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Ein Prediger muss nicht allein *wei-
den*, also dass er die Schafe unter-
weise, wie sie rechte Christen sollen
sein, sondern auch daneben den Woel-
fen *wehren*, dass sie die Schafe nicht
angreifen und mit falscher Lehre ver-
fuehren und Irrtum einfuehren.

Luther

Es ist kein Ding, das die Leute
mehr bei der Kirche behaelt denn
die gute Predigt. — *Apologie, Art. 24*

If the trumpet give an uncertain
sound, who shall prepare himself to
the battle? — *1 Cor. 14:8*

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ARCHIVES

Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Epistle Selections

First Sunday after Trinity

Acts 8:42-47

The Church of God is invisible, a spiritual house, 1 Pet. 2:5. Faith alone makes one a member of the Church, and faith is a matter of the heart, Rom. 10:9, 10, into which no man can look. Yet as the invisible soul life manifests its presence by its activities, so the faith life of the Church, though hidden with Christ in God, Col. 3:3, will and must manifest itself in holiness and good works. This truth is vividly and instructively exemplified in the first Christian Church at Jerusalem.

The Church of Christ Manifests Its Hidden Life

1. *By loving loyalty to God*
2. *By loyal love of the brethren*

1

In loving loyalty to God the Church at Jerusalem clung firmly to Him who had brought them to saving faith.

A. By loyalty to the means of grace.

a. God's Word had shown them their Savior, and they had experienced its saving power. Acts 2:14-41. Therefore they loyally persevered in their devotion to the doctrine of the apostles. They received it as God's Word, 1 Thess. 2:13, any change of which, any deviation from which, had been strictly forbidden by God, Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6. That doctrine was to them sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, Ps. 19:10. Therefore they continued to come to the Temple, v. 46, taking part in the daily worship, viewing the sacrifice in the light of the Gospel fulfillment. This worship, which so many of their fellow Jews attended, gave them an opportunity to show their loyalty and love to God's Gospel by telling it to others and bringing them to like saving faith.

How about our loyalty to God's Word? Is it to us also the infallible norm of faith and life, not one iota of which we will surrender? Do we love it? How about reading, studying, hearing God's Word? Private, family, public devotion? Church attendance? Telling others? Is there room for improvement?

b. Lord's Supper: breaking of bread, vv. 41, 46. Twice their love of the Lord's Supper is mentioned. How often do you attend?

B. By loyalty in prayer and praise.

a. They prayed publicly, as a congregation. Is the pastor the only one that prays? Do we all as a congregation join with him in sincere heartfelt prayer, that rises like a mighty petition to the throne of God?

b. Praises. They had the means of grace and favor with the

people, v. 47. Do we praise God for the blessings we enjoy in our country? Or do we find fault with conditions in Church and State without praising God for the liberty we still enjoy and above all for His salvation, His Gospel? Let us stop grumbling about government, preacher, fellow Christians, and make our life one of loyalty to God by praising His holy Name.

2

The congregation continued steadfastly in fellowship, v. 42, coming together like one big family of brothers and sisters and having all things common, v. 44. Their homes were open at all times to all fellow Christians in unstinted hospitality. Whenever it became necessary, they sold their "possessions," fields, houses, real estate, and "goods," other valuable property, and divided the proceeds as every man had need, v. 45. Their charity was not reckless but judicious, as Ramsay puts it (*St. Paul*, p. 373), a distribution of goods wisely managed. They were happy to meet their fellow Christians at the love feasts held in connection with the Holy Supper, and they gladly invited the poor to their table. Fellowship indeed! Cp. Acts 4:32-37.

Times have changed. Yet Christians must not permit changed conditions to interfere with and chill that loving consideration and willing regard for the needs and exigencies of their fellow Christians. All the members of a Christian congregation ought to be firmly knit together by the bonds of loyal love. There ought to be no clannishness, no caste system, no cliques, no quarrels, no petty bickerings, but a true fraternal spirit ruling all. There ought to be that willingness to help and accept help when in need which exists between loving brothers and sisters; not the haughty condescension of one doing a "favor" to the needy one, which sends a cold chill into the heart of the unfortunate recipient of such "charity," nor the false pride which refuses to accept charity lovingly offered although one is in dire need of it; not the miserly selection of the smallest coin or worn-out clothing nor the impudent demand of aid as one's due. No, that spirit of true fellowship, true brotherhood, should rule which weeps with the weeping and rejoices with the joyful, which sympathizes with the needy brethren and sisters, and unobtrusively, yet willingly and liberally, will help to relieve them.

Such loyal love will redound to the welfare of the congregation. Actions speak louder than words. While lack of love among the brethren will repel the unbeliever, true Christian loyalty to God and love to the fellow Christians will be a powerful manifestation of the hidden divine life dwelling within the Church and will be an important factor in bringing about the result described in v. 47.

Second Sunday after Trinity

1 John 1:5 to 2:2

Adam and Eve in blissful fellowship with God. Their sin destroyed it. Now they were separated from God, the Source of life and happiness, and that meant death and all that pertains to death. But God in His infinite mercy through Christ reconciled Himself to man and inspired the prophets, apostles, and evangelists to write the Holy Scriptures, which "are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," thus bringing us back into blessed fellowship with God.—But we are also to remain in this fellowship. Our text gives an answer to the questions:

When do We Remain in Blessed Fellowship with God?

1. *When we walk in the light*
2. *When we continue to find comfort in Christ alone*

1

1:5. What the apostles wrote was not the result of their thinking but a message entrusted to them by Christ. They must proclaim this message for the purpose stated in v. 3. In this blessed fellowship with God we must remain. To retain it, we must "walk in the light," v. 7, because God is light, v. 5, etc. Sin is called darkness because it destroys man and leads him into the utter darkness of hell. Light is holiness. God's holiness, perfect purity, is called light because it brings joy and comfort. Here note the use of the word *light* peculiar to John, John 1:4-9. The holiness of God is, in the most wonderful way, revealed in the sacrifice of His Son for our redemption, Is. 6:1-7. Fellowship with God therefore can be retained only by walking in this light.

V. 6. The mere saying is not enough, Matt. 7:21. If you walk in darkness, separated from God in your thinking and planning, live a life of sin, but assert that you are in fellowship with God, you lie. Your actions, your way of life, contradict your claim and prove you a liar.—God is absolutely holy; He abhors sin. In order that He might save you from sin and its dominion, He sent His only-begotten Son into the world to accomplish this. How, then, can you claim fellowship with the holy God if you love what He abhors and from what He has saved you?

V. 7. To walk in the light means to view things as God views them, that you love what He loves and hate what He hates. His Word, therefore, must be your chief delight, above all the Gospel, which tells you how you were cleansed from sin and all unholiness by the sacrifice of His Son, but also how through His Holy Spirit He grants you strength and willingness to serve and obey Him in

holiness and righteousness all the days of your life, 2 Cor. 5:15; Luke 1:74, 75.

In thus walking in the light, we have fellowship with God together with the apostles and all such as believe that the blood of Jesus, etc.

Oh, blessed fellowship with God! Should we not walk in the light that we may remain in such blessed fellowship?

2

V. 8. There are such, not only among those who openly reject God and His Word, but also among those who claim fellowship with God, to whom these words apply. But they deceive themselves and thus mislead themselves into destructive errors regarding their own condition and regarding the grace of God in Christ Jesus. They have lost the precious truth that their salvation is solely in Christ.

V. 9. This is God's gracious will. We should approach Him not as proud, self-righteous, even demanding Pharisees, but as poor, miserable sinners that we are, and humbly and penitently ask forgiveness for Jesus' sake. God is faithful; He keeps every promise. And He is just; for after He has punished Christ, who, as our Substitute, bore our sins, He will grant us forgiveness, thus cleansing us from all unrighteousness.

V. 10. What horrible impudence! Denial of your sinfulness is tantamount to making God a liar, to a declaration that the sacrifice of His Son was not necessary. Clearly, God's Word, which proclaims His infinite love toward sinners, is not in such impudent fools. They do not seek comfort in Christ, the Savior of sinners.

2:1. This is what God would have us do. Like the Apostle Paul, Rom. 7, we confess that we daily sin much and deserve nothing but punishment. But if we are disturbed about this, as we surely should be, we should remember that we have Christ, who, as our Advocate, pleads for us and thus obtains forgiveness for us. God wants us to seek comfort in Christ alone, and not only once, at the beginning of our fellowship with God, but continually, every moment, to the end of our days.

V. 2. Christ alone is the Propitiation for our sins. But can you apply this comforting truth to yourself? Dare you do it? Most assuredly; for He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. If for the sins of all, then also for the sins of every individual, for your sins. Our comforting assurance is based upon the universality of God's grace in Christ Jesus. That is sufficient encouragement for us to seek comfort in Christ continually, and in Him alone. If we do this, we have and retain blessed fellowship with God.

H. J. BOUMAN

Third Sunday after Trinity

Acts 5:34-42

The Church of the one and only true God has always enjoyed full security under His protection. It was so in the Old Testament, Ps. 46; 87:1, 2. And the same security is spoken of by the Lord Jesus in Matt. 16:18. Our text presents a wonderful example of

The Foolishness of Trying to Hinder the Work of God in His Church

This is attested to

1. *By the admission of competent observers*
2. *By the manifest victories of the Gospel*

1

a) The occasion and the setting of the story, when Peter and the other apostles had been arraigned before the Great Council and Peter had given his declaration of a great and fundamental principle, which the Church has ever observed, v. 29. This declaration had infuriated the members of the Sanhedrin to the point when they were ready to have the apostles executed, v. 33.

b) The interference of Gamaliel. His position and authority unquestioned as one of the greatest teachers of the rabbinical school at Jerusalem, specifically mentioned by Paul in his defense, Acts 22:3. Gamaliel represented the more liberal school among the Jewish teachers, over against the conservative school of Hillel. Gamaliel's prestige was of a kind to give weight to his words; he was a man of intelligence and learning, a shrewd and competent observer, vv. 34, 35.

c) Gamaliel's appeal to the verdict of history and the conclusions which should be drawn. Theudas evidently an ordinary assassin, while the revolt of Judas of Galilee was occasioned by one of the periodic censuses which were so obnoxious to the Jews, since they reminded them so strongly of their subjugation under the Roman power, vv. 36, 37. Hence the earnest recommendation of Gamaliel to leave matters in the hands of God:

If man's it be, 'tis bound to fail;
If God's it is, it will prevail.

Verse 38 f.

d) The foolishness of trying to hinder the work of God has been acknowledged also by other men throughout the centuries. Even those who were unwilling to accept the truth of the Christian faith were impressed by the earnestness of its confessors. And others, who tried with might and main to extirpate Christianity, failed miserably. (Thomas Paine; Robert Ingersoll.)

2

a) The Jews could not quite restrain themselves from venting their spite against the apostles, although they accepted the recommendation of Gamaliel. But their scourging of the apostles merely emphasized their own powerlessness. And their command to the apostles to refrain from preaching in the name of Jesus was in reality a contradiction of their own resolution, v. 40. We have similar examples in mission history, in the account of the manner with which certain rulers yielded to the inevitable, also in agreements like the concordats which have occasionally been in force between the Roman Church and Protestantism.

b) But the manifest victory of the Gospel put to shame the foolishness of men in trying to hinder the work of God. The reaction of the apostles took two forms; first, they counted it a special privilege and honor to suffer shame for His name; secondly, they returned to their work of spreading the Gospel with all the greater vigor, both in the public preaching services in the Temple and in the private meetings in the homes of the brethren, vv. 41, 42.

c) This story is intended to give to the Church also of the present day new strength and courage for its work. It may be that the believers of these latter days, as the Lord also indicates in His eschatological sayings, will face great dangers and temptations. For this reason we are to cling with full confidence to the promises of the Savior, especially Matt. 16:18. P. E. KRETZMANN

Fourth Sunday after Trinity

Acts 9:1-20

In our day God's Word is quite universally despised even in the midst of nominal Christendom, other means to build and preserve the Church being sought for. Yet we have no reason to cast aside the Word of God. It still builds and prospers the Church.

The Power of God's Word

1. *It engenders saving faith*
2. *It works prayerful obedience*
3. *It creates willing confession*

1

A man like Saul, vv. 1, 2, brought to saving faith in the self-same Jesus whom he had persecuted! How was that possible? Jesus' Word did it. The words of Jesus, vv. 4, 5b, brought him to the conviction that he, the self-righteous Pharisee, Phil. 3:5, 6, was in fact a blasphemer, etc., 1 Tim. 1:13. He knew that it would be impossible to silence the voice of his conscience if he would close

his ears and heart against the Word of Jesus and still trust in his own works. He knew that Jesus of Nazareth, now appearing to him and speaking to him, was not a deceiver, but the living Son of God, Jesus, a Savior, *his* Savior. The voice and word of Jesus had brought him, the determined enemy of Jesus, to saving faith in this very Jesus.

Jesus still speaks to mankind in His Word, in Scripture, John 5:39; 1 Pet. 1:11; through His messengers, Luke 10:16; 17:20. In this Word He lays bare to the hearers their inmost heart, Jer. 17:9, 10; Heb. 4:12, 13; John 16:8, 9, and works conviction of their sinful depravity. In this Word He invites all men, I am Jesus, Is. 55:1-3; here He tells them of His birth, His life, His suffering, His death, His resurrection, and explains to them the meaning, purpose, and fruit of His life-work. This Word works faith, John 6:64; 1 Pet. 1:23, convinces man that in Jesus he has everlasting life and that nothing can sever him from the love of God, John 10:27-30; 2 Tim. 1:12. The Word of Jesus works saving faith. Let us cling to it.

2

a) Prayer. Saul prays, v. 11; prays to Jesus, pours out his heart to Him whom he had regarded as an impostor, until he had experienced the power of Jesus' Word.—Ananias prays; speaks to Jesus, tells Him his misgivings and fears, vv. 13, 14. Why? Because through Jesus' Word He had been made a disciple, v. 10, a pupil of Jesus, who had unflinching trust in the grace and wisdom of his Savior.

By His Word Jesus convinces the believer that He is man's best and wisest and omnipotent Friend, to whom he can come at any time, with whom he may consult, whose advice he may ask, whom he may confidently tell his troubles, his anxieties, his hopes, his wishes, his needs.

b) Obedience. Saul exclaims: v. 6a. He obeys Jesus' Word, 6b, patiently submits to Jesus' will, and awaits His hour, although for three days he remains blind. Ananias obeys in spite of his misgivings, vv. 15-17.—So Jesus' Word works obedience in the heart of all believers, making them willing to do His will, to serve their Lord and their fellowmen, patiently, prayerfully, to submit to His guidance, to make His Word the norm of their life.

3

Ananias, by the word of Jesus, became willing to speak to Saul, to tell him that in answer to his prayer Jesus had sent him, v. 17, freely confessing Jesus' name before the former enemy.

Saul confessed his faith by joining the despised flock of disciples, v. 19, and preaching the Gospel, v. 20. His life's purpose henceforth was to bear the name of Jesus to Jews and Gentiles in

spite of all hardships which this involved, v. 15. Why? The Word of Jesus constrained him.

To this day the Word exercises like power, Acts 4:20; Matt. 12:34. In the Word we have seen with the eyes of faith our Savior Jesus; in the Word we have heard His message of peace and salvation. In the Word we have tasted of the heavenly gift, Heb. 6:4, 5. This Word opens our mouths and lips, so that they freely confess that Jesus is the Lord.

Let us thank God for this power unto salvation, and let us remain steadfastly loyal to His Word. TH. LAETSCH

Miscellanea

Antichrist — and the Son of Perdition

(A study of 1 John 2:18, 22 f.; 4:4; 2 John 7, compared with 2 Thess. 2:3-12)

As we make this study, it is understood that the relation between 2 Thess. 2:3-12 and 1 John 2:18 ff. is a matter of exegesis; but that it is important for our understanding of the teaching concerning Antichrist is obvious. The words "for our learning," Rom. 15:4, and "for doctrine," 2 Tim. 3:16, apply also to the entire New Testament.

We offer an exegesis of the John passages only, and not of the paragraph in 2 Thessalonians, since the latter has been previously dealt with in this publication (IV, p. 424 ff.). Besides, the current series of articles on the Eschatological Content of the Epistles to the Thessalonians must not be overlooked.

In 1 John 2:18, 22 f. John addresses his readers in his customary way as *παιδία*, little children, and then continues: The last hour it is, and just as you heard that Antichrist is coming, and now many antichrists have appeared; whence we understand that it is the last hour. . . . Who is the liar except he who denies that Jesus is the Christ; this is the Antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. Every one who denies the Son does not have the Father either. Chap. 4:3: And every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not of God, and this is that (spirit) of the Antichrist, of whom you have heard that he is coming, and now already he is in the world. 2 John 7: For many deceivers went out into the world, those who do not confess Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh: this is the deceiver and the Antichrist.

Let us analyze the text more exactly. The apostle tells his readers that they heard, namely, as a historical fact, information had reached them, it was a part of the instruction they had received in connection with their religious training, not mere idle gossip or an evanescent bit of news.

The apostle associates this information with *ἐσχάτη ὥρα*, without the article, which gives the expression the connotation peculiar to the New Testament. It usually refers to the entire period beginning with the Apostolic Age and ending with the final coming of the Lord. The