

Concordia Theological Monthly

Continuing

LEHRE UND WEHRE

MAGAZIN FUER EV.-LUTH. HOMILETIK

THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY-THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY

Vol. XVII

March, 1946

No. 3

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Ein Prediger muss nicht allein weiden, also dass er die Schafe unterweise, wie sie rechte Christen sollen sein, sondern auch daneben den Wölfen wehren, dass sie die Schafe nicht angreifen und mit falscher Lehre verfuerehen 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*

Published by the

Ev. Luth. Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States

CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE, St. Louis 18, Mo.

Homiletics

Outlines on the Standard Epistle Lessons

REMINSICERE SUNDAY

1 THESS. 4:1-7

We live in a paradoxical age. Loyalty to God is called bigoted dogmatism, but fanatic liberalism in doctrine and life is applauded. Our text pleads for an ever-increasing, unyielding loyalty to God and presents God's power and plan for such a life.

GOD-PLEASING WILLFULNESS

I. *Its source* II. *Its manifestations*

I

Willfulness in negative sense: man by nature (Gen. 6:5; Acts 7:51). In their former state also the Thessalonians had been willful against God. Now they should be as determined in the sanctifying of their lives, even more so.

They possessed the necessary power. The exhortation is "by the Lord Jesus," διὰ τοῦ κυρίου. The Apostle appeals not merely as Christ's representative (2 Cor. 5:20), but on the basis of the atonement "by Jesus Christ" (cf. Eph. 1:5). Since Christ had perfectly kept the Law for them and redeemed them from the curse of the Law, they could say with the Apostle: Phil. 4:13. The redemption through Jesus Christ is the power and motivation unto sanctification.

They were elect of God (ch. 1:4). As such they were called (v. 7). Not only a turning to a life in God, but also a life for God follows.

This sanctification is willed by God (v. 3 a). He insists on it. He works faith in us, and thereby "the new man" is created (Eph. 4:24). This inward man delights in the Law of God (Rom. 7:22). We do the good works, but the initiative lies with God (2 Cor. 3:5), and He works through us (Phil. 2:13). If the slogan *deus vult* at the convention in Clermont could stir up the masses of Europe to forsake occupation, land, and family to engage in the Crusades, how much more should the will of God persuade us unto sanctification.

As the Thessalonians, so we. We need continued encour-

agement to increase in sanctification (v. 1 b; *Triglot*, p. 907: "Form. Con., Sol. Decl.," II, 68). Having been redeemed by Christ, having been made Christians, and knowing not only that sanctification is God's will, but that He Himself works in us both to will and to do (Phil. 2:13), we Christians are well equipped, in utter disregard of our rebellious nature, peevish flesh, and inflated reason and in the most willful manner, to go about those things which tend evermore to the sanctifying of our lives.

II

It took God-pleasing willfulness to manifest sanctification in Thessalonica. The city was known for its unblushing unchastity, depraved debauchery, and dishonesty in business. Cf. the moral laxness of our age.

God-pleasing willfulness manifests itself in various actions of believers. Sanctification is used as a general term (v. 3 a; ch. 3:13). The life of Christians is to be a state of doing good works, *προϊστασθαι* (Titus 3:8). It is to be for "necessary uses" (Titus 3:14).

Specific manifestations: a. Purity. Avoid every form of sexual irregularity (v. 3 b). Not only public scandals, but also those things done in secret are to be avoided. The positive side of the Sixth Commandment is to be stressed. Personal purity becomes saints (Eph. 5:3). Our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 6:19). We are to sanctify ourselves (Lev. 20:7). Not merely the outward decency, but also the chaste inward attitude belongs to the proper concept of God-pleasing willfulness (v. 5 a). Since the heathen know not God, they delight in carnal desires (v. 5 b); but we who know the God of Holiness have higher ideals. Impurity and holiness are opposites (v. 7).

b. Honesty (v. 6). The Thessalonians were to be honest even in a city known for its fraud. With God as the Avenger, dishonesty is not even shrewd business. Especially in business connections with each other they were to be a light in the unscrupulous economic setup of this city. Applications: Not only in business dealings, labor relations, and tax payments, but also in our church contributions.

In a world which is infatuated with sexual licentiousness and obstinate in its greed for wealth and power because it deifies materialism, we Christians are firmly to set our will on holiness in the power from on high. VICTOR MENNICKE

OCULI SUNDAY

EPH. 5:1-9

Christians, though living in this world, are not of the world (John 17:14-16). They have experienced a remarkable change (2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Pet. 1:23). This change manifests itself, and must do so, in their entire conduct. They must walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called (Eph. 4:1). In our text the Apostle uses the believer's high calling of God in Christ Jesus as the motivation for his exhortation to holiness and good works.

WALK WORTHY OF YOUR VOCATION IN CHRIST JESUS

- I. *As God's dear children through Christ walk in love*
- II. *As saints in the Kingdom of Christ avoid all uncleanness and covetousness*
- III. *As lights in the Lord Jesus walk as children of light*

I

A. V. 1. Christians are dear children, beloved of the Father, who has in His marvelous loving-kindness adopted them; beloved of the Son, who gave Himself for them and thus made it possible for them to become children (v. 2); beloved of the Holy Spirit, who regenerated them into sonship (cp. Eph. 2:18-22; 3:16; 4:30). What an honor to be a child of God, dear to Him!

B. Therefore be followers, imitators of God and of His love. Children imitate their father, so imitate your Father, the Triune God; and as He is love, so let your whole life be love, love toward God (1 John 4:19) and His commandments (1 John 5:3); love toward your fellow Christians (1 John 4:10-12, 20-21; 5:1-2); toward all men (Matt. 5:43-48). As children of the God of love walk in love! (*The Lutheran Hymnal*, No. 397.)

II

A. Christians are saints (v. 3), not by nature, but because they have by the Holy Spirit been made citizens in the kingdom of Christ and God (v. 5). The Apostle had addressed them as saints (1:1); he had told them how they were made saints (1:3-14; 2:1-22). They were saints having been washed in the blood of Jesus and having received forgiveness of all their sins (1:7); in Baptism (5:25 b-27) having been

regenerated by the Holy Spirit and endowed with the strength and willingness to do good works (2:5, 6, 10). Saints indeed.

B. Therefore walk as saints in a life of purity and holiness. The Apostle warns particularly against two sins prevalent in his day and ours. a) Immorality of every sort. What cesspools of sexual filthiness and sensuality in our cities! What filthy jokes and immoral books and lewd pictures seen and heard round about us! b) Covetousness, love of money, of filthy lucre. Is there a sin more prevalent in our country than worship of the dollar?

C. Such things are not convenient, do not agree with the Christian's calling into sainthood. They exclude from membership in Christ's kingdom (v. 5), subject man to God's eternal wrath (v. 6). Examples!

D. Be not deceived! Our wily flesh will seek to seduce us also. Then remember: We are saints, and filthiness of immorality and covetousness should never be named as having been committed among us. We are pure, holy, saints, by the grace of God. Let us walk in purity of life.

III

A. Christians are a light in the Lord (v. 8). Formerly they were darkness, not only living in the darkness of sin and shame and vice, knowing neither God nor His will, but being themselves darkness, from whom no light, no good could proceed. In the Lord, having been united with Christ, the Light of the world (John 1:4, 9), they are a light (John 8:12). Like Christ they know God (Matt. 11:27; John 1:18). Like Him they know and love God's will (Ps. 40:8; John 4:34; 9:4, 5). Blessed, happy people, a light in the Lord!

B. Therefore they must walk as children of light (v. 8 b) and bring forth the fruits of light (v. 9). a) Goodness. As God is good (Ps. 25:8), so Christians must practice goodness, be good to all, good Christians, good neighbors, good citizens. b) Righteousness. They must not permit their "goodness" toward others to connive at sin, but all their deeds and words must be in keeping with the norm of God's Law. c) Truth. Their righteousness is not merely a cloak; no, they are true, loyal, sincere in all they do and speak, true friends, loyal citizens, sincere Christians. We are a light in the Lord. Let us walk as children of light in the strength the Lord provides through Word and Sacrament.

THEO. LAETSCH

LAETARE SUNDAY

GAL. 4: 21-31

To that lawyer who wanted to know how he might inherit eternal life and then cited correctly the sum of God's Law, Jesus said, "This do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10:28). But John 3 Jesus repeatedly says, "Whosoever believeth in Him, etc." Two ways; may we take our choice? To the Galatians had come Judaistic teachers who said: "Both are required; faith in the Savior is not enough; you must also keep the Law of Moses." — The natural man wants to go to heaven by way of the Law. Ask people to come to church, and you often get the answer: "You go your way, we go ours; we live a respectable life; we'll probably all come out even."

St. Paul in the text wants to set the Galatians (and us) right. He does this in an allegory, by comparing

SONS OF HAGAR AND OF SARAH

I

V. 21. St. Paul says we must, in the first place, know what we are talking about. God has two kinds of children, as Abraham had. Story. All men are in a sense children of God (creation, preservation). As such they are bound by the Law of God; obliged to keep it perfectly (Rom. 2:13; Gal. 3:12) as bondmen subject to punishment if they do not, entitled only to board and keep if they do. — But there is another relationship to God: that of being true sons of God through the promise and the fulfillment of the promise of Christ. They do the Father's will not by constraint, but of their own free will. They are heirs not because they have earned it, but by virtue of their relationship to God. — The two relationships exclude each other; you can't be both bond and free. — Let everyone who still hopes to gain anything by works be sure he understands the Law: No merely "respectable" life or "doing my best" will pass muster (James 2:10).

II

What will they find who aim to live by the Law? The evidence that they are bondmen. By the Law is the knowledge of sin. It cannot justify; it can only show that we lack the required righteousness. Hence it urges on to ever new

attempts to keep it, enslaving its followers, filling them with dread at the consequences of their failings. — That is not the Lord's fault. Attempting to live by the Law is like a crippled man's trying to cross a river: swimming is a good way to do that; but it's not possible *for him*. Keeping the Law is a way to heaven, but not for man as he is now born into the world. The lame man needs to be carried across the river, and sinful man needs a new covenant to be saved. He must be born again as a child of promise, a free son of God (v. 31). Christ has made that possible (Gal. 3:13; 4:4, 5). — Even so the Law has its use (Gal. 3:24; Ps. 119:9, 105); but the bondage is gone (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 3:25), and the curse is lifted (Gal. 3:13).

III

Sons are heirs. — They who base their relationship to God on the Law will inherit under the Law (Lev. 18:5; Luke 10:28; Rom. 10:5. — Deut. 27:26; Ps. 119:21; Jer. 11:3; Gal. 3:10). The actual result, then, is v. 30. — They will not have it so; claim to be the true heirs; make life miserable to the children of promise (v. 29); but Matt. 7:21-23; Eph. 2:8, 9. The inheritance, by the Father's disposal, belongs to the sons of promise.

The application to ourselves now is: Can we say v. 31? Isaac is the prototype of a Christian. But we all have an Ishmael in our heart, too — our old flesh, self-righteousness — struggling for the mastery. How necessary, then, the admonition Gal. 5:1.

THEO. HOYER

JUDICA SUNDAY

HEB. 9:11-15

What is Christianity? Well to consider this question during Lent. Our answer will reflect what the sacrifice means to us individually. With deadening regularity the cry is heard that Christianity means a better man, a better society, one world. In a sense this is true — if we mean a better man, conforming to the will of God; a better society, a regenerated society; one world, all citizens of the kingdom of God. If, however, we think merely of a law-abiding citizen, a society with less poverty and crime, a world at peace, then we are

confusing a fruit of Christianity with Christianity itself, the effect for the cause. — A generation interested in a *diesseits* view of life will not become interested in a *jenseits* philosophy. The Christian with his feet firmly planted on the ground is also looking up, setting his "affection on things above." He is interested in a better man, a finer society, "one world," but in a more complete sense than natural man can envisage.

What is Christianity? What does the sacrifice of Jesus, the Center of Christianity, mean to me?

WHAT DO I OWE THE ATONING SACRIFICE OF CHRIST?

I. The cleansing from sin (vv. 11-14).

The sacrifice of Jesus is just what a sin-enslaved world needs most. The foolish may make light of sin, call it "the color element in life," "an invention of the priestcraft," but the realist who examines self and the world and compares his findings with the Law is amazed at the blindness of those who would not see.

As little as the world can successfully deny sin, still less can it atone for it. But Christ fully satisfied the demands of eternal justice. He came as the heaven-sent High Priest to sacrifice, not something else, but Himself. This He did by means of His body, "a greater and more perfect tabernacle" than even the Jew could boast. And the blood thus shed was offered as the ransom which was acceptable to God. By its very nature this blood was able to accomplish what the world lacked. If the blood on Jewish altars slain could effect something in a ceremonial or symbolical way (v. 13), surely the blood of the Holy One of God, offered through His spirit, could purge us from sin, dead works, an evil conscience (v. 14).

Whatever sins may burden us: sins of weakness, sins which have trafficked upon our life, "pet sins" which burn our conscience, this sacrifice has atoned for all and won for all men a Mediator, a "Go-Between." He points to His sacrifice, and we are declared free by virtue of the atonement of our High Priest.

II. The power to walk righteously, to "serve the living God" (v. 14 c).

With sins atoned for by His sacrifice, with God satisfied, reconciled, with every obstacle removed for me to approach

God, with this sacrifice accepted in faith, I can now walk with Him. I am united with Him. No sacrifices for sin are necessary, but I can and will want to offer thankofferings. With the Spirit in my heart, there arises now a willingness to serve Him. Sin I will shun as that loathsome, despicable power which would enslave me and make the forgiveness of God of no effect. Now there can be fruits which lead to a better man, a better community, a more perfect world. Through the preaching of the Gospel I can beat back the powers of darkness and find new places to conquer in His name. By sanctified, fruitful living, Christianity's fruits in me will have a practical effect in this world. As a child of the heavenly Father I have at my disposal all the resources of Heaven by the simple process of prayer.

III. The hope of eternal life (v. 15).

Christ earned "good things to come" (v. 11). He did save not merely to save, but that as holy beings we might serve Him in everlasting life. With sins forgiven, we are prepared for an eternal bliss with Him. He had made a testament for us which necessitated His death before we might effectively be His heirs (v. 15). With this death accomplished, we have a sure hope that we shall enter eternal life.

This hope can't be taken away from us, since it is based on His sacrifice, rather than the sacrifice of animals by human priests. Built on the solid rock of a divine promise, we are more than conquerors (Rom. 8: 37-39).

The Father, having accepted us, every vestige of doubt which our enemies may try to implant vanishes (Rom. 8: 31b-33).

Beholding the chaos of this world — nations the playthings of strife, suspicion, and greed; the individual ground under the heel of sin's undoing; every human hope dashed — the Christian thanks God that his is a sure hope of a better city "which hath foundation, whose Builder and Maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). This is the hope of eternal life springing forth from the sacrifice of Jesus.

This sacrifice is the heart of Christianity. It assures me of forgiveness of sins, the power to serve the living God, and seals for me the hope of eternal heritage.

ARTHUR C. REPP

PALM SUNDAY

PHIL. 2:5-11

In a few days we shall again gather in our churches for services on Good Friday. On that day we shall turn our steps to Calvary. As we look upon the great work which, on that knoll, God performed in Christ Jesus, our eyes at first turn down in grief and shame, but then they rise to the heights of heaven, to the throne of grace. First we see the Redeemer in the depths of ignominy for us, then in the height of glory for us. Let us on the threshold of Holy Week consider

THE TWO STATES IN CHRIST JESUS' REDEMPTIVE WORK

I. The state of humiliation II. The state of exaltation

I

A. Christ Jesus' state of humiliation began when He, the incarnate Son of God, "made Himself of no reputation" (v. 7).

1. From eternity Christ Jesus was God and possessed the divine nature (John 1:1-3). During His whole sojourn in the flesh Christ Jesus never once laid aside His divine nature (v. 6).

2. Nevertheless, He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (v. 6).

a. Ancient kings, in fact, potentates of any age, delight in making a display of their power and glory.

b. Not so Jesus Christ. Though He, the God-Man, was throughout His life on earth in the form of God and could have made full and constant use of His divine power and majesty according to His human nature also, yet He did not parade His power, make a show of His majesty. Only on certain occasions He let some of His divine power and glory shine forth, namely, when He performed His miracles.

B. In the state of humiliation Christ Jesus furthermore "made Himself of no reputation," emptied Himself by "taking upon Himself the form of a servant" (v. 7).

1. Though He could have walked in kingly glory and could have exercised His divine power constantly, He chose to become a Servant who had not where to lay His head (Matt. 8:20), who was made under the Law (Gal. 4:4).

2. He "was made in the likeness of men" (v. 7), according to body and soul taking upon Himself the weakness and frailties of human race, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15; 2:14-18; 5:7-8).

C. His humiliation reached down to death (v. 8).

1. Death, the wages of sin, is a disgrace for all men, yet Christ Jesus became obedient to the will of His Father.

2. The ignominy of death was heightened by the death on the cross, the death of a criminal, of an outcast from society, forsaken of God.

D. Let this mind be in us! (v. 5; cp. vv. 1-4, 12-18).

II

The humiliation of Christ Jesus was followed by His exaltation.

A. God the Father highly exalted Him (v. 9.)

1. In the resurrection.

2. In the ascension.

3. In the session at His right hand.

B. God gave "Him a name that is above every name" (v. 9). He now, according to His human nature also, makes full and uninterrupted use of His divine majesty, of that dominion that holds sway over all dominions (Matt. 28:19). Angels, human beings, fallen spirits, and the damned must bow before Him (v. 10), and confess His Lordship (v. 11), willingly or unwillingly.

Thus did God Himself place the stamp and seal of His approval upon the work of redemption, for which the Son of God was made man and for which the incarnate Lord made Himself of no reputation (vv. 7-8).

Thanks be to Him for His self-effacing love. Let His love be unto us the foundation of our salvation and the wellspring of every Christian virtue.

ALEX W. C. GUEBERT

MAUNDY THURSDAY

1 COR. 11:23-32

The words "the night in which He was betrayed" take us from the presence of man into the presence of Jesus, of God Himself. Tonight we, too, are in the presence of God

through Word and Sacrament; through the Sacrament in a special way. Jesus says: Words of Institution. To the earthly elements, bread and wine, Jesus adds the heavenly ones, His true body and blood, that same body and blood which took our place on Calvary and paid for the sins of the world, our sins. His sacred body and blood in the Sacrament seal unto us the forgiveness which they won for us. We certainly do not wish to show disrespect for the Savior's feast, nor betray Him, but desire to be prepared in order to receive the blessings of the Lord's Table.

ST. PAUL'S INSTRUCTION TO THE COMMUNICANT

I. St. Paul teaches us the proper reverence.

A. To come to the Lord's Table is the will of Christ. "Till He come" (v. 26).

B. We must reverently recognize the *Real Presence*. Here we receive the greatest gift that Christ can give us, His own body and His own blood (vv. 24, 25, 27, 29). If we make special preparations as guests invited to an earthly banquet, how much more should we prepare for that heavenly banquet of which Jesus Himself is both the heavenly Host and the heavenly Food. Such preparation demands that every communicant believe the words "This is My body, My blood" and "It is given and shed for you." Therefore, "Soul, adorn thyself with gladness." Not in a spirit of indifference, but in reverent awe and heavenly happiness based upon the eternal Word of God let us approach the Table of our Lord to receive the seal of the "glad tidings of great joy."

II. The Apostle warns against man's desecration of the Holy Supper (vv. 27-29).

Some consider it just a memorial meal, not realizing that Christ's true body and true blood are present. How sad if it were only a memorial feast! This is a miracle feast. A miracle in itself, it performs a miracle in the hearts of believers. The Apostle warns against mechanical participation in Holy Communion. We are not working merely for a great number of attendants at the Lord's Supper, but for people who believe what the Lord's Supper is and what blessing it gives to the communicant.

III. The Apostle exhorts to serious self-examination (v. 28) in a candid and honest spirit, standing, as we do, in His sight, before His eyes.

Some are weak (v. 30), not sufficiently strong spiritually. They are in danger of falling an easy prey to all kinds of temptations and trials and attacks from within and without and of succumbing finally to spiritual death.

Others are sickly, do not have a healthy Christian sanity and equilibrium. God wants our lives to be well balanced and happy. This spiritual sickness, unless cured, will result in spiritual death.

Others are asleep, no longer spiritually awake. In false security they are apt to doze off into spiritual death. They do not realize that they are walking corpses.

Such self-examination is basic. A communicant must realize the gravity of the situation, lest he become guilty of profaning Jesus' body and blood. By such self-examination he judges himself (v. 31); sees God as a real Father who chastens and disciplines us, so that we may not be judged or condemned eternally.

Helps in preparing and judging ourselves are the so-called preparatory sermon, the Christian Questions and Answers, review of the meaning of the Lord's Supper, other material furnished by the pastor. As the teacher leads pupils from ignorance to knowledge, so the Word of God takes us and diagnoses our case and administers the cure. The aim and goal is not to condemn us with the world, but to save our souls (v. 32).

Having examined ourselves according to the standards of God's Word, we realize our sick and weak condition. Let us then go to Jesus and confess our sins to Him. He forgives them; He has died for them. He gives us the seal of His forgiveness. He says to us, "My son, My daughter, thy sins be forgiven thee," and He seals to us this forgiveness with His body and blood given to us in the Sacrament. May we, then, come with penitent hearts and accept gladly the forgiveness offered there. Then we shall receive the blessings of the Sacrament and be a blessing unto others, for Jesus', our Savior's, sake.

F. L. NEEBE