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From Advent to Shrove Tuesday
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Brief Studies

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THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

1 PETER 3:8-15

Introduction

Peter is practical in his exhortations to the Christians. The epistle summarizes and emphasizes "the calling of a Christian." God called us and "gave us a new birth" (1 Peter 1:3). He who called us is holy, so "like Him, be holy in all your behavior" (1 Peter 1:16). This holy life is to be shown in all situations and activities. By such "good conduct you should put ignorance and stupidity to silence." (1 Peter 2:15)

We Are Called to Show
Good Conduct to All

I. *With regard to our fellow Christian*

A. *In a unity of mind.* We are to regard every fellow Christian as our equal (Rom. 12:16). We have "the same turn of mind and a common care for unity" (Phil. 2:2 NEB) for one another. To have the Christian arrayed against his fellow Christian negates being "firmly joined in unity of mind and thought" (1 Cor. 1:10 NEB). Only by such a unity of mind can we with "one voice . . . praise God." (Rom. 15:5 NEB)

B. *In a unity of compassion.* Seeing the widow of Nain, the Lord's "heart went out to her" (Luke 7:12, 13 NEB). This is compassion. We are to "rejoice with those who rejoice" and to "weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15 RSV). Our feelings are to be with the fellow Christian so that in time of stress we help him remain firm. We are to stand "loyally by those who were so treated" and to "share the sufferings of the prisoners" (Heb. 10:33, 34 NEB). By such unity of compassion we are to help one another, just

as our Lord sympathized with our weaknesses. (Heb. 4:15)

C. *In a unity of love.* "Love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous." We are not brethren merely by flesh but by the Spirit. We are "blood-relatives" through the blood of Jesus Christ. As such we are to be tender-hearted, full of pity (Eph. 4:32). Angry and jealous folk are not moved by a heart of pity. Their heart is pity-empty and not pitiful. We will also be courteous. Shorten the word "courtesy" to "curtsy" and you have the picture of humbly bowing down in politeness and in good manners to show respect for one another. It is the opposite of being demanding and arrogant.

The bond of love which unites us with our fellow Christians dare never be taken for granted. God has united us to Himself and thereby with one another. We who were afar off were drawn nigh by the blood of the Lamb of God. We are safe from the curse of our own sins, secure from Satan, and certain of victory over the grave. God is our Father by the grace of God in Christ and therefore we are brethren with every fellow Christian. We are united in mind with the mind of Christ to have compassion and love for one another.

II. *With regard to all fellowmen —*

Not all in this world know of the love of God in Christ. Today's Gospel stresses that we indeed must be "fishers of men" (Luke 5:1-11). But until they become Christians or though they refuse the grace of God in Christ, we are still to act as Christians and to show good conduct to all.

A. *We repay not evil for evil, but we bless.* "See to it that no one pays back wrong

for wrong, but always aim at doing the best you can for each other and for all men" (1 Thess. 5:15 NEB). The *lex talionis* ("eye for eye, tooth for tooth") is to give way to love that we might "be all goodness, just as your heavenly Father is all good" (Matt. 5:38-48 NEB). We can find no greater example of such love than Christ. "He was abused but did not retort with abuse, when He suffered He uttered no threats" (1 Peter 2:23 NEB). We are not merely to return blessings to those who bless us, but we are to bless those who curse us (Luke 6:28). Even though we deserved it, God did not pay us evil for evil but called us to inherit a blessing. By grace He pardoned our evil deeds. He paid Himself evil for our evil, that we might receive His blessing. Therefore we also should "never pay back evil for evil" (Rom. 12:17 NEB). Peter quotes Psalm 34:12-17 (vv. 10-12 of the Epistle) to remind us that the Lord honors the blessers and not the cursers.

B. *We are not to be troubled by the terror of men but to trust in God.* For doing what is right men may make us suffer; we may lose position or prestige. When we obey God rather than men, we may discover that men who fear not God will get ahead of us in school or work or the community. Our lives may be endangered. At such a time we "fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28 NEB). "Believe me, He is the one to fear" (Luke 12:5 NEB). Once Peter was afraid, but he who "tasted that the Lord is good" (1 Peter 2:3 NEB), who knew God took care and showed mercy (1 Peter 2:10), now exhorts us not to be afraid of men but to have reverence for God. "Man proposes, but God disposes" (cf. Prov. 16:9). In our good conduct we know that we can bless and not repay evil for evil, for we are assured that God works all things together for our good. (Romans 8)

To our fellow Christians we show the love

of God shown to us. We forgive as Christ has forgiven us. We have a united mind of love and pity. And to the man of the world we exhibit the same love of Christ, forgiving because Christ forgave them and us. They may not be one with us in love and in pity, but we are one with Christ and exhibit His love to the world. The opportunity may arise when we can say, "Know you what I have done to you?" and explain the reason of the hope that is within us.

GEORGE W. BORNEMANN

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THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ROMANS 6:3-11

Connection

With this Sunday begins a cycle of texts dealing with man's duty in response to God's love. This particular text stresses the newness of life as a result of being baptized into Christ. The Introit speaks of the Lord as the Strength of His people, making the new life possible. The Collect acknowledges God as the Source of spiritual strength and asks for an increase of love and true religion. The Gospel (Matt. 5:20-26) speaks of the righteousness which must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.

Introduction

It is relatively easy to see the significance of Baptism for infants. Do we adults recognize its meaning and value for us for daily living? It offers rich comfort; it also confronts us with an inspiring challenge. The thrust of the text is found in v. 11 (Phillips): "Look upon yourselves as dead to the appeal and power of sin but alive and sensitive to the call of God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Dead to Sin but Alive to God

I. The Intimate Relationship with Christ into Which We Have Entered Through Baptism

A. The essence of it: "Baptized into Christ . . . into His death . . . buried with Him . . . we shall also be [participants] in His resurrection" (vv. 3, 4, 6). In no human relationship is there such a close intimacy.

B. The intimacy illustrated (v. 5): "planted together," actually "grown together," not only alongside each other. "United with Him" (RSV); "Incorporated with Him" (NEB); "Grafted in" (Rom. 11:17). Have "put on Christ" like a garment (Gal. 3:26, 27). Mystical union. Cf. Christ's prayer, John 17:21, 23.

Thus through Baptism we enter into a most blessed and intimate communion with Christ; we become participants in and share the fruits of His death and resurrection.

II. *The Results of This Relationship for Our Lives*

A. The death of the Old Adam. Luther's description of the Old Adam: angry, hateful, envious, unchaste, stingy, lazy, haughty, unbelieving, infected with all vices, without anything good.

He must be put to death (v. 6). He is to be crucified (Gal. 5:24). This is painful. He resists. It requires a struggle. Yet the Christian has no choice.

It means a "dying to sin." That is what Christ did (v. 10). This must become true of us (v. 11). As a result, sin must lose its attraction for us, its charm. Satan should have to "write us off" as a lost cause, as hopeless prospects for his kingdom.

B. Sin has lost its dominion over us (v. 9). Before conversion man is the slave of sin. He may recognize the disaster it is bringing to him and yet be unable to rescue himself. A hopeless situation. Baptism tells us that we have been rescued from that dominion.

Sin has lost its authority. In the beginning it had no authority over man, but when man yielded to its demands, it usurped authority.

Baptism reminds us that in Christ's death we have been freed from the authority of sin (v. 7). Christ has nailed the legal summons that was against us to His own cross (Col. 2:14). We are pardoned — free. Such a Gospel does not inspire an irresponsible, reckless life, but on the contrary a life of dedication to Him who so graciously freed us.

C. The Birth of the New Man.

Just as in Baptism we participate in Christ's death, so also by Baptism we become partakers of His resurrection so that we walk in newness of life.

This means that we are sensitive to the voice of God in Christ Jesus (v. 11), in contrast to such as are spiritually asleep or dead, preoccupied with the distractions of this world. Just as the daughter of Jairus, the young man at Nain, and Lazarus responded to the life-giving power of Christ's Word, so other souls that were dead in sins respond to His Word in Baptism and become sensitive to His call.

The birth of the "new man" means a response of obedience, prompt, willing, and enthusiastic. Instruments of righteousness to God. (V. 13)

It means to experience a genuine joy in His service.

It means that the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) will begin to appear.

Conclusion

The significance of our baptism should prompt a spiritual inventory. Man's life of sanctification may be compared with a spectrum, ranging from the faintest traces of spiritual life through increasing degrees of holiness. Where do we find ourselves on this spectrum, and in which direction are we going? An honest examination of ourselves will prompt us to look back to our baptism for the comfort of forgiveness and for the strength and incentive for greater sanctification.

Milwaukee, Wis. HERBERT BERNER

THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ROMANS 6:19-23

Connection

The central thought of the propers for this Sunday is the contrast between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world. The Introit shows the joy of those who serve God. The Collect asks that God our King would fend off all things that would be hurtful to us. The Gradual points to the instructions the subjects receive from their King. The Gospel for the day (Mark 8:1-9) points to the glorious manner in which the King provides for His subjects.

Introduction

"I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul." A popular high school poem. In reality rank heresy. No man is free. V. 16 NEB: "You are the slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin or of obedience." So, not a question *whether*, but by *whom* you will be employed.

By Whom Will You Be Employed?

A wise choice will be made, by the grace of God, when you consider the nature of

I. The Masters

A. Will it be sin (v. 19)? Described first as "impurity," uncleanness. Cf. the condition of the deserted house; the filth of the body which is not kept clean; the stench of decaying food.

Also described as "iniquity," lawlessness; throwing off all restraint; challenging God's authority; rebellion against His rulership; striving to overthrow His kingdom.

B. Or will it be righteousness (v. 19)? Imputed. Offering cleansing, healing, peace. So intimately bound up with Christ that the Scriptures say: He is the Lord our Righteousness. By whom will you be employed? One it will surely be.

II. The Employment

A. The service to sin is slavery (v. 20). Total loss of freedom. The slave no longer has a will of his own. He follows orders of his master, even to his own destruction. So completely under the will of his master is he that he promotes the cause of wickedness. In blindness he thinks this is the thing to do. In judgment God finally turns such people over to their master. (Ch. 1:24, 28-31)

B. The service to righteousness is also slavery. Jolting language to help the readers understand (v. 19a). But a totally different type of slavery. Voluntary. Bringing complete joy and happiness. Complete surrender to Christ. In contrast to "promoting the cause of wickedness" this employment is "for the cause of sanctification."

By whom will you be employed?

III. The Fruits of Our Service

A. From service to sin the fruit is shame (v. 21). Cf. the embarrassment when caught in a lie. Cf. Adam and Eve when God confronted them. In Hosea God says: "I will change their glory into shame."—The embarrassment of the final Judgment. Daniel 12:2: "everlasting shame and contempt."

B. From service to righteousness the fruit is glory. "In the cross of Christ I glory." Such a person does not look to his own righteousnesses, which are as "filthy rags" and would add to his shame, but to the robe of Christ's righteousness, his "beauty" and his "glorious dress."

By whom will you be employed?

IV. The Freedoms Granted

A. Service to sin grants a certain kind of "freedom," viz. from righteousness (v. 20). Such a person has nothing in common with true righteousness. Cf. the Gergesenes (Matt. 9:29): "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus?"—This means also freedom from (bereavement of) the fruits of the Spirit

(Gal. 5:22, 23). "Freedom"? Yes, no one is forced to be a Christian. But what a freedom!

B. Service to righteousness means freedom from sin and its consequences (v. 22). Freedom from sin's guilt, condemnation, dominion (as described in Gal. 5:19-21); freedom from Satan's accusations, bondage of eternal death and hell. By whom will you be employed?

V. *The End to Which Such Service Leads*

A. The service to sin ends in death (v. 20). Sin pays a wage, viz. death (v. 23). It does not let its servants go unrewarded.

B. The service to righteousness ends in eternal life (vv. 22, 23). Sin pays, but God gives freely through Christ. A reward of grace; the privilege of being among the sons of God, heirs of heaven, beholding Him face to face. By whom will you be employed?

HERBERT BERNER

THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ROMANS 8:12-17

Connection

The general subject for this particular cycle of the church year is still: "The service of God." Last Sunday the emphasis was on our relationship to Him as that of slaves and Master. Today's emphasis is on our relationship to Him as sons and Father. We are the sons of God by the power of the Spirit in a marvelous demonstration of grace and mercy. As we think of this, we break forth in the praise of the Introit: "We have thought of Thy loving-kindness, O God . . . Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised." In the Collect we ask for the Spirit, who enables us to do those things that are right and in accordance with the Father's will. The Gospel (Matt. 7:15-23) puts us on our guard against the false spirits who would lead us away from this God-pleasing service.

Introduction

Every year literally thousands of children are adopted. Usually an occasion of joy to the parents and to the children. Usually it fills a deep-felt need on the part of both. If this is an occasion of joy, even to non-Christian people, then consider the joys and the blessings of divine adoption.

Adopted into God's Family

This action of God gives us

I. *The Conviction of Status as the Sons of God* (vv. 14-17)

A. A status of privilege (v. 14): "sons of God." Contrast with what we were by nature. No claim on Him or on His name. But now we have "power," i.e., "authority" to make this claim. (John 1:12)

To appreciate this status, consider the implications in the terms "sons" and "children" (vv. 14, 16). "Sons" points to our legitimacy and legal rights as a result of adoption. "Children" points to our origin: "Born of God," new birth. Both show we are not "stepchildren," with a second-rate place, but really and truly God's children. As such we are the objects of His love. "Behold, what manner of love!" (1 John 3:1)

B. We must have deep convictions about this status. May seem too good to be true. It is not understood by the world, which asks: "What do you have which we do not have?" It points to our tribulations and bids us recall 1 John 3:2: "It doth not yet appear . . . yet we know . . ." We also have the testimony of the Spirit (v. 16): "The Spirit endorses our inward conviction . . ." (Phillips)

II. *The Motivation to Live Above the Level of the Flesh and to Mortify Its Sinful Desires* (vv. 12, 13)

A. A distinction may be made between "body" and "flesh." The desires of the "body" may be natural, legitimate, e.g., hunger,

thirst, etc. Yet the satisfaction of these desires dare not become the end and aim of life. This would be carnal-mindedness. As God's sons we must rise to higher interests and more important concerns—the things of the Spirit. Here we must honestly examine our own motives in our everyday calling. It is possible to go to church for carnal reasons. Reasons for worship given in a survey conducted by an author of a book on worship: "It does me good to see my friends"; "I enjoy hearing this minister preach"; "The organ and the choir music are always soothing." This could also be true of pagan worship.

Because of sin, natural desires do not remain neutral or innocent but deteriorate into sinful lusts of "the flesh." Hunger ends in gluttony; thirst in drunkenness; the desire for creature comforts in extravagance. The flesh argues: "But I owe it to myself." Scripture says: "No" (v. 12). We must mortify the sinful flesh; "sever the nerve" (Phillips) of its cravings.

B. Good reason for doing so (v. 13). To live after the flesh means death. A person may devote so much attention to satisfying the demands of the body that he loses the Spirit, and becomes a slave to the flesh. By mortifying the deeds of the body we shall live.

III. *The Incentive to Pray Courageously* (v. 15)

A. Man's natural fearfulness because of (1) his own sense of guilt; (2) the prospect of death, who "all their lifetime were subject to bondage," (Heb. 2:15); (3) coming into judgment (Heb. 10:26, 27); (4) the prospect of meeting God Himself. (Heb. 10:31 and 12:29)

B. In sharp contrast the child of God has received the Spirit, who imparts confidence, "Abba, Father," intimacy, "as dear children ask their dear father." Also courage or boldness. In Christ we have the power, authority,

right to pray. This realization imparts courage and boldness. This is praying "in the name of Jesus"; effectual.

IV. *The Certainty of a Glorious Inheritance*

A. The inheritance itself. (1) Its certainty (vv. 16, 17). (2) Its value. We are the heirs of God, to whom the earth and its fullness belongs (Ps. 24:1); all the beasts on a thousand hills (Ps. 50:10); all silver and gold (Hag. 2:8). (3) Its "joy in heaven" (Luke 15:7), "for another heir is born." (4) Its nature: We are coheirs with Christ. (V. 17; Heb. 1:2)

B. Concomitant experiences: (1) Sufferings (v. 17). We must be willing to take up the cross after Him (Matt. 16:24). (2) Glorification together with Him (v. 17). He will "change our vile body" (Phil. 3:21). As we compare the sufferings with the glory, we will not hesitate. (Ch. 8:18)

Conclusion

Think it over; then thank God every day of your lives that you have been adopted into God's family. Live as His children.

HERBERT BERNER

THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

1 COR. 10:6-13

Connection

The central thought for the day underscores the responsibility of the Christian in his position of covenant grace and mercy. It is a stewardship which we have received, together with its responsibilities as well as its privileges. The Introit indicates the conflict in which the conscientious Christian will find himself. The Collect petitions for the kind of desires that will please God. The Gradual points to the need for a proper fear of God and delight in His commandments. The Gospel (Luke 16:1-9) warns against the loss of our position of stewardship through progressive self-delusion.

Introduction

The text for today can be properly understood only against the background. Corinth had been a very unpromising place for a Christian congregation. Yet by God's grace the church was planted there. When Paul continued his labors in other fields, disquieting news came about gross irregularities among the Corinthian Christians, including sins of immorality. Even more disturbing was the failure of the congregation to exercise discipline. They were not much concerned. To arouse them, Paul wrote this text. Because Christians of all times are exposed to this danger, the admonition is of utmost importance for us, too.

Beware of Overconfidence

I. *The Sins Lying at the Door*

A. The Corinthians are to see them illustrated in the ancient history of God's people. (Vv. 6-10)

Idolatry: Aaron and the golden calf, and the luxury-loving mind of the people. (V. 7)

Fornication: Israel and the harlots of Moab; God's judgment killed 23,000 in one day. (V. 8)

Tempting God: Sarcastically they complained about being led out of Egypt to die in the wilderness; discontent with the manna. God sent poisonous serpents. (Vv. 9, 10)

B. In the 20th century

Idolatry: our love of ease, luxury, entertainment — 20th-century gods.

Fornication: This is routine news of the public press: lack of respect for the sanctity of the marriage vow; disregard of purity among the youth.

Tempting God: Many see how far they can go to the left; with how much they can "get by"; how far they can press their luck; they push the patience of God. Much grumbling and complaint about our lot in life.

In all of this we need God's reminder to

Cain: "Sin lieth at the door, a crouching beast, striving to get at thee." (Leupold)

II. *Why Scripture Reports These Sins*

A. They are to be a lesson for us (v. 11). Pity the man who fails to learn the lessons of the past.

B. They are to put us on our guard against overconfidence (v. 12). This state of mind is characterized by complacency, self-sufficiency, conceit, carnal security; overestimating one's own strength and underestimating Satan's strength; carelessness and indifference; an inclination to abuse God's grace, to imitate the world, and then to boast of free forgiveness.

But should we not be confident, as Paul was? Yes, if our confidence is in God; no, if it is in ourselves. (V. 12)

III. *The Antidote Against Sin*

Lest the Corinthians should expect leniency because they thought their situation was unique, or be driven to despair of the possibility of a better life, Paul reminds them (v. 13) that they should look to God, His power and His faithfulness.

A. The *preventive*: He will not permit a temptation beyond their strength. He knows how much each person can stand. Like the pillar of cloud and of fire, God stands between us and Satan.

B. The *reinforcement*: God either trims the temptation to bring it within the strength of the Christian's endurance, or He increases the Christian's strength to cope with the temptation, and thus makes a way of escape. But in any case the Christian can do so only as Christ who is our Strength lives in him. Without Him we cannot withstand any temptation.

C. The *cure*: We might think, if the foregoing be true, a Christian would never fall. But he does. Scripture is full of examples: Abraham, Jacob, David, Peter, and others. Church history shows the same record. No

need for despair: Christ is our Forgiveness. This fills us with a new song, even among tears of repentance. (Ps. 130:3, 7, 8)

Conclusion

We sing hymn 226, v. 3.

HERBERT BERNER

THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

1 COR. 12:1-11

Connection

We are still dealing with the Christian's obligation and duty in response to God's mercy and goodness. This applies particularly to those who have received special gifts. The Introit reminds us of our dependence on the Lord for strength in the battle that would cripple us in our stewardship. The Collect asks for the grace necessary to respond properly to God's mercy. The Gradual reminds us of our close relationship to God. The Gospel (Luke 19:41-48) underscores God's sorrow when His people neglect the opportunities afforded them by His grace.

Introduction

Among the seven churches of Asia Minor some were models of vigorous Christian life and received God's commendation; others were woefully weak and drew God's severe censure. The congregation at Sardis, in spite of an illustrious name, was spiritually dead—it lacked the Spirit. This is the great danger confronting Christian individuals and congregations. There may be much busyness but little interest in the Lord's business. We can be effective servants of God only as His Spirit lives in us.

The Spirit Bestows His Gifts

I. *The Necessity of the Spirit*

There are precious few, if any, genuine atheists. Yet among people who confess faith in God, even the triune God, there is woeful

lack of understanding of the role and of the gifts of the Spirit.

A. Though we speak of God the Father as the Creator, the Spirit also played a prominent role in the creation and preservation of the world. (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 33:6)

B. The Spirit was directly involved in the incarnation of Christ. "Conceived by the Holy Ghost."

C. The Spirit gave us the Bible (2 Peter 1:21) and continues to make it alive. (Heb. 4:12)

D. The Spirit is essential to the birth and continued existence of the Holy Christian Church. (Acts 1:8; 2:1-42)

E. The Spirit is essential to the begetting and the preservation of faith in every individual Christian (text, v. 3). He alone can convince us of our sonship and teach us how to pray acceptably. (Rom. 8:26; Gal. 4:6)

II. *The Generosity of the Spirit*

A. There is a great variety of gifts (vv. 4-6). The variety is seen in the spiritual possessions of the church, the services rendered, and the way in which the members of the church are energized by these gifts.

B. There is great abundance of gifts (vv. 8-10). Some of these were exceptional; others more general. Here review the gifts as enumerated. The problem of the church is not a dearth of talents but rather the failure to make full use of the talents available.

C. There is an equitable distribution of gifts (vv. 7, 11). Do not insult the Spirit by saying: "I have no gifts." Of course, the distribution is not equal, but it is equitable. The point is, God has equipped His church with all the talents necessary for it to carry on its work and to do all that God asks it to do.

III. *The Inspiration of the Spirit*

Why has the Spirit been so generous? Not just for our own personal enjoyment of

His grace, but "for the common good" (v. 7). Gifts have been bestowed so that we might be equipped to serve. Two common mistakes among Christians: (1) Some want to be only chiefs and expect to be served, letting others do the work. But Christ says: "If any would be great among you, let him be your servant." (2) Others want no obligations in the church. They do not want to be disturbed in their complacency. They want to enjoy "being left alone." They do not understand the purpose of the Spirit in bestowing the gifts: "for the common good." Either we use the gifts of the Spirit or we lose them.

Conclusion

May we recognize the grace of God in Christ and be filled with the Spirit so that we will conscientiously use His gifts "for the common good."

HERBERT BERNER

THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

1 COR. 15:1-11

Connection

The Eleventh and Twelfth Sundays After Trinity center around the theme of God's grace, which constrains and enables the child of God to fulfill his duty. Thus the Introit points to the God of Israel, who gives strength and power to His people. The Collect underscores God's grace. We confess that God is wont to give more than we desire or deserve, and yet we pray for His mercy, forgiveness, and those good things which we are not worthy to ask for but receive through Christ's merits. The Gradual is a confession of trust in God, who mercifully helps. The Gospel (Luke 18:9-14) shows the sharp contrast between the Pharisee who recognized no need for grace and the publican who realized that grace and mercy were his only hope.

Introduction

Are you concerned that your life be worthwhile? You have only one life to live on earth, and it is comparatively short. To make it truly worthwhile it must be surrendered unconditionally to God. Cf. Noah (Gen. 6:22); Abraham (Gen. 22); Isaiah (Is. 6:8); and especially Paul, who wrote our text. Remember what he had been and what he became. It all happened when he let God's grace take over in his life.

Letting God's Grace Take Over

I. *What We Are Without God's Grace*

A. By nature man is inclined to boast. Paul did this before his conversion. In Phil. 3:4-6 he shows the grounds of his former boasting.

The natural man, who lets the Old Adam have his say, does the same today. He may take pride in his ancestry, what he has made of himself, the success which has come through his diligence.

B. The better we understand grace, the more clearly will we see our own unworthiness. Paul called himself "one born out of due time" (vv. 8, 9). Paul realized he was "chief of sinners," "less than the least of the saints," and that the things of which he had formerly boasted were but "rubbish" (Phil. 3:7, 8). This is the only conclusion to which we can come about ourselves.

II. *What We Can Become Through God's Grace*

The grace of God —

A. Converts us. Paul writes (v. 10): "By the grace of God I am what I am," and what was that? A Christian. This was a miraculous contrast to what he had been. The same was true of the Corinthian Christians to whom he wrote this. Consider what the moral conditions were in Corinth. So forbidding that God had to encourage Paul to preach (Acts 18:9). Yet many were converted. The same miracle has taken place in

every convert. See what he was by nature, and then see what he becomes by grace.

B. Preserves us (v. 1: "the Gospel . . . wherein ye stand"). When you consider all the temptations and hazards to the faith, you recognize the miracle of God's grace in everyone who remains faithful.

C. Saves us (v. 2). Remember from what we are saved: sin, power of Satan, eternal damnation; and then behold the miracle of God's grace.

D. Sanctifies us, in the narrow sense (v. 10: "not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all"). Paul mentions some of these things in 2 Cor. 11:23 ff. There is no limit to what a man can become when the grace of God takes over in his life. Paul said: "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." (Phil. 4:13)

III. *What We Have in the Gospel, Which Offers God's Grace*

A. The Gospel content (vv. 1, 3-8). Christ died. Christ was buried, which underscores

the reality of His death. Christ arose again. The catalog of witnesses: He was seen alive of Cephas, the Twelve, the 500 brethren, of James, and also of Paul. The certainty of His resurrection and of the fact that He lives today.

B. The significance of the Gospel. Not a mere academic fact, but Christ died "for our sins" (v. 3). God made Him to be sin for us, so that we might have the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). This is what makes it "good news." Christ rose again for our justification (Rom. 4:25). We have the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:7). All of this was "according to the Scriptures," (vv. 1, 3, 4). There can be no doubt about it!

Conclusion

See what we have in the Gospel of grace! Eternal life (John 5:39). Therefore, use it, search it; give God's Spirit a chance, and let God's grace take over.

HERBERT BERNER

A COMBINED BIBLE-READING AND PULPIT PROGRAM

EDITORIAL NOTE: During the church year 1964-65 the homiletical section of our journal will present texts for sermons that have been chosen on the basis of and in conjunction with a systematic reading of Scripture by the members of the congregation. By reading the suggested chapters in the Bible prior to the Sunday under which they are listed, the hearer will bring to church a helpful background and preparation for the sermon, based on a text from the assigned reading.

The plan was prepared by the Rev. George W. Bornemann, pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church, Elmhurst, Ill.

The following columns summarize the Biblical material to be read before each Sunday and list a text for the sermon that also serves as a focus for the weekly readings.

A detailed schedule of daily readings for the entire year which gives the dates on which the specified chapter of the Bible is to be read may be ordered from Concordia Publishing House for general distribution to all members of the congregation.

Order No. 13-1183. Prices: single copy, 15 cents; dozen, 12¾ cents each; 100, 12 cents each

1 ADVENT

Readings: Gen. 1-4; 6. Ps. 1; 8; 19; 103; 143; 144

Text: Gen. 1:26-2:2

2 ADVENT

Readings: Gen. 7-9; 11:1-9; 12-15. Ps. 42; 91; 139

Text: Gen. 26:11-15

3 ADVENT

Readings: Gen. 17; 18-22. Ps. 4; 98

Text: Gen. 17:1-14

4 ADVENT

Readings: Gen. 24-28. Ps. 5; 6; 145; 146

Text: Gen. 26:1-5

CHRISTMAS

Text: Gen. 35:19

ST. JOHN, APOSTLE

Readings: Gen. 29—33. Ps. 32; 33; 45; 46;
89; 92; 93

Text: Gen. 33:9-12

SUNDAY AFTER NEW YEAR

Readings: Gen. 37—46

Text: Gen. 44:13-44

EPIPHANY

Text: Gen. 45:4

1 SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Readings: Gen. 47—50. Ex. 1—4; 6:1-13;
7:1-13; 11; 12; 13:17-22; 14

Text: Ex. 19:1-8

2 SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Readings: Ex. 19; 20; 32—34; 39:32-43;
40. Lev. 10; 16. Num. 11; 12; 14

Text: Num. 11:4-20

3 SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Readings: Num. 16; 20; 21. Deut. 11; 32;
34. Ps. 14—16; 90; 100; 103

Text: Deut. 7:6-11

4 SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Readings: Joshua 1—3; 6—8; 24. Judges
1; 2. Ps. 2; 102

Text: Joshua 23:6-16

TRANSFIGURATION

Readings: Judges 4—7; 11; 13—16. Ps.
48; 49

Text: Judges 21:25

SEPTUAGESIMA

Readings: Ruth 1—4. 1 Sam. 1—4; 8 to
10; 13

Text: 1 Sam. 3:10-18

SEXAGESIMA

Readings: 1 Sam. 14—20; 24; 26; 28; 31

Text: 1 Sam. 26:21

QUINQUAGESIMA

Readings: 2 Sam. 1—7; 9; 11; 12

Text: 2 Sam. 5:1-10

INVOCAVIT, 1 LENT

Readings: 2 Sam. 15—18; 22. 1 Kings 2; 3;
10; 11

Text: 2 Sam. 8:6

REMINISCERE, 2 LENT

Readings: Ps. 126—131. Prov. 1—4. Eccl.
1; 3; 12. Song of Sol. 2; 8

Text: 1 Kings 11:9-14

OCULI, 3 LENT

Readings: 1 Kings 12—17. Ps. 84—86

Text: 1 Kings 12:16, 17

LAETARE, 4 LENT

Readings: 1 Kings 18—22. 2 Kings 1; 2.
Ps. 72

Text: 1 Kings 17:4

JUDICA, PASSION SUNDAY, 5 LENT

Readings: 2 Kings 4—7; 9; 11; 13; 17—19

Text: 2 Kings 4:9

PALMARUM, 6 LENT

Readings: 2 Kings 22—25. Amos 1—9. Ps.
22; 24

Text: Amos 5:16-24

EASTER

Readings: John 13—21. Jonah 1—4

Text: Jonah 1:17; Matt. 12:39, 40

QUASIMODOGENITI, 1 EASTER

Readings: Job 1—5; 14; 19; 28; 39. Ps.
118; 139

Text: Job 42:1-6

MISERICORDIAS DOMINI, 2 EASTER

Readings: Hosea 1—14. Micah 4; 6; 7. Is. 1

Text: Hosea 11:8, 9

JUBILATE, 3 EASTER

Readings: Is. 2; 6; 7; 10; 11; 35; 40; 42; 43

Text: Is. 40:25-31

CANTATE, 4 EASTER

Readings: Is. 49; 50; 52—56; 60—65. Ps. 81—83

Text: Is. 54:1-8

ROGATE, 5 EASTER

Readings: Nah. 1—3. Zeph. 1—3. Ps. 65; 66; 121—125; 119:1-32

Text: Zeph. 3:8,9

ASCENSION DAY

Text: Ps. 110

EXAUDI, SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION

Readings: Hab. 1—3. Ps. 119:32-176; 110 to 112

Text: Hab. 2:1-4

PENTECOST

Readings: Jer. 1; 3; 5; 9; 12; 13; 31—33; 38

Text: Jer. 31:31-34

TRINITY SUNDAY

Readings: Dan. 1—7

Text: Dan. 6:26,27

1 TRINITY

Readings: Lam. 1—5. Ezek. 1; 2. Ps. 11 to 13; 33; 34; 40; 41

Text: Lam. 3:41

2 TRINITY

Readings: Ezek. 3; 5; 23; 34; 37; 43. Ps. 43; 44

Text: Ezek. 36:22-27

3 TRINITY

Readings: Joel 1—3. Obadiah. Ps. 132 to 135; 148—150

Text: Joel 2:12,13; or Obad. 4

4 TRINITY

Readings: Hag. 1; 2. Zech. 1—14

Text: Zech. 8:8

5 TRINITY

Readings: Ezra 1; 3. Mal. 3; 4. Ps. 2; 104 to 108

Text: Mal. 1:5

6 TRINITY

Readings: Ezra 4—6. Neh. 1—7:4; 8; 9

Text: Neh. 9:33

7 TRINITY

Readings: Neh. 13. Esther 1—10. Ps. 47; 51

Text: Esther 4:14

8 TRINITY

Readings: Matt. 3; 11:1-19; 14:1-14. Mark 1:1-45. Luke 1; 3:1-22

Text: Luke 1:57-80

9 TRINITY

Readings: Matt. 4—7; 9. Luke 4; 5

Text: Matt. 5:20

10 TRINITY

Readings: Matt. 10; 11. Luke 6—10

Text: Luke 6:13

11 TRINITY

Readings: Luke 11—17

Text: Luke 13:33

12 TRINITY

Readings: Matt. 21:1-29; 24; 25. Luke 18 to 21

Text: John 6:15

13 TRINITY

Readings: Matt. 26:30-75; 27. Luke 22; 23

Text: Luke 23:45

14 TRINITY

Readings: Matt. 28. Mark 16. Luke 24. 1 Cor. 15. Ps. 54—59

Text: 1 Cor. 15:20-28

15 TRINITY

Readings: Acts 1—5. 1 Cor. 12; 13

Text: 1 Cor. 12:14-26

16 TRINITY

Readings: Acts 6—11. 1 Cor. 14

Text: Acts 6:1-7

17 TRINITY

Readings: Acts 13—21

Text: Acts 16:9

18 TRINITY

Readings: Acts 22—28. 2 Tim. 1; 2. Ps. 20;
21

Text: Acts 28:30, 31

19 TRINITY

Readings: Gal. 1; 2. 2 Tim. 3; 4. 1 Peter
1—5. 2 Peter 1—3

Text: 1 Peter 2:5-8

20 TRINITY (REFORMATION)

Readings: Rom. 3—8; 10—15

Text: Rom. 1:16, 17

21 TRINITY

Readings: 1 Cor. 1—11

Text: 1 Cor. 6:16

22 TRINITY

Readings: 1 Thess. 1—5. 2 Thess. 1—3.
Eph. 6. Phil. 4. Col. 4. Philemon

Text: 1 Thess. 5:9

23 TRINITY

Readings: Rev. 1—6; 19—22

Text: Rev. 21:7