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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 Woelfen wehren, dass sie die Schafe nicht angreifen und mit falscher Lehre verfuehren 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 Eisenach Epistle Selections

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Trinity

1 THESS. 5, 14—24

Our text speaks of the sanctification of the Christian, that is, of the improvement of the Christian's character; note well—the *Christian's* character. The unbeliever is dead in sin. He must be born again before he can show evidences of newness of life. But the Christian is born again; he has passed from death unto life. This new spiritual life, however, is threatened with disaster. Just as infants are attacked by diseases and their very life is endangered by accidents, so the new spiritual life in the Christian is attacked by many foes. Great care is required therefore that this life may endure, may increase, and may prosper. In our text God instructs us in spiritual sanitation and hygiene so that the spiritual life in us may prosper, have a healthy development, and come "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Briefly stated, He answers the question:

How May We Christians Grow in True Godliness?

1. *By guarding against*

a) An unruly spirit, v. 14. Because we are sinful, we naturally are impatient of control. We hear men and women say, "I want to live my own life." They do not want to be dictated to. We must be on our guard against this lawless spirit. God wants obedient children, not wilful, self-willed, unruly, and rebellious prodigals. We are not to be like Reuben, who, when the notion took him, became disobedient, rebellious, self-willed; Absalom; the sons of Samuel.

b) Impatience. Just because we are in earnest about doing God's will and because we wish other Christians to do the same, we may become impatient towards those who are weak, those who have not reached the grade of virtue which, we think, they ought to have reached. Virtuous and godly persons are often in danger of becoming impatient with their fellow-Christians. This is no small fault. Thereby we wound and repel those who are beginning to walk in God's ways. Text: "Be patient," etc., v. 14. God and others have patience with us, more than we think, Titus 2, 2; Heb. 12, 1.

c) The wish to avenge ourselves, v. 15a. Every one of us is inclined to render evil for evil. And it is so easy to excuse this sin, to say to ourselves: I am not going to allow any one to step on me or to make a fool of me.

We Christians have some one who is in charge of avenging us,

Rom. 12, 19. To revenge yourself is not only sinful, it is soul-destroying, it will cause you to hate your neighbor and become a murderer. It is also very foolish. You are undertaking something that is impossible for you, and you are taking it out of the hand of One who understands His business perfectly. How foolish! Let us ever remember how much God has forgiven us and that we daily pray: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." (Application.)

But it is not sufficient to guard against these sins.

2. *We are to follow that which is good*, v. 15b.

a) "Comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak." We are to be especially kind to the unfortunate and the suffering, those who are discouraged. Satan is tempting some of these poor souls to despair. They may have had disappointments and losses. It is a blessed work to support such and to cheer them with comfort from God's Word, to assure them of your sympathy, your willingness to help, and your intercession, 2 Tim. 1, 16—18; 1 Sam. 23, 16.

b) While doing this, we are to "pray without ceasing." Oh, how much there is to pray for, for ourselves and for others! Some have thought that it is impossible to pray without ceasing. But we never stop thinking, and as we think, we ought to accompany every thought with a prayer, with sighings to God that He would guide, that He would bless, that He would help, support, confirm, all who are in need of His almighty assistance. At night we ought to fall asleep with a prayer, and as we face each morning a new day, we ought to pray.

c) "Rejoice evermore." God does not wish us to obey Him with groans and tears as if we were condemned bond-slaves. While we avoid the evil, while we pray and do good, we should rejoice. "In everything give thanks." There is no true prayer without thanksgiving. If we but give thought to it that God has lifted from us the heaviest burden, the curse of our sin; that Jesus has suffered for us the pangs of damnation which we deserved, then why should not our whole life be a life of thanksgiving and praise? True: Acts 14, 22; but: Rom. 8, 18. We are to be *cheerful* Christians. Discouragement, wailing, despair, are so many accusations against God, as if He were making a mistake, as if He were injuring us, whereas in reality He is blessing us.

d) Therefore let us not quench the spirit, v. 19. If others wish to sing God's praise, let us not discourage them; and if God moves us to praise, let us give way to it, glorify His holy name. David; Luther; Paul Gerhardt.

e) There is nothing that will help us so much in this as giving attention to prophesying, that is, giving attention to the Word of

God. There we have the testament of God which appoints us heirs of the inheritance undefiled and that fadeth not away.

f) And in all this we are to be circumspect, not accept everything that is offered to us, but: vv. 21, 22; cf. Neh. 6, 3; Gen. 33, 12—17.

But "Who is sufficient for these things?" Our text has an answer.

3. *We should always be and remain mindful that God is faithful.*

a) V. 24. He is the One who has enlightened you, called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. He is the One who has enriched you with this treasure. He has begun a good work in you. You have tasted the sweetness of God's blessings in body and soul.

b) This God is not going to forsake you now. He is not going to undo what He has done; He is not going to leave undone what He has begun, Phil. 1, 6. Text, v. 23. God has not called us to be robbers, thieves, murderers, but He has called us to be children in the family of a perfect heavenly Father and to become more and more like Him. It is to be a *permanent* adoption; and after we have passed the trials, endured the training, there will come the glory of eternal blessedness. Let us therefore not give way to discouragement, let us not allow any evil or any evil one to mislead us, to change our minds, but: v. 15b.

Our text closes with a sincere and consoling prayer for us Christians. That very prayer teaches us that God is the One who must work in us. He is the Husbandman who has engrafted us branches in the true Vine Jesus Christ, John 15, 1, 2. And He, through His Word and Sacraments, will continue to bless us, to increase in us true godliness. The pastor sows the Seed, the pastor waters the plant, but God gives the increase, 1 Cor. 3, 6. Let us be very careful that we do not interfere with His blessed work. Let us repeat this prayer of our text, v. 23. Let us with true sincerity of heart and fervency sing: Hymn 347. — Heb. 13, 20, 21.

MARTIN S. SOMMER

Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Trinity

HEB. 10, 32—39

Much emphasis in present-day religion upon life in this world. Social gospel. *Diessetsreligion*. Modernism, having given up the Biblical teaching of bodily resurrection, of Judgment, of heaven, finds it necessary to emphasize a shallow religion of morality for this world only or at least chiefly for this world.

The Bible does not forget to emphasize that our religion is to be a "workaday" religion, Luke 1, 74, 75; 2 Cor. 5, 15; Matt. 5, 15;

Gal. 6, 10. But the Bible above all things points to the time after death, to heaven, Matt. 6, 20; 2 Cor. 5, 1. It is just the thought of heaven, future relief, rest, bliss, which it uses to make the troubles of this life bearable, to encourage to greater consecration and faithfulness. This is the message of our text. Let us consider

The Certain Hope of Heavenly Bliss

1. *It produces patience in suffering*
2. *It encourages faithfulness unto salvation*

1

a) Study of context reveals a very serious warning against apostasy, Heb. 10, 26. 29. 31. In place also today. Large numbers of those who at one time were Christians, Lutherans, accepted the truth, have gone with the world. But after this warning against apostasy the apostle suddenly begins with an admonition to patience in suffering and of faithfulness to Christ, and his motivation is the certain hope of heaven, a better and more enduring substance, v. 34 c.

b) Introducing the subject of suffering and persecution, the apostle refers to the former days, v. 32. These former days were the days of their first love, when they were so filled with love and zeal for the saving truth which had come into their hearts that they considered it an honor to suffer. Cp. Acts 8, 1; 12, 1. Not an easy matter; for it was a fight of affliction, a bitter wrestling with afflictions, to which they were not accustomed. It is well to remember former days, days of blessings and joys, days of trials and afflictions. We forget so readily. The rush of present time wipes out impressions so quickly. It is well for Christians to sit down and think, to meditate upon circumstances of former life, upon the ways of God in all those days.

c) The nature of their suffering. V. 32 b had already indicated the intensity of the struggle. V. 33 indicates that some of the trouble was personal. "Made a gazing-stock" means they were made a spectacle. In case of martyrdom in the arena, when cast before wild beasts, this was true in the fullest sense of the term. Here it means to be made the center of derision and scorn. Also suffered with others, v. 33 b, with Paul in particular, v. 34, evidencing a Christian spirit of sympathy and compassion with brethren. This spirit is often lacking today. During depression we did not always show proper sympathy to suffering brethren. Often did nothing for them, but left all matters of help to Government or other agencies. Early Christians were willing even to give up

their goods for the sake of the Gospel. They knew higher possessions, Matt. 6, 20; Luke 12, 33.

d) What made these people so willing, so patient in suffering? Text, v. 34 c. Knowledge of higher possessions, of better days in the future, made them willing to bear everything for the Gospel's sake. Same should be true today. Just as a person is willing to undergo a painful operation because he hopes for a better day, better health, so we Christians, with the certain hope of heaven in our heart, should be able to bear the greatest affliction. Your cross may be heavy today; assurance of future bliss should lighten it greatly.

2

a) The certain hope of future bliss also encourages the Christian to be faithful unto the end, vv. 35. 36. "The remembrance of what they had already endured and the consciousness of their lasting possession in heaven are the best and most urgent motives to keep the Christian steadfast and cheerfully confident." (Kretzmann, *Pop. Com.*)

b) The effort to remain faithful must be constant, but it will not last too long, v. 37. The coming of Christ will relieve the Christian, bring him to his goal. Christ comes when He calls Christian home in hour of death. Christ will not delay too long. Cp. Hos. 2, 3. 4; Is. 26. Just when trouble seems greatest, the Lord "mighty to help" will come. Therefore: Heb. 10, 23.

c) Faithfulness is not our own merit. We remain true only through the power of God, 1 Pet. 1, 5, operating through the Gospel, Hab. 2, 4; Rom. 1, 17. Stress the need of regular use of the means of grace, churchgoing, attendance at Lord's Table, family worship, private study of Bible.

d) Dangers of backsliding, v. 38 b. 2 Pet. 2, 20; Heb. 10, 26. Show your own church-members what faithlessness, spiritual carelessness, will lead to.

e) V. 39. Commendation of faithful hearers. V. 39 a shows that the writer of the epistle has good opinion of his people. V. 39 b shows that it is the hope of heaven, "the saving of the soul," that is the highest incentive to faithfulness unto the end. Cp. Rev. 2, 10; 3, 11. As the runner continues in the race because he sees the goal ahead, the crown of victory, so we Christians are faithful unto the end because of the crown of eternal salvation beckoning us. Picture the glories of heavenly bliss and make final appeal to be willing to suffer, to serve, to be steadfast and faithful.

E. L. ROSCHKE

Twenty-Sixth Sunday after Trinity

REV. 2, 8—11

At the end of the calendar year many contracts expire. At such a time we are naturally confronted by the question, Shall the contracts be renewed? (Give examples.)

This Sunday brings to a close another church-year. While our contract with God does not expire at the end of the church-year,—never, in fact,—yet we shall be able to enter the new church-year with greater cheerfulness and satisfaction if we pause today to let the Bible answer for us the question: Shall I continue to follow Jesus faithfully, or shall I join that vast number who annually turn back and walk no more with Him? Cf. John 6, 66.

“Be Thou Faithful unto Death”*1. That admonition is needed.*

a) Suffering is one of the greatest stumbling-blocks in a Christian's life. Most people find it difficult to understand why Christians trying to live their life in keeping with God's will should suffer. Every pastor again and again hears the complaint: “I go to church, I try to do what is right, why must I suffer this way?” The situation becomes even more disturbing when faithfulness to God *brings on* suffering — persecution. Seems as though God were going back on us. Wrestling with that difficulty, many people find it difficult to continue following Jesus cheerfully. “What's the use!”

Yes, suffering for the Master is often more difficult than laboring for Him. Persons whose enthusiasm knows no bounds when they are privileged to render heroic services for Christ often lose heart completely when they have to suffer in spite of their discipleship, yes, *because* of it.

b) Hence the admonition in the text is needed, “Be thou faithful,” etc. aa) We need to be reminded that we can expect suffering even though we are faithful followers of Jesus. The text is addressed to the congregation at Smyrna. One of seven. All seven reprov'd with exception of two; Smyrna one of the two; faithful congregation. At the same time it had to suffer. “Tribulation” — persecution, Jewish and Gentile hostility. “Poverty” — owing perhaps to confiscation of property by hostile government or boycotting. Because of their poverty they could not defend themselves. Seeing money slip away from us is a trying ordeal. “Blasphemy” — mockery of those who posed as God's chosen people, yet were everything but that. “Prison” — greater tribulations still coming. Being a faithful follower of Jesus is no protection against suffering in this world. God is not “going back on us” when He lets us suffer.

bb) We need to be reminded that we can expect suffering *because* we faithfully follow Jesus. The tribulations mentioned in the text might have been escaped had the Christians of Smyrna renounced Jesus. Many an abuse in this world can be escaped if we cease following Jesus.

cc) We need to be reminded that God expects us to be faithful in spite of the suffering which such faithfulness brings with it.

dd) "Faithful unto *death*" is significant. Evidently a martyr's death is meant. Not only does Jesus mean to say that we are to remain faithful until such a time when God will call us out of this world through death; we should remain faithful to Him even though our faithfulness be rewarded by martyrdom. If even a martyr's death is no excuse for turning back, then lesser discomforts are certainly no excuse. Jesus wants us to continue faithfully following Him regardless of the cost.

Since such faithfulness is not an easy task, the solemn admonition in the text is needed.

2. That admonition should be heeded.

a) Because it is uttered by Jesus. "First . . . Last," the Eternal One. What He says is final; when we follow His command, we are safe. "Dead . . . alive," Lord of death; to Him we can entrust ourselves safely even though we be dead.

b) Because He who utters that admonition knows what is involved. "I know." Not blindly giving orders, failing to see the harm that might come to those who follow those orders; He is well aware of what is before us; He does not demand the impossible of us, 1 Cor. 10, 13.

c) Because the suffering which a Christian must endure does not bring actual harm. "Fear none of those things," etc.

d) Because the sufferings are intended to test us (and strengthen us). "That ye may be tried."

e) Because God holds in check those who trouble us. "Ten days"—figurative, indicating a definite limit. The devil is like a dog chained to a tree; within the radius of the chain he can do much damage, but he cannot go as far as he wants to. Example of Job.

f) Because a life far superior to life here on earth awaits those who remain faithful. "Crown of life." "Not . . . hurt of the second death," hell, Rev. 20, 14; 21, 8. Cp. Matt. 10, 28.

g) Our faithfulness or unfaithfulness to God should not be determined by what will befall us today or tomorrow; let us consider what eternity has in store for us and on the basis of that make our decision.

h) Remaining faithful unto death is not within the ability of human will-power. Think of Peter. "The spirit is willing," etc. We need the aid of God's Spirit. We need the means of grace, through which the Spirit of God operates. We need regular communion with God in prayer. "Watch and pray."

Conclusion. — It is possible that the "angel" (pastor) of the congregation at Smyrna, to whom the words of the text were addressed originally, was the famous Polycarp. Be this as it may, he was later bishop of Smyrna. In 168 A. D. he suffered martyrdom, having replied to the proconsul's demand to recant: "Fourscore years and six I have served the Lord, and He never wronged me; how, then, can I blaspheme my King and Savior?" May God give us such faithfulness! Hymn 378. RUDOLPH PRANGE

Day of Humiliation and Prayer

HEB. 12, 12—17

The first of Luther's Ninety-five Theses impresses upon us that our whole lives are to be one continuous repentance. But a Day of Humiliation and Prayer such as we are observing today is a special admonition to acknowledge and lament our sins and ask God's forgiveness. In doing so, we bring our God the homage and worship due Him.

As did Pharaoh's butler, so let us today say with penitent hearts:

"I do Remember My Faults This Day"

1. *I have failed in my duty to myself*
2. *I have failed in my duty to others*
3. *Above all, I have failed in my duty to my God*

1

a) Vv. 12. 13. The holy writer recurs here to what he has spoken about in v. 1, where he compares the Christians to athletes that are contending for a prize and are putting forth all their skill and strength in doing so. He exhorts his readers to recover from their faint-heartedness and become zealous and determined to bring the struggle for mastery to a successful end. His very words accuse them by implication of spiritlessness. — Must we not admit that we, too, have been faint in the presence of trials and have thus deprived ourselves of the very blessings these were to bring us? Have we not seen in our troubles only crosses instead of the means to attain crowns? Have we not let them be burdens to weaken us when they were intended to be means to strengthen us? Have we not thus hindered the development of our spiritual life to its full purposes?

b) These faults we should not only admit but correct. By God's grace we should resolutely determine to advance in the way of holiness for the sake of the "lame," the weak, whom our lack of consistency might easily give reason to stumble, but especially for our own sake, too, since by remissness and vacillation we may in the end "fall short of the grace of God." Slothfulness will result in our falling behind, and it may prevent us from reaching the goal and result in our never "seeing the Lord."

2

a) I have not "followed peace with all men," v. 14. Often have I harbored a grudge against my neighbor and refused to forget a wrong or slight. I have not been free from malice and vindictiveness. I have frequently delighted in retaliating, repaying evil with evil. Thus I have not only retarded my own spiritual growth, but injured the growth of others. I have allowed this or that "root of bitterness," v. 15, to spring up to the great harm of the Church and the "defiling" of many. Oh, may we all remember these faults this day with sorrowful hearts and by God's grace determine to root them up and cast them out!

b) Then, too, let us this day remember that we have not exercised that diligent care over our brethren that our Christian duty demands, vv. 13. 15. We have not helped the weak among us to grow as we should have done, neither have we always watched over them lest they go astray. Brotherly admonition is sadly neglected among us. While it is the special duty of pastors to "look diligently" to the flock entrusted to them, the holy writer plainly indicates in v. 15 that all members of a Christian congregation should exercise a loving oversight over one another. How much better would matters stand among us if every Christian would look upon himself as his "brother's keeper"! One important reason for Christians to gather together into congregations is that they may practise a loving supervision over one another.

3

a) Vv. 14 b. 16 a. How solemn this word: "Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Plain, simple words, but sharp and powerful. They remind us of Lev. 19, 2; Matt. 5, 48. To cleanse us from our natural sinfulness, Jesus shed His precious blood, and by the gracious working of the Holy Spirit through the means of grace we shall wash ourselves by faith in Jesus' blood. And by such faith we shall then turn away from sin and in our daily life prove ourselves to be Jesus' own by fighting sin, world, and Satan and walking ever more perfectly before God in newness of life. Such sins as fornication, v. 16, and other gross immortality

the Christian will shun. He will strive to keep his thoughts clean and his lips pure. Are we as we should be in thoughts, words, and deeds?

b) Then let us in all earnestness ask ourselves whether we duly value the things that are of God. Vv. 16. 17 tell us of Esau's sin. Do we esteem spiritual things as highly as we should? Are we not in danger of esteeming the things of this world, temporal things, higher than we should? Esau is a type of the worldly-minded person, since he sold his birthright for a "morsel of meat." In doing so, he lost the blessing of the first-born.

Esau's later regrets and all his pleadings were unable to undo the results of his "profanity."

May Esau be a warning to us! Let us ever realize how sinful it is to sell our spiritual blessings, which Christ gained for us with such a tremendous price, and always bear in mind how shortsighted we should be to exchange the salvation of our immortal souls for the fleeting pleasures of this life.

Well for us if we with contrite hearts recognize and acknowledge our sins against ourselves, our fellow-men, and our God and then ask God to give us grace to do better in the future. God will surely hear our prayer and grant us His gracious help, Ps. 32, 1. 2. 7. 11; Is. 41, 10.

F. J. LANKENAU

