. Faith and word — words are not connected to the loud speaker. It is true, "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (v.10); but now do not let the tracks dip underground. "And with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

How many people have a talking faith? If I do not talk about my Savior's death and resurrection, never have words for it or on account of it, my faith is missing something. Though it come from God, it is suffering from lack of self-expression. Faith needs exercise, mouth-moving, word-making (1) for itself and (2) for others (v.18). Faith is a talker.

Ask almost any American whether he is a Christian, and he says, "Certainly, what else?" That is putting words into his mouth. Rather ask, "What are you?" The answer: "It's none of your business. What are you?" Nowadays people are very careful not to antagonize anyone, for others might learn to know what to believe. That's bad. Pass yourself off as being like everybody else. This is the denier's talk. "Have faith, do the best you can," etc. This is not Christianity.

We cannot be satisfied with generalities. Be specific, factual, such as (v.11), "Believe in Him." V.9: Christ crucified and risen, righteousness, sin, salvation. If such items are not talked about, you have nothing more to offer than, "Have faith, Have faith," and this without the Word. We are back to the "Get-hold-of-yourself" theology as

the answer, and this is not true. Thereby no one is converted. Content of v. 14 ff. in application. Christian faith loves to talk, not in empty gassing, "Have faith." It comes with the facts, the deeds of God, by Christ for our righteousness.

We go to Communion today, not because we expect to be converted, or to come to faith. We have faith. God's word "Take, eat; take, drink" brings me to the altar. Not for the sake of bread and wine itself; that kind of eating we do at home. The word of Christ, "This is My body, this is My blood." . . . His promise that puts His body and blood into my mouth. Without the Word there would be nothing.

Concluding thoughts: As Christ makes His entrance into our very person, may our mouth, much used for ingestion, be used for some audible expression. Now let us hear the whole text read without interruption.

Schaumburg, Ill.

F. A. HERTWIG, JR.

INVOCAVIT

HEBREWS 12:1-3

We are a "contest-conscious" generation. This is very evident during the baseball and football seasons. This is very evident from TV programs which rank among the first in popularity. Because we are a "contest-conscious" generation, we are also a "winner-worshiping" people. We admire and honor those who win. We all desire to be winners.

Since this is so, Heb. 12:1-3 has a special appeal. It tells us that being a Christian is like a contest, like a race (cf. 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7; 1 Cor. 9:14). Furthermore this Scripture passage tells us how to win "the race that is set before us" as Christians. It is of interest to note that winning the race depends on the Christian's look.

The Look That Wins

I. Look away from sin (v. 1 b).

- A. To win, a contestant must look away from, must avoid, whatever hinders him (1 Cor. 9:24-27). Unless a contestant is willing to do this, he cannot win. To win, a Christian must "lay aside every weight." He must avoid "the sin which doth so easily beset us."
- B. We must remember, however, that avoiding hindrances does not win the game or the race for the athlete. More is needed to win. Nevertheless, avoiding hindrances is

tremendously important. Likewise, avoiding sin does not save the sinner (Gal. 3:11). A sinner is saved by grace, not by works (Eph. 2:8-9). Nevertheless, to win heaven, the Christian will be earnest in his looking away from sin; otherwise he will lose his faith (Matt. 13:18-22).

II. Look about you at your companions (v. 1 a).

- A. An athlete who faces a contest alone is under a far greater strain than the athlete who is surrounded by teammates of proved ability. We Christians at times lose heart in our race because we feel alone. However, we are not alone in our contest or race for heaven. We are part of a "glorious band," part of a "noble army" (cf. Hymn 452). Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses—all are our teammates (cf. Hebrews 11). This should give us confidence and courage. The patriarchs and saints of old, "though dead and long ago gone to their heavenly rest," still speak to us about what it means to be a Christian. Therefore we are to look to their example and take heart. They won the race that was set before them. We are to do so likewise.
- B. Again, we must remember that looking at his teammates, looking at their example, important at this may be, does not make a winner of an athlete. More is needed. Likewise, the noble example of patriarchs and saints, ancient or modern, does not save us. Much more is needed. *Jesus is needed.*

III. Above all, keep looking to Jesus.

- A. He accomplished our salvation (v. 2 b). The fact that He "is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" is proof positive that He fully accomplished for us what He set out to accomplish. Even while He suffered, He knew that He would accomplish our salvation. This was His joy. Now, to benefit from that which He accomplished for us, we must look to Him in faith.
- B. He is "the Author and Finisher of our faith" (v. 2 a). "Christ starts our faith and leads it to its consummation." We are to keep our eyes on Him and what He did.
- C. He gives us an example in perseverance (v. 3). In our race as Christians we meet with many disappointments, we suffer many heartaches. This should not discourage us. When discouraged, we are "to consider thoughtfully"

what Jesus endured to accomplish our redemption. Such thoughtful reflection will spur us on to run harder, to believe in Jesus the more firmly.

Conclusion.—In an earthly contest or race only one can win. In the contest or race here mentioned everyone of us can win. And just think of what we win. We win heaven. We win heaven with a look, a look of faith to Jesus, our Savior.

San Antonio, Texas

ROLAND WIEDERAENDERS

REMINISCERE

ROMANS: 8:28-39 (Key Verses, 31-33, 37)

Eusebius tells us that about A. D. 312 Emperor Constantine, engaged in battle, saw in the sky a flaming cross on which were inscribed the words "By this sign conquer." It is said that this led to Constantine's conversion. The Cross of Jesus Christ is a conquering power. We are reminded of that truth this Lenten season, when we gather in special services to ponder the tremendous meaning of Christ's suffering and death in our stead. This is also the theme of today's service, "Through Christ we are more than conquerors." Our text brings this out very forcefully. If ever Paul "rode in a triumphant chariot on this side of heaven," it was when he wrote this chapter. Church fathers have called it "the golden chapter of the Bible."

Through Christ We Conquer

Life is an ongoing battle. For a child growing to adulthood, life is a struggle. For Columbus crossing the Atlantic, life was a battle. But the greatest battle is the spiritual struggle in our own lives. The stakes are high, and victory belongs only to the strong in Christ.

I. Our enemies

The forces arrayed against us are more than paper dolls or toothpick soldiers. They are powerful. They are inimical forces not only outside us but also inside us. Explain each briefly. They are tribulation (v. 35); distress (v. 35); persecution (v. 35); famine (v. 35); nakedness, peril, sword (v. 35).

II. Our strength . . . Jesus Christ.

A. The meaning of being strong in Christ (v. 37). We use the words "through Christ" so often that it can become a mere cliché falling on drugged minds. It means more than having Christ as a silent Partner . . . more than Christ in the bleach-

ers watching our struggle in the arena. It means sins forgiven, the barrier between God and us removed, and Jesus living within us. This text speaks of the believers' triumph, namely, people reborn in Christ who have the life and power of God at work in them. "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" (Gal. 2:20).

B. What He did to make us conquerors (vv. 34, 37).

1. Died for us (Rom. 5:6).
2. Rose for us (John 11:25).
3. Makes intercession for us (Heb. 7:25).
4. Loves us (Eph. 5:2).

We are strong in the grace and love and merits of Christ, which are ours by faith. Thereby we share in His victory. It is through Christ that God can love us, does love us, and pours His power into our lives (2 Cor. 2:14).

III. Our guarantee of final victory.

Despite the victory of Christ we still have our doubts and fears. Even the best Christian has his "blue Mondays." Worries nag us, guilt annoys us, doubts pester us. So we need all the re-enforcements and added assurances of final triumph which God can give us. Here they are:

A. The love of God the Father.

1. Spared not His own Son (v. 32). Since He has proved His love by giving His best, will He ever withhold anything to see us through to victory?
2. Elected us (v. 29). The Father has by grace foreknown and elected us to salvation. Having elected us, He now
3. Justifies us (v. 33). We can challenge all our accusers by telling them that God has declared us just and righteous through the merits of Christ. Who can any longer condemn us?
4. Overrules all things for our eternal good (v. 28).

B. The love of Jesus Christ (vv. 37, 34). Jesus has not only given Himself for us but He also intercedes for us at the throne of God (1 John 2:1). He will also plead for us and conquer for us at the final Judgment.

- C. The work of the Holy Spirit. . . Paul says (v. 38): "I am persuaded." This assurance gives evidence of the Spirit's work. It is He who puts this conviction in our hearts, keeps us in faith, and assures us of final victory (Rom. 8:16).

Hugh Kennedy, an eminent Christian of Ayr, Scotland, when he was dying, called for a Bible; but finding his sight gone, he said: "Turn to the eighth chapter of Romans, and set my finger at these words, 'I am persuaded that neither life nor death, etc.' Now," he said, "is my finger upon them?" And when they told him it was, he said: "God be with you, my children; I have breakfasted with you, and shall sup with my Lord Jesus Christ this night." This is the believer's ultimate triumph.

Topeka, Kans.

ALBERT C. BURROUGHS

OCULI

2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-14

"It's good to be alive!" Rather rare the moments when men can honestly say this. But if we are speaking of the true life of God in us, then in life and death, in prosperity and suffering, in time and to all eternity, we shall never cease to praise God for

The Life That Truly Lives

(or the theme for the day: "Christ's Life Manifest in Our Life")

- I. Our glory: God puts His life in us "earthen vessels" (v. 7).
 - A. Human wisdom always tends to separate God from world, body from soul, religion from life. Yet into a body of dust God first breathed His own divine life, purposes, and character. To be "spiritual" apart from daily flesh and blood living is to reject God's true Life.
 - B. Learn this from Jesus Christ.
 1. God prepared Himself an "earthen vessel," common, without special attraction (Is. 53:2).
 2. Yet in that earthly flesh of Jesus is hid the treasure of God's true life, planted anew in a world that had died (Col. 2:2, 3, 9; John 1:4, 14).
 3. Not in special radiance of glory, but in His day-to-day earthly love, witness, and self-sacrifice, does the Life of God in Him show.
 - C. Here is our glory, that God does not despise this earthly existence of ours, but plants in it His true life.
 1. St. Paul understood this. He is the "earthen vessel," un-

noticed, despised, unwanted, wrestling with sin, ready for death. Yet he is glorified by the treasure God has placed in him. See v. 6.

2. Do we understand?

II. Our transformation: To be alive means to die to the old life of mere physical comfort, ambition, and survival (vv. 8-11).

A. The flesh hates this; it cries, "Protect life above all." Yet even physical life exists not of itself nor for itself, but is the gift of God. To cherish life above its Giver is to reject the true Life.

B. Thus Christ proved His life for His Father by dying.

1. Appreciate "the dying of the Lord Jesus" (v. 10). He forsakes earthly ambition, does the will of God without regarding consequences, burns Himself out in love for us, and finally lays down the life of the flesh, as the life of God in Him demands (Epistle: Eph. 5:1, 2).

2. So He also taught: "Take cross. . . ." "Love life . . . lose it." "Fear not them which kill the body. . . ."

C. This life of Christ now shows in our "dying."

1. St. Paul understood it (develop vv. 8-11 and parallels).

2. Do we? How much "dying" have we done for Him?

III. Our power: The life in us has power, by its dying, to beget life in others (vv. 12, 13).

A. Wisdom is offended and argues, "What's the use of dying? Surely, a living Christian is more useful than a dead one." Yet life and death are God's, not ours. No death can touch us until God is ready to build more by our death than by our continued life. "Hairs numbered." But if we cherish life and refuse to lose it, we have no power to transmit God's life; and we also lose our own.

B. Learn this from Christ, who by DYING gave His life to the world.

1. So He believed (John 12:24ff).

2. So He lived, unyielding, losing all for the sake of truth, for truth alone gives life (John 6:63. Cf. our chapter, vv. 1-4).

3. So He died, His death God's purposeful sacrifice for sin and the very source of our redemption. NOT to die would have been death both to Him and to us.
- C. So we, who have received life by His dying, transmit that life by our "dying."
1. St. Paul understood it. "Death works in us, but life in you." If Paul had not died to this life and to every earthly ambition, Corinth would never have received the Gospel! Yet no credit to Paul (v. 7b). The life of faith cannot but speak (v. 13).
 2. Do we understand? Or do we still so protect our old earthly existence that we cannot witness and that we have no power to beget God's life in others?
- IV. Our hope: The life of God in us can never perish, nor can the "earthen vessels" which contain it (vv. 10b-11b, 14).
- A. To earthly wisdom the reverse is true. God's life is death! Cling to life, above all, for only where there is life is there hope! Yet how futile is such a hope! For this life will most surely die. Trust Christ, who says that to forsake this life is to keep it unto life eternal!
- B. So we learn from Christ. Even in dying He was certain of the ultimate victory.
1. How confidently He foretold it!
 2. How gloriously His resurrection proved it!
 3. And the "earthen vessel" of His humanity shares it (Phil. 2:9-11).
- C. We who die to the flesh, can no more perish than God's life in us can perish.
1. Understanding this, Paul was unconquerable (vv. 8,9). He waited for victory and vindication (vv. 14ff.).
 2. Do we understand it? What comfort, hope, power!

Rejoice eternally, you who "always bear about in your body the dying of the Lord Jesus," for God's eternal life in Christ is manifest in you! Rejoice, for you have lost nothing, but in humility you will praise Him: "Dear Savior, it's good to be alive!" Amen.

LAETARE

2 CORINTHIANS 5:14-21

In the very midst of Lent comes a Sunday of joy. Isn't it incongruous? Doesn't it spoil the mood of reverence and of holy grief? How does it do it—by turning attention away from the Cross? No, it is a worship centering in the Cross. But it helps to hold before Christians, for the purpose of their triumph,

When Death Is Triumph

This rich text makes clear that the triumph of dying belongs both to Christ and to Christians. Its triumph resides both in His initial act of dying and in the message that keeps on sounding the note of triumph till He comes again.

I. *His death brings the triumph of life*

- A. He died. On the cross He gave up the ghost. But more: He died the death of leaving God out and away. "God made Him to be sin" (v.21). Sin is the severing of self from God, the initiating of death. God made Him to be such a loss of God. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt.27:46). He tasted the ultimate of death, the wrath of God.
- B. He died for all (vv.14,15). He did not die for His own sake; He was not made sin on His own account. By Jesus Christ, God "hath reconciled us to Himself" (v.18). Jesus died for the sake of mankind, for the sake of you.
- C. Then were all dead (v.14). Is that triumph? Oh, yes, much more than to live the dead life. For Christ died "to sin once" (Rom.6:10) that sin's power and meaning might be over; and it is over as we died that death with Him. There is room in His death for all of us, for He died for us all. That means that death is no longer to rule us; for we have died to death. Death means the stopping of the force for life that has been going on up to that moment. We were under the force of death; in Christ we died to death.
- D. He died for all that they which live should live unto Him (v.15). That's the obverse of the picture. The two go together: die to death; this leaves life to be lived. This means that a new life force takes the place of the one we died to; and that is Christ. For He, too, died to death and rose again;

in Him God reveals the life that is lived by God. As we are a part of Christ, His dying, so we are a part of His living.

- E. This means that the old things are passed away, all things are become new, all things are of God (vv. 17, 18). This is a triumph that is not celebrated merely by the shouts of crowds lining the route of the parade; this is the triumph that goes back home with them into daily living.

II. *His death brings the triumph of the message of life*

- A. Are you triumphing? Are you living, or are you still trying to serve the vanquished master, play dead, hold your spiritual breath till you are blue? That's bad business. For when a body is made to live by a life force, it can't operate with another kind of atmosphere or with water instead of blood. Are you experimenting with the wrath of God? Are you trying to get lost and separated from Him who found you at such bitter cost?
- B. The heavenly Father foresaw even this situation. And so He gave the ministry of reconciliation to live men, that they might bring to life their world for which Christ died, that they might help keep alive their fellow Christians who had died with Christ and had begun to live to Him, but still experimented with death again.
- C. This service of fellow Christians all around us — fathers and mothers, pastors and teachers, friends and acquaintances — rifles the Word of Reconciliation into us. Paul wrote these words to get the Corinthians to open their ears to his message again; they had been experimenting with clever pap. He wanted them to realize that God Himself was behind this tremendous message.
- D. See what the message is that we have to be listening to, over and over again, so that the triumph of Christ's death may bring life to us: "He made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (v. 21). God made Him to be sin for us, and struck Him with the full measure of His wrath for man's sin, that through Him we might have righteousness, the blessed estate of being approved by God, upright in the serene confidence of God's ongoing forgiveness.

Hence, Christian, rejoice in the Cross and in the death of Christ. For its Word has struck you, too, through Baptism, by which you have

died with Christ and have been raised with Him (Rom. 6:3ff.); through the Word of Reconciliation in the preaching of the Gospel (1 Peter 1:23—2:3). So keep on hearing! Thus we shall play the role of the disciples the night before Christ died. To them He said: "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11).

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RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

WHAT KIND OF CHRISTIAN?

Commenting on A. J. Toynbee's recent book *An Historian's Approach to Religion* (Oxford; \$5), *Time* (September 10, 1956) asks the question what kind of Christian Toynbee really is; for though an Anglican in childhood, he always showed himself ready to range various prophets, gods, and philosophers alongside Christ. He does so also in his latest book, in which he writes about the religious condition of today's world. While, of course, it is not fair to judge any book by one man's analysis, nevertheless the quotations taken from the book may aid the reader in arriving at his own judgment. The reviewer states that Toynbee "denies that Christianity is the one true religion," and he writes in conclusion: "Says Toynbee: Christians must winnow the nonessential chaff (mostly theology) from the wheat of their tradition, must abandon the 'chosen people' claim to the uniqueness of their Savior and their revelation. They must learn to regard all the higher religions as revelations of God." He then quotes Toynbee as stating: "The spirit of the Indian religions, blowing where it listeth, may perhaps help to winnow a traditional Pharisaism out of Moslem, Christian, and Jewish hearts. But the help that God gives is given by Him to those who help themselves; and the spiritual struggle in the more exclusive-minded Judaic half of the world to cure ourselves of our family infirmity (*i. e.*, self-centeredness) seems likely to be the most crucial episode in the next chapter of the history of Mankind [cap. in original]." Toynbee thus denies both the deity of Christ and the absoluteness of the Christian religion. In a footnote the reviewer remarks that Toynbee's sentiments and scholarship on Judaism have been angrily attacked by the Jewish author Maurice Samuel in his book *The Professor and the Fossil* (Knopf; \$4), in which he says that "his [Toynbee's] characterization of Jewish culture as a 'fossilized relic' fails to explain the extraordinary phenomenon of Jewish survival." Christianity, however, has much more to say in its defense.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER