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Book Review

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# HOMILETICS

*The homiletical helps in this issue are a continuation of a series of sermon studies based on the Saxon Pericopic System texts (Series A) originally compiled in 1842. The contributors of this month's sermonic materials are clergymen of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod serving on two of the faculties of schools within the Synod. The sermon studies for Trinity XV and XVI were prepared by a committee of faculty members of St. John's Lutheran College in Winfield, Kans. A committee of faculty members of Concordia College in Edmonton, Alberta, are the joint authors of the studies on the texts for Trinity XVII and XVIII.*

THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY  
AFTER TRINITY

MATTHEW 11:25-30

"At that time." At *what* time? It was sometime during His Galilean ministry. In Matthew 11 these words are used in connection with Jesus' censure of the Pharisees. In Luke 10 they are used on the occasion when the seventy returned with joy. (Compare Matt. 11:20-24 with Luke 10:13-15 and Matt. 11:25-30 with Luke 10:21-22.) Jesus found need and occasion to say the same things twice and oftener. He speaks of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. These cities were found on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. They lay in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, the land which had seen a glorious light (Matt. 4:15). These people had sat in darkness and death. Then, through Jesus, they saw a great light when He said: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). In these cities He had done most of His miracles. But what was their reaction? "They did not repent." And so He pronounces His fearful woes upon them. Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom would have repented heartily long ago had they heard and seen what Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Ca-

pernaum had heard and seen. Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom are representative of heathenism. Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum are representative of impenitence. For the latter it would be less tolerable on the great day of judgment. The woes still hold true today for those who have witnessed His mighty works and have seen the great light but who refuse to repent.

All this reveals an appalling degree of unbelief, rejection, and hardheartedness. In fact, we don't even know what the attitude of the disciples was on this occasion. In spite of all of this, Jesus joyfully extends an invitation. In spite of the darkness around us, in His name we extend that same invitation:

Come Unto Me

## I. *The One Who Said This*

A. A joyful person. "I thank Thee." The verb denotes more than mere thankfulness. It involves hearty adoration, praise, and thanksgiving. The parallel in Luke (10:21) states that He rejoiced in the Holy Spirit. Perverse and impenitent, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum refused to acknowledge what He meant for them. But despite reasons for grief, Jesus is joyful, thankful, full of praise and adoration toward His Father. This is important for us.

B. Very God of Very God. Five times in this text He speaks of His Father. He clearly gives Him His proper honor as Lord, Maker, and Sustainer of heaven and earth, the universe. He has a clear vision of His Father's εὐδοκία, His good and gracious pleasure, will, choice. (Note the use of the same word in Luke 2:14; Eph. 1:5-9; Phil. 2:13; 2 Thess. 1:11; Luke 12:32; 2 Peter 1:7.) All things have been given to Him by the Father (cf. Eph. 1:10-22). Finally, He and the Father know each other intimately. The verb ἐπιγινώσκω denotes intimate acquaint-

ance. (Note: From Luke 10:21-22 it is clear that the Holy Spirit is not to be eliminated from this intimate acquaintance.)

C. But also genuinely a man. The text calls Him Jesus. It says of Him that "all things were given to Him." This reminds us of Col. 2:9, where it is unmistakably clear that He *is* a man. He further describes Himself as "meek and lowly in heart."

## II. *The People to Whom He Was Speaking*

A. To all men for comfort. Christians too are tempted to self-justifying laboring. But they have that God-given honesty which is part of repentance. "All who labor and are heavy laden"—all who attempt the hard work of trying to make themselves right and to bear their load of sin. If they are honest, they say: "What I don't wish to do, that I do. And what I hate, that I do" (Rom. 7:15). They are troubled by innate arrogance. They are troubled because they question the voice within that tells them they are wise and prudent in their own right. They must admit that popularity, the crowd, money, and success mean so much; but if they are honest, by God's goodness they see in themselves the babes of whom Jesus here speaks, totally dependent for everything on Him who has received everything so that He might benefit them. And to them Christ graciously says: "Come unto Me. I will give you rest."

B. But He also warns all. He says that the Father hides all these things from the wise and prudent. (See 1 Cor. 1:18-29.) The wise and prudent are those who are on the way to destruction because the Word of God that speaks about the cross of Christ is foolishness to them. "Their end is destruction" (Phil. 3:19). The "wise and prudent" are found in the context of Matt. 11:25-30. They are those who rejected the austere preaching of John as devil's work; those who rejected the friendly manner of Jesus with sinners as coming from a drunkard, a fool; those in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum who

were left cold by the preaching and mighty works of the God-man.

The words concerning the "wise and prudent" in v. 25 are written for our warning. The wise and prudent are those who reject Him in whom all the promises of God are Yea and Amen. From their deluded wisdom and prudence the Father hides "all these things," and that means everything that the Father offers in the God-man. For them "Come unto Me" means nothing, and they can find no rest.

## III. *What He Meant by This Invitation*

A. "Come unto Me" does not mean that the recipient must first do something. He need do no more than Lazarus did or could do when the God-man said: "Lazarus, come forth," no more than the lame man did whom Christ commanded to get up and walk. What Christ demands, He Himself bestows. And when He says, "I will give you," He does not mean at some future date but now.

The "rest" of which Jesus twice speaks is life in forgiveness. (Cf. Rom. 3:24; Phil. 3:9.) He who has received all from the Father to do His work as Savior gives all to the fallen sinner, a mere babe, a restless sinner. The man who believes this can say with Paul: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31-35)

This rest reaches into timelessness. "There remains a sabbath rest for the people of God" (Heb. 4:9). That chapter's final verse reads: "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Luther: "Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation."

B. He who comes and finds rest learns something. He learns that Christ is meek and lowly in heart. He came not to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.

He who comes to this Christ and learns to know Him finds that he is also enabled

by Christ to do something: he will be enabled to take up the yoke and the burden of Christ. "Take My yoke upon you . . . for My yoke is easy and My burden light." You who by the grace of God accept His invitation are enabled to live the life that He wills, though imperfectly. The yoke and the burden include His will for you: sanctification, a hearty following after, bearing the cross that is tailor-made for you. You are brought to a realization of weakness, as was Paul, so that God's strength may be made perfect in you. The yoke and burden surely include affliction (2 Cor. 4:16-18). This yoke and burden are called *χερστός* and *ἐλαφρόν*. The first means "good, useful, easy," the second simply "light."

The wise and prudent voice within us says "Not so!" But the child of God—the babe—who listens and learns of Him agrees that Jesus' yoke is easy and His burden light. And for the life of Christian faith and service whereby he is enabled to serve God, the child of God joins the apostle Paul in praising Him from whom the strength to live this life comes: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Gal. 2:20)

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THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY  
AFTER TRINITY

JOHN 9:1-5

*Introduction*

The world is full of suffering caused by the ravages of war, disease, the inhumanity of man, and the destructive forces of nature. The widows and orphans in Viet Nam, cancer and leukemia patients—all of us—know anguish. The list is endless: concentration camps, labor camps, mudslinging in political campaigns, backbiting, gossip, tornadoes, earthquakes, floods, fires, death.

The Christian, like the worldling, often

misunderstands these things: sees people and their afflictions in the wrong light just as the disciples of Jesus did in this text. Jesus uses this affliction of a man born blind to point out the real purpose of His mission, of the church's mission, and of our mission as individual Christians. He makes it quite clear that He and we are the "sent" ones, that our mission is to

Work the Works of God

I. *God Works His Work Among Men*

A. Natural man is unaware of his condition. So long as his health is good and "everything's going my way," he is quite content and happy with himself. "All's well with the world" while youth and luck hold out. Error and sin both have this peculiar property that the deeper they are, the less their victims suspect their existence.

B. Natural man doesn't know how to interpret his affliction. Being spiritually blind, he sees himself, God, other people, material blessings, and also his afflictions in the wrong perspective. God, however, who makes use of our afflictions to accomplish His good and gracious will, can use afflictions themselves to give us a new perspective. Through affliction God often forces depth into life's shallowness.

God's own children, like the disciples in this text, often have a distorted view of man and of affliction. True, all evil, every catastrophe is indirectly the consequence of sin. Certain sins, especially social sins of sex, food, and drink, bring with them their natural consequences. It is wrong, however, to assume, as the disciples did, that there is always a direct relationship of cause and effect between misfortune and sin. (See Luke 13:1-5 with its account of the massacre of Galileans by Pilate and the death of the 18 victims of the falling tower of Siloam. Jesus asks: "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this? I tell you, no.")

In the case of Christians especially, but also of unbelievers, afflictions are evidently used by God's love to call them to repentance, to arouse them from their spiritual stupor. The pain of reverses and misfortunes, of physical handicaps, is unmasked and unmistakable evil, an evil that one cannot ignore, that insists on being attended to. Such pain shatters the illusion that all is well, that what we have — whether good or bad in itself — is our own and is enough for us. God wants to give us more. But often He cannot because our hands are so full of material blessings and we cling to them so tightly that there is no place for God to put the spiritual blessings He wants to give. The "pain" of our afflictions makes us drop what we are holding and opens our fists. Afflictions and pain tell us, "Son, daughter, you're sick! You need a physician!" A physician utilizes the pain to locate the ailment and to diagnose its nature and discover the remedy. Only then does he remove the symptom. So it is often with our afflictions. "God whispers to us in our pleasure, speaks to us in our uneasy consciences, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world" (C. S. Lewis in *The Problem of Pain*). Jesus puts it this way: God permits many such afflictions "that the works of God might be made manifest."

C. God transforms natural man. The man born blind came to see Jesus in a new light as a result of this experience. God used his blindness to let him see Jesus with the eyes of faith as well as with his physical eyes. The Lukan account suggests that he came to know Jesus by steps: "The man called Jesus" is what he calls Him in v. 11. In v. 17: "He is a prophet." And then comes his confession of faith in the Son of God (v. 35; note variant reading) and his act of worship (v. 38). (The incident here in John 9 is reminiscent of the illness of Lazarus and its sequel in John 11, where Jesus said: "This

illness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it" John 11:4).

Sometimes God waits a long time — this man was born blind and was now a mature man of possibly 40 years. In the case of Lazarus our Lord waited until Lazarus died from his illness. Paul's thorn in the flesh was not removed. But Paul said that his affliction was given by God "to keep me from being too elated." And he had the assurance from God: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness. I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Cor. 12:7,9)

## II. *We Must Work the Works of God*

A. Not "I" as KJV reads, but WE must work the works of God. What undeserved, unexpected grace that we should be permitted to share in the work of God! That work includes all kinds of help for all kinds of need. Christ taught and explained — but He also healed. We must not narrow the scope of the work. But we must never forget the source of strength for the work either. Only God can turn a sinner from his ways. We can't even bring ourselves to God, let alone others. And our limitations extend to all aspects of the work. "Without Me you can do nothing." But, working under His guidance and with His power, "nothing shall be impossible." "He who hears you hears Me."

B. We MUST work the works of God. This is a necessity, not an option. "You cannot serve God and mammon." "He who is not with Me is against Me." The Greek word *dei* is used on three levels of meaning. All three apply here. (1) A thing is *appropriate* to do or happen (Acts 1:22). (2) The action or happening is *essential*, an absolute must, a *sine qua non* (John 3:7: "You must be born anew"). (3) The action or event

is *inevitable* because it is part of God's eternal plan, will, and determination. (Luke 2: 49: "I must be in My Father's house"; Acts 4:12: "... no other name ... by which we *must* be saved"; Acts 14:22: "... through many tribulations we *must* enter the kingdom ..."; Acts 17:3: "It was *necessary* for the Christ to suffer"; John 4:4: "He *had* to pass through Samaria"; 2 Cor. 5:10: "For we *must* all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.")

C. We must work THE WORKS OF GOD. In a secondary sense we are permitted to share in the creative, redemptive, and sanctifying work of God. Of primary importance is the faith-creating work of God in which we are to share. (John 6:29: "This is the work of God that you believe in Him whom He has sent." Also v.40: "For this is the will of My Father that every one who sees the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life.") This is the heart of the text, the heart of the mission of Christ and His church, and it must lie also at the heart of our lives.

D. The blessedness of this mission. We have Jesus' promise of success. "As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." Not just "until My ascension," not "if I am" or "when I am in the world," but whenever, wherever I am present, whether visibly as now or invisibly, "to the close of the age," or working in Scripture and sacrament. Also whenever and wherever one of My "sent ones" speaks this Word or administers this sacrament or simply reflects it in his life, there "I am with you always, even to the end of the world." And whenever and wherever I am present, "the light goes on!"

WALLACE BEHRHORST  
HAROLD BULS  
NORBERT DETTMANN  
EVERETTE MEIER  
JOHN SALESKA

Winfield, Kansas

THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY  
AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 12:54-57

*The Propers*

In the Introit we immediately ask for a fuller vision of our Savior when we pray: "Deal with Thy servant according to Thy *mercy*." In the Collect we ask the Lord that we may "with pure hearts and minds follow Thee, the only true God." Jesus, whom we want to see even more clearly as Savior, is indeed God, the only God. The Epistle (Eph. 4:1-6) tells us that there is "one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all." Jesus is not the Father, but He is God. The more clearly we see Jesus as Savior, the more clearly we see God. The words of the Gospel (Luke 14:1-11), "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted," remind us that Christ is the humble yet exalted Savior, even though the above verse speaks primarily of God's dealing with men in this world and particularly in the next. Christ is still our example for living and our only hope for mercy from the Father in dying. In this light it is interesting that a parallel to the above verse is found in the context of the publican's cry for *mercy*. In a physical sense, the higher up you are, the better the view; in spiritual things the lower we sink to our knees in true repentance at the foot of Christ's cross, the better the view of the Savior.

*Introduction*

Modern man — you — must still decide what to do with the man Jesus Christ. According to the first chapter of John's Gospel, John the Baptist was trying to help the people of his day to see Jesus as Savior, "the light of the world." The trouble was that "He came to His own, and His own people received Him not" (John 1:11). In the same way modern man — you — would miss seeing Jesus fully as Savior by trying either to

blow that Light right out of the world or by trying to dim that Light to conform to the shades of the sin and darkness in this world. As sinners we need the best light there is to find our way through this darkened world. We need the Light of the world.

We Need to See Jesus Even More  
Fully as Our Savior

I. *Even We Christians Often Fail to See Him Fully as Savior*

A. He can begin to be someone unimportant in our spiritual eyes. Our view of Him begins to dim when we feel that our sins are too great or else too insignificant really to matter to our Savior. We may not look on Him as deliberately perpetrating a hoax, as Hugh Schonfield does in *The Passover Plot*, but we can lose sight of Jesus by minimizing His redemptive power in our lives. We are failing to heed the words of our text (12:56) which warn against not discerning "the present time" — the time of grace. We may be able to discern the meaning of clouds coming with the west and south winds when predicting the weather is concerned (12:54-55), but we may be failing to see Jesus fully as Savior.

B. Or we can fail to see Jesus fully as Savior by regarding Him merely as a sort of teacher. We may like to look at Christ by having His moral precepts on display in the lives of our family. "He's good for the children." In the words of our text, we may turn Jesus into a sort of worldly "south wind" pedagogically to supply us with moral weather reports so that we might avoid the heat and frustrations of modern living.

C. Or we may miss seeing Jesus fully as Savior by regarding Him merely as an advocate of humanitarianism and social reform. Few would deny the need for social reform and the need for Christian activity in this area. Trouble comes if we begin to see Jesus

merely as a preacher of a social gospel. Then we would look only at "the appearance of earth and sky" (12:56) by looking at the surface symptoms of the times. There are honest cries for food and dignity, and we must do all we can to answer them. But most of all, all of us need to see Jesus as the world's Savior from sin! If we see Him merely as some kind of Biblical superman advocating social humanitarianism, we can become nothing more than robins chirping out good cheer. Jesus becomes a mere "bonus man" for the underprivileged and disadvantaged.

D. Or we may fail to see Jesus fully as our Savior by regarding Him as a harsh judge. The context (12:58) warns us that Jesus will indeed come to judge mankind. The problem is that we may fail to see the coming Judge properly through the eyes of faith and thus dread His coming. We are not heeding the words of our text to "judge what is right" (12:57). We have turned what for some is a "bonus man" into a "bogeyman" for others.

II. *But We Should See Jesus as the Messiah, Our Savior*

A. Jesus should be seen as the promised Messiah. The time of the Lord was at hand (12:56), for God the Father had entered into the time of men in the person of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 11 presents a panoramic view of the Savior as seen through the eyes of the Old Testament believers. He was their coming Savior, the Messiah. Jesus Himself cries out (Mark 1:15) that "the kingdom of God is at hand"; see Me as your Savior!

B. Thus Jesus should be seen as our Savior. When we see the true signs of "the present time," we see that Jesus came into our time to make us His for eternity. In the words of Hebrews 11, "God has provided some better things for us" to see, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

### III. *When We See Jesus Fully as Savior, We Then Recognize*

A. His true claims about Himself. Then He is no dead hoax in our eyes but a risen, living, and rising reality. We judge what is right about Him (12:57) and see Him as the true Savior.

B. His teachings concerning His redemptive purposes. His were not merely lessons about meteorology on the basis of south winds and clouds from the west but lessons with a redemptive purpose. He wanted the blind to see Him as Savior, the deaf to hear Him as Savior, and the lame man to get up and walk to Him as Savior. Whether He teaches us by the audiovisual aid of miracles, the lectures of parables, or the object lessons of His own life, He wants us to see Him fully as Savior.

C. His humanity. He came in our time (12:56) in the flesh to suffer as a man for our sins. Two passages from Hebrews 2 bring this out forcefully: "But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone" (2:9); "Therefore He had to be made like His brethren in every respect so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people." (2:17)

D. His coming judgment. We need not fear it, in fact, we can even long for it. We do not have to pay the "very last copper" (12:59), for Christ has paid it in our stead. We need not fear the end of temporal time, for we live in "the present time" (12:56), the time of Jesus, whom we view as our Savior.

#### *Conclusion*

Lord, in loving contemplation  
Fix our hearts and eyes on Thee,  
Till we taste Thy full salvation  
And Thine unveiled glory see.

### THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATTHEW 10:16-22

One hears the Introit speaking of "them that wait for Thee," of "Thy prophets being found faithful," of "the servants," of "Thy people," "the new Israel"; and singing joyfully of the place of communion and loving worship, "I was glad when they said unto me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'"

The Collect must be prayed in the light of the Epistle (1 Cor. 1:4-9). Conscious of our natural condition of impotence, we pray for God's mercy. We pray that in all things God's Spirit may direct and rule, guide and save, tell us how, and inspire us to do.

The Epistle for this Sunday tells the story of the founding of God's people, the nurturing, the maintaining, the purpose, the hope and goal of His family. Mindful of the fact that the church year is nearing its end, we, as His people, look back and thank God for the abundance of grace given us. Not a single grace is lacking.

In the Gospel, Matt. 22:34-46, appears our Lord's answer to the query about the greatest commandment. Love is the answer. Attention is directed also to our Lord's question to which "no one was able to answer Him a word." "What do you think of the Christ? Whose Son is He?" He is David's Son and God's Son, and the Holy Spirit rules and guides and directs us in all things if we truly believe this. There is no life of love without the life of faith—not a questioning faith, but the simple answer of the surrendered heart and life that is ready to serve "come what may" as it waits for the glories yet to be revealed, the kind of faith that gives the simple answer, "My Lord and my God!" This kind of answer, as an outgrowth of this kind of unquestioning faith, is of course prerequisite to the services asked by Christ in the face of the persecutions He predicts in the sermon text for the day. It is the service of those who are "sent into the world, but not received by the world." They are



## Unwanted Witnesses

This text is a portion of the larger account of the sending of the Twelve. During the course of His ministry of preaching and healing in the cities and villages of Galilee, Jesus discovered the true condition of the people. They were in a most wretched state of spiritual dereliction and helplessness, resembling for all the world a people "scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd." Moved with compassionate love, the Great Shepherd invites His disciples to pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into the harvest, to send witnesses to His people. Immediately He summons the Twelve and sends them to be such witnesses. He instructs them as to where they shall go, as to the nature of their labor, as to their reward, as to their attitude toward men to whom they witness. This brings us directly to the subject matter of our text.

I. *What the Lord's Witnesses May Expect in and of the World to Which They Are to Witness (16-18)*

The Lord will not deceive with false promises those who are sent into His service. As it was with Him, so it will be with His witnesses, who are not wanted by the world. They will encounter opposition, enmity, persecution. The hardships will not be lacking any more than the blessings will be withheld. Therefore, "Behold, I send you." I send you forth as weak, defenseless sheep in the midst of a flock of wolves. You will be in constant peril. But let your conduct in the midst of men be governed by the wisdom of the serpent, wary in your relations with men, yet with all the simplicity, guilelessness, and purity of the dove. A difficult task, to be sure; these are precisely the traits that all believers, and certainly His witnesses to a world that wants them not, must earnestly cultivate.

Witnesses to a world that wants them not must understand that men are unfriendly toward the message of the Gospel. It will there-

fore be necessary to "beware of men; for they will deliver you up to councils and flog you in their synagogs, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for My sake, to bear testimony before them and the Gentiles" (vv. 17-18). The disciples themselves experienced this.

The world today still does not want the Lord's witnesses. The Lord's witnesses must still "beware of men," must still combine the wisdom of the serpent with the simplicity of the dove. In the light of our Lord's words, things will get worse before they get better.

II. *Whose Help and Support the Lord's Witnesses Will Receive in Their Witnessing (19-20)*

The Lord will not leave His witnesses to fend for themselves. The Spirit of God Himself will be with them. He will fill them. He will give them fitting thought and word. He will place their speech rightly in the heart and on their lips. This is not to say that His witnesses thereby become machines, robots, witless instruments in the hands of the Spirit. When they stood before civil rulers and magistrates and the prophecy of the Lord was fulfilled upon them, they were living, thinking, speaking, willing personalities possessed of all the properties of the human being. And yet this prophecy of the Lord stresses the point that it was the Holy Spirit who gave them inspiration and utterance.

Today, too, the Spirit gives the Lord's witnesses utterance. We have no reason to expect inspiration in the sense of Biblical inspiration; but the Lord is still with the faithful who witness to Him and to His Word. They have the assurance of the Spirit's help and support.

III. *The Patience and Perseverance Required of the Lord's Witnesses in Their Witnessing (21-22)*

The Gospel and its witness will bring about general discord. This discord will find

its way even into the lives and homes of those who are bound together in family love. It will sever even the tenderest ties of the home and family. As some are conquered and won by the redemptive power of the Gospel (see Rom. 1:16) and others stubbornly persist in their opposition toward the Gospel, dissension and discord enter in. Groups are torn apart, as it were, by the Word of God; the two-edged sword of the Word separates them. Certainly, and unfortunately, there is many a household where a rending has taken place, where a breach has been brought about because of the sincere conversion of one of its members. The others turn their backs on him, scoff, sneer, ridicule, humiliate. Enmity toward the confessors and witnesses of Christ and His Gospel will be general. (V. 22)

Patience, perseverance—these will be needed in abundant measure. Patience, because the enmity and opposition will be so

bitter as to cause persecution from one city to another (recall, for example, the experiences of Paul). Perseverance, because the labor is so great and important, because the task is never finished.

But through it all the glorious promise and the reward of the faithful beckon to the worn and weary witness who is often on the verge of despair (v. 22b). The labor is difficult, the opposition hard to bear, the promised reward may seem far away, the Lord may tarry long before He comes, but He will certainly come, bringing His reward in His hand. With this glorious promise, this wondrous hope, every faithful, patient, and persevering witness of the Lord can and does perform his labor of love with joy and gladness until He comes.

Edmonton, Alberta

ROLAND A. FRANTZ  
WALTER SEEHAGEL  
F. LORING YOUNCE