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The Chronological Sequence of the Pauline Letters.

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In chapter XXVII of his excellent book *Archeology and the Bible* Professor Barton remarks: "The chronology of the life of Paul cannot be fully determined from the Bible itself. Such chronological data as the New Testament affords helps us only to a relative chronology. Could the year of one of the dates given by the New Testament be determined by a date of the Roman Empire, it would enable scholars to affix with approximate certainty the other dates." (Page 439.) Since the discussion has always been based on a relative chronology, the various systems differ from one another by from four to five years, and as a result there has been quite a little bit of confusion pertaining to the chronological data of Paul's letters.

So far as the relative chronology of the Pauline letters is concerned, we have the following passages of Scripture to aid us in forming a picture of this section of history. In Gal. 1, 18 Paul writes: "Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter." This period of time is evidently to be reckoned from the date of his conversion and includes the time of the so-called Arabian sojourn. In Gal. 2, 1 the Apostle, connecting up with the last date mentioned by him, writes: "Then fourteen years after, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas and took Titus with me also." This trip is evidently identical with the one described in Acts 15, the occasion being that of the so-called Apostolic Council. In Acts 18, 11 we are told that Paul continued in Corinth a year and six months, and afterwards it is stated that Paul after this tarried there yet a good while. This was after he had been brought before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia. In the same chapter we are told that, before Paul had started on his third missionary journey, he spent some time in Antioch before his departure for Galatia and Phrygia. In chapter 19, 8 we find that Paul went into the synagog at Ephesus and spoke boldly for the space of three months. The Jews having turned from him,

How Shall We Celebrate the Anniversary of the Reformation?

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There never has been a time when the people of our country had as much religion as they are having to-day; but there has never been a time when they had as little true religion as they are having to-day. Our country has more churches than it has ever had; our daily papers are carrying a very large amount of church advertising and church news; our secular magazines are publishing many religious editorials, articles, and stories; the market is flooded with religious books of all kinds; some denominations are making strenuous efforts to put their doctrines before the people; even in our courts and political life religious issues are being injected by such trials as the one of recent date in which the evolution theory was the prominent feature, as well as by the consistent effort on the part of some churches to have so-called Christian laws written upon our statute-books. All this is bringing religion in an increased measure to the attention of the general public. But, on the other hand, it is sadly true that an unusually large percentage of the religion which is preached and taught and published to-day is insidiously deceptive and utterly false; some of the largest and most influential church denominations of our country are no longer stressing their distinctive doctrines and a religion of positive conviction; and even in these very so-called Christian denominations men who deny all the fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion are permitted to teach in theological seminaries and to preach from so-called Christian pulpits. As a result, our country is to-day less Christian than it ever has been before and, of course, less morally sound. A destructive criticism of the Christian religion is producing increasingly bad results in home, church, and state. The religious situation of our otherwise glorious country is sad beyond description. If our country continues on its religious downward path, then — so the Bible and history teach us — our country is headed toward utter ruin. And this holds good of the world at large.

There is only one remedy which can cure the ills of our time. When a similar situation arose in the days of Jeremiah, the Lord had Jeremiah tell the people: "Stand ye in the ways and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." Jer. 6, 16. The old paths and the good way of which the Lord spoke was the way of the

true, revealed religion. That is our only hope to-day: a return to the old Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is only by means of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that the sin-cursed world can be saved.

The Lutheran Church, which has remained true to her Reformation heritage, still preaches and teaches the old Gospel of Jesus Christ. This fact, taken in connection with the present deplorable condition of the visible Church on earth, emphasizes our privileges as well as our opportunities and responsibilities. Says the Lord: "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." Luke 12, 48. We ought to bear this in mind especially also when we celebrate the anniversary of the Reformation on October 31 this fall. How shall we celebrate? I answer:—

1. *By becoming better acquainted with the history of the Reformation for the purpose of a better understanding of the utter necessity of the Reformation and a better appreciation of its blessings.*

2. *By a more thorough study of the Bible as a protection against error and for a greater benefit and enjoyment of the blessings of the Reformation.*

3. *By a continued strict adherence to the Word of God and by a more conscientious application of this Word of God in our churches and in our daily life, thereby proving our thankfulness to God for the blessings of the Reformation.*

4. *By a greatly increased effort on our part to spread, with the gracious help of God, the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ, so that the largest possible number of our fellow-sinners and fellow-redeemed may hear it and share with us the blessings of the Reformation.*

1) How shall we celebrate the anniversary of the Reformation? Not by idolizing Dr. Luther, not in a spirit of pharisaic self-glorification, not by a mere perfunctory recital of Reformation facts to our own people, not by using the opportunity simply to make a noise in the world, but by becoming better acquainted with the history of the Reformation for a better understanding of the utter necessity of the Reformation and a better appreciation of the blessings of the Reformation.

Both example and precept of Scripture bid us do so. The people of Israel of old were commanded to tell their children how God had delivered them out of Egypt and led them through the Red Sea and the river Jordan to the Land of Promise, in order that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord,

that it is mighty, and that God's people might fear the name of the Lord, their God, forever, Josh. 4, 24. Even so we should study the history of the Reformation and diligently teach it to our children that we may know that the Lord's hand has been mighty and gracious to deliver us from the bondage of papistic idolatry by restoring to us His Word in its purity. The psalmist says: "Walk about Zion and go round about her, tell the towers thereof, mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following." Ps. 48, 12, 13.

In the preface to his Life of Luther, Mathesius tells us that only fifty years after the nailing of the Ninety-five Theses to the church-door at Wittenberg and only twenty short years after Luther's death many people knew little or nothing of the deplorable condition of the Church at Luther's time. Small wonder that now, over four hundred years after that time, people generally are sadly ignorant of the Reformation history!

Expecting a good citizen to know the history of his country, may we not expect a good member of the Lutheran Church to know the history of his Church, at least its great essentials, if not its details? Without such knowledge one can truly enjoy the blessings of the Reformation, as millions have done and are doing, but without it one will never understand the necessity of the Reformation nor appreciate the wonderful and gracious ways of God in giving us these blessings through the work of the Reformation.

Let us celebrate the anniversary of the Reformation by making a special study of the Reformation history in our churches, in our schools, and in our homes. The books and Reformation programs published by our Synod and the reading of our church-papers will, among much other good literature, be a wonderful help in this direction. Then such great historical facts as the nailing of the Ninety-five Theses to the church-door at Wittenberg, Luther's defense before the Diet at Worms in 1521, his good testimony and steadfastness at Marburg in 1529, and the writing of his catechisms will, in their historical setting, be viewed in a new light, and the whole work of the Reformation, together with its bearing upon present conditions in the Church and in the State the world over, will be better understood and appreciated.

2) How shall we celebrate the anniversary of the Reformation? By a more thorough study of the Bible as a protection against error and for a greater benefit and enjoyment of the blessings of the Reformation.

What is the Bible? "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." 2 Tim. 3, 16. The Bible is the Word of God, by which God would make us wise unto salvation by faith which is in Christ Jesus. The Bible is that Word of which Jesus says: "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth; and the truth shall make you free." John 8, 31. 32.

From the Bible, Luther learned to know his Savior, and by the Bible he was made free from the spiritual slavery of the Pope and of hell. The Bible, this mighty sword of the Spirit, was Luther's only weapon in his spiritual warfare. With the Bible, Luther defied the Pope and the emperor at Worms in 1521; with the Bible he refuted Zwingli and others at Marburg in 1529; from the Bible he preached his sermons; from the Bible he wrote his catechisms; from the Bible he took his doctrines. Luther stood squarely on the Bible.

How can we know that Luther took his doctrines from the Bible? Shall we take his word for it? No, a thousand times no! Luther was not a new pope. Luther translated the Bible and put it into the hands of the people, so that the people could themselves read and be convinced. The open Bible, the Bible in the hands of the people, is the fruit of the Reformation. The Bible has been translated into more than four hundred languages and is found the world over.

But to have the Bible will do us no good if we do not read and study it. How shall we be able to detect false doctrines if we do not know our Bible? How shall we get the full benefit and enjoyment of the open Bible if we do not know our Bible? The average member of the Lutheran Church is better indoctrinated than the average member of other churches. But does the average Lutheran know his Bible as he ought to know it? "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly," says Paul, Col. 3, 16. And Peter says: "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." 2 Pet. 3, 18. The anniversary of the Reformation is an appeal to the world at large, and to Lutherans especially, to study the Bible.

3) How shall we celebrate the anniversary of the Reformation? By a continued strict adherence to the Word of God and by a more conscientious application of the Word of God in our churches and in our daily lives to prove our thankfulness to God for the blessings of the Reformation.

The time in which we are living is a time of spiritual indifferntism and of a "go-as-you-please Christianity." The devil tried to crush the Church by bitter and bloody persecutions. He failed. "The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church." The devil tried to crush the Church by taking God's Book from the people. He failed. God, through Luther, gave the Bible back to the people. Now the devil is making another attempt — perhaps his last attempt before the end of the world. He has changed his tactics. Among us he is transformed into an angel of light. 2 Cor. 11, 14. He is not taking the Bible from us, but he is trying to rob us of its contents. Never before has the Bible been assailed as generally and as assiduously as it is to-day. Many calling themselves Christians no longer believe that the Bible is the inspired and unerring Word of God. Many in the visible ranks of Christendom and such as are without, such as Christian Scientists, deny every essential Christian doctrine, but are continually "quoting the Bible" and trying to make the world believe that they are standing on the Bible, but they are misinterpreting it, distorting it, perverting it, and with the devil's theology they are deceiving themselves and others. Unchristian men are known to be in the seats of learning and in the pulpits and are tolerated. We need not be pessimists to say that the visible Church of Christ of our day is in a most deplorable condition. There are many pulpits which seldom or never give a clear-cut answer to the question, What must I do to be saved?

What shall we do in view of all this? The temptation besets us on all sides to do as others do. We Missouri Synod Lutherans have long ago been decried as being overstrict, narrow, bigoted, arrogant, uncharitable, and behind the times. Why? Simply because we insist upon a strict Lutheranism, which means strict adherence to every word of the Bible. This is our Reformation inheritance. Shall we give up our inheritance? God forbid! To give up this inheritance means, in its last analysis, to give up the Bible. God forbid! If we were to cast aside this inheritance, we would not be loyal to our God, not loyal to the truth, not loyal to our Church; we would, on the contrary, be an unthankful people, — we could not celebrate the anniversary of the Reformation. Let us in these trying times say with Luther, "Here we stand, we cannot do otherwise; God help us!"

But let us not make another mistake, which would prove to be just as fatal. Let us not *in theory* confess the truth, but *in*

practise deny it. That would be dead orthodoxy. Our Lutheranism would then be an abomination to the Lord, but the devil's delight.

The anniversary of the Reformation is an earnest appeal to us in these days of a "go-as-you-please Christianity" for a *more conscientious application* of the divine truth in our churches and in our daily lives. Let us not deceive ourselves! Let us remember that we are by nature not better than others. Let us remember that only by the grace of God we are Christians and Lutherans. Let us remember that "pride goeth before destruction." Prov. 16, 18. Let us not disregard the apostle's warning: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. 10, 12. And oh, how many have fallen!

As far back as 1870, over fifty years ago, the sainted Dr. Walther preached a sermon to his St. Louis congregation on the text from Galatians: "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" Gal. 5, 7. His theme was: "*Wir sind nicht mehr, die wir waren,*" *We no longer are what we were.* His sermon was a mighty call to repentance. Would the sainted Doctor, if he were among us to-day, find conditions much improved, or would he, in view of conditions, have to issue a still mightier call to repentance? Have we not permitted indifferentism and materialism and worldliness to creep into our churches and manifest itself in our daily lives? Have not many of our pastors and congregations already, at times, yielded to the demand to do church-work along the path of least resistance? While boasting of our orthodoxy, have we not in many instances sadly neglected our Christianity? What a mistake! How unthankful to our God for the blessings of the Reformation!

4) How shall we celebrate the anniversary of the Reformation? By a greatly increased effort on our part, with the gracious help of God, to spread the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ, in order to have the largest possible number of our fellow-sinners and fellow-redeemed hear the Gospel and share with us the blessings of the Reformation.

God has, without any merit or worthiness of our own, entrusted to us His Word, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in all its truth and purity. Our Lutheran Church teaches the way of salvation, not by works, but by the grace of God, through faith in Jesus Christ. Our Lutheran Church teaches the true doctrines of the Sacraments and of sanctification; in short, it teaches the whole counsel of God for man's salvation and God's glory. That is our undeserved *privilege*.

In the world to-day the vast majority of people are not Christians. In this our country two-thirds are without the Church, and many of those who are in the churches are adrift on the sea of spiritual uncertainty and doubt; many even are rank unbelievers. That is our glorious *opportunity* for service.

Our privilege and our opportunity go to make up our *great responsibility*. We dare not keep the truth for ourselves. By the grace of God it has been given to us, in order that we, in turn, should give it to others. We owe it to our God and Savior, and we owe it to the world to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all men, to preach it in all languages. The apostles were accused by the Jewish Council of having filled Jerusalem with their doctrine. Have we filled the world with the true doctrine entrusted to us? Have we filled this our country with this true doctrine? Does every man, woman, and child in this our country know what our Lutheran Church teaches? Why not? Have we made every possible effort to let them know? Have we at all times been ready to sacrifice our material blessings on the Lord's altar to let the world share our spiritual blessings? Or have we spent our money for unnecessary things and for mere luxuries while the cause of missions has gone begging? What have we done? What are we doing? What do we intend to do?

The world needs the old Gospel. The Lord has called us to preach it. The opportunities are awaiting us. Our program of expansion must go on. Our colleges must continue to be enlarged. Our mission-work must grow. Our financial support must be increased. And for all this we need more faith and love and zeal and courage and patience and self-sacrifice.

May the Lord, our God, graciously keep us from being an unthankful people! May He stir us mightily with His Spirit to give the honor and glory due to His name for the blessings of the Reformation! May He graciously open our eyes to behold His wonderful and gracious dealings with men through the work of the Reformation! Let us learn to know and love better the Bible which He again put into our hands; let us believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ for our salvation; let us apply it in our churches and live it in our daily lives; and let us spread it to the salvation of many. Thus we shall, with a song of rejoicing and a shout of triumph which will make heaven's arches ring from one end of the world to the other, glorify God and give thanks to Him which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.