

HENRIC SCHARTAU
AND
THE ORDER OF GRACE

Biography by Henrik Hägglund and
Fifteen Sermons by Henric Schartau

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Ninth Sunday After Trinity

In the Name of the Great Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

What shall I do? The steward in our text put this question to himself, when he realized that he was near his fall. In a wretched world, full of toil and sorrow, this sad question is not infrequently heard. Men have fascinating speculations, but some unexpected accident upsets their plans, and they are cast into greater difficulties than before. Then all shrewdness disappears, and hope is changed into perplexity. In this condition a person looks round about everywhere for counsel and help, inquiring with anxiety, "What shall I do?" Luk. 16. 3.

With most people this concern extends only to the misery pertaining to this life. O confident sinner, either you never think as far as eternity, or you consider it an easy matter to be saved. You consider it great, important, and fortunate to feel good while here, to be glad, to get what you want in life, but thoughts concerning your eternal welfare you leave for an advanced age, for the sick-bed, or for the time of death, as though the reflections of a few brief moments, and a few sighs were thinking enough, provision enough, for your soul and for eternity, while your whole life-time has not sufficed for the innumerable concerns for this world and for your body.

If you stopped to think why you have come into this world, and whither you shall go when you must depart; how helpless you are with reference to your soul's salvation; how many and powerful enemies surround you; how unexpectedly death may come upon you; how great is your guilt before God; how long eternity is, and how impossible it is there to repent—if you meditate on these matters, then, like the steward, you would begin to worry and, even with reference to your salvation, earnestly inquire, "What shall I do?"

Indeed, you cannot do anything for your salvation. Your Saviour has done everything to purchase it for you. The Holy Spirit has undertaken to do everything to have you share salvation. The only thing for you to do is to use the means of grace, accept grace, and not resist the workings of the Holy Spirit. We do not wish to enter more deeply into these meditations, until we have found occasion in the Gospel of the day and sought God's grace for the performance. We ask this in the Saviour's name, praying, "Our Father," etc.

Proposition.

THE FIRST WORKINGS OF GRACE BY WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT SEEKS TO AWAKEN CONFIDENT SINNERS TO ANXIETY FOR THEIR ETERNAL SALVATION

1. The first workings of grace.
2. A great number act in an entirely wrong way when spiritual emotions arise.
3. The correct and only way to take when anxiety for salvation arises in the soul.

First Part.

*The First Workings of Grace, whereby the Holy Spirit
Seeks to Awaken Secure Sinners to Anxiety
for Their Eternal Salvation.*

“There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he was wasting his goods.” So we read in the Gospel. God is this rich man, “the same Lord of all, rich unto all that call upon him.” A lot of this riches, both in the kingdom of nature and of grace, He has given you, as stewards, to use and to care for. The servant in the Gospel wasted his master’s goods, not by reason of human weakness or inability to look after everything, but by reason of his wickedness, that he did not wish to do better, or his carelessness, being unconcerned about his master’s goods. There are, indeed, many who act no better with reference to the goods of their Lord. Here is one who has good health, but it is being destroyed, either by vice or in riotous enjoyments. Here is one whom God has given opportunity to acquire great learning, but it is being lazily neglected. Here is another on whom God has lavished worldly riches, but he squanders it as a profligate or he hoards it as a miser. To each one of you God has given the most precious of all His treasures, His only begotten Son, but a large number of you pass Him by in unbelief. God grants you emotions of grace, but you either resist them or misinterpret them to the appropriation of false comfort. He gives you time for repentance, but you abuse it and move heedlessly on in sins and impenitence. Nor is this, as you wish to pre-

tend, done by reason of your weakness, because you are an imperfect human being. No, it is done by reason of your impenitence, by reason of an obdurate soul, which is unwilling to accept the grace of God unto repentance.

The unrighteous steward did not think of a day of reckoning before him. Like another "evil servant," mentioned in Mt. 24. 48, he probably thought, "My Lord tarrieth"; but while he was using his master's goods in an unjustifiable manner, the report of his faithlessness went abroad, and his master returned. When the steward least expected it, a message came from his master, summoning the steward to give an account. In like manner you also, O unconcerned soul, are wasting your Lord's goods and neglecting His grace. You may, indeed, cherish the thought that death will tarry, and that in the meantime you are without responsibility; but when you feel most secure, perchance, in the midst of a sinful life, a fearful message reaches you from God. A few words from the preacher come like arrows from the Lord and pierce your hardened heart, causing pain and anxiety. A few lines in a devotional book become to you like the message of the Lord to Ezekiel, "Written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe." Sometimes the Holy Spirit makes use of some word which has lain inactive in your memory. This word becomes heavy and weighty, sinking down into the heart, and setting it in motion. These first workings of grace, this first anxiety for salvation, are results of the Holy Spirit's operation through the Word, just as the master in our Gospel "called the steward

and said unto him, What is this that I hear of thee?" Even if outward occurrences contribute to this result, as in the case of the jailer in Philippi, it is nevertheless the Word which brings about true anxiety for the soul's salvation; and it is the redemption wrought by Jesus which is the foundation of it all. His "blood speaketh better than that of Abel." It calls to God even for the unconverted sinner, lest it be in vain for him, and in order that he may experience its power unto spiritual awakening. It calls and, as it were, admonishes the Spirit of grace to try His utmost to arouse the sinner to an earnest concern for a share in the propitiation which this blood has wrought before God.

1. This results from the upbraidings of conscience. "What is this that I hear of thee?" said the master in our text to his servant. Although everything is silent in the dormant heart of a sinner, still conscience occasionally raises its voice, upbraiding him, "Thus you are doing, that is how you live." Do you suppose that

"The Lord shall not see,
Neither shall the God of Jacob consider?

He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?
He that formed the eye, shall He not see?"

the evil that you are doing? Shall He not hear your sinful speech? Does not the great searcher of hearts know the abominations, which you are harboring in your mind? Indeed, it is He that inquires, "What is this that I hear of thee?" Is it right to live thus? Or why do you do this? Your oaths and curses — are they your songs of praise for the good which the

Lord has done even to you? Your intentional sins — are they the compensation for His goodness? The hostility, hardness, and indifference of your heart to your Saviour — are they your acknowledgement of His poverty, of His labor, of the hatred which He endured, of His anxiety, of His wounds, of His pain, of His death? May we not ask with Jeremiah, “Shall evil be recompensed for good?” Or in the words of our text, “What is this that I hear of thee?” Such thoughts are often considered to be merely self-assumed fancies, or at best a natural consequence of a manifestly wicked life, but they are not the works of nature; they are the works of grace. It is the Holy Spirit, who thus quickens the conscience and arouses the sinner to think. If this supreme custodian of the conscience did not awaken sinners, they would never awake themselves after having once fallen asleep.

2. The first workings of grace appear with unexpected reminders of death. “Thou canst be no longer steward,” said the master in our text to his servant. He had to leave his stewardship. Such will be your lot in death. Then you must leave the world and its goods. The master in our text prepared his servant for the final dismissal. In like manner God reminds you that you must die, and He does this before death comes. He does not reveal when or how death will come, but He reminds you of the brevity of life and of mortality. You live on a long time without thinking of this, but all at once there comes a thought of death. Dear friends pass away, and you reflect to-day of what may happen you to-morrow. Accidents and dangers represent death as more probable and, as it

were, near at hand. A certain fear follows upon such presentiments of the approaching King of Terror. Nor are these thoughts of death merely vain fancies or natural fears, for they sometimes occur without any apparent reason. No, it is the Holy Spirit, who would "teach you to number your days, that you may get an heart of wisdom," that you may consider the aim of life and realize that you must soon "fly away."

3. The Holy Spirit awakens a sinner with secret dread of the day of reckoning, of judgment, and of punishment, "Render the account of thy stewardship." The servant had received his stewardship with the understanding that he should render account to his master. God gives freely, but He expects an account. In death it will appear how you have used the talent intrusted to you. If you wish to know what you have to hope or fear, just ask your conscience how your account stands. The judgment there found is written by the finger of God. It is the same judgment which will eventually be pronounced against you before the world, but God warns you while it may yet be altered. Believe me, the dread of eternity, which occasionally arises in your soul, the fear of hell, which often causes your heart to shudder — these are the workings of grace wrought by the Holy Spirit, who seeks to awaken you to an earnest anxiety for your eternal welfare and salvation.

Second Part.

How a Great Number of People Act in an Entirely Wrong Way, When Such Anxiety Arises in Their Heart

The unfaithful steward is represented as being in anxiety over his situation. He gave expression to his uneasiness of mind, as we recall from the introduction. He realized his sad predicament, but he was not heartily concerned about regaining his master's favor; no, he was merely concerned about how he might be supported during the rest of his life. So, likewise, the great majority of men, when they first become concerned about their soul's salvation, seek not for grace that they may be saved, but only how they may quiet their anxiety and get rid of their uneasiness of mind. They stop with these first emotions and do not advance farther on the way of repentance.

1. Some turn away from the first hardships that meet them on the way of repentance; they do this by reason of physical effeminacy and love of comfort. "I have not the strength to dig," said the unfaithful steward. He was accustomed to luxury and did not think that he could endure hard work. He loved comfort and had no desire to try any human hardships. He therefore said, "I have not the strength to dig." In like manner you act with reference to your salvation, O careless soul! When the Holy Spirit begins to arouse your conscience, your flesh and blood begin to wail. When the salt of Holy Scriptures smart in the wounds of sin, you say as some of the followers of Jesus once said, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" It appears to you that the representations of Scripture are

altogether too severe. You make the claim that you have a delicate and sensitive heart, which might in this way easily be brought to pangs of conscience and despair, and so you allow the fear of such pangs of conscience and despair to frighten you, and you fear them to the extent that you continue securely on the way to hell. Indeed, I believe, and make the confident assertion, that this foolish fear of despair is like a public thoroughfare on which most people journey to eternal perdition. Oh, how utterly perverse to act thus! To begin and not finish! To be moved and yet remain unwilling to be converted! To see danger and not attempt to be saved, but rather grasp the wretched comfort of running into it with folded eyes! Even if it should cost you the most bitter tears of penitence, this surely cannot be worse than the condition found where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth." Even though you should in your awakening experience the most awful agony, this cannot rise to the heat that prevails in "the lake of fire, which burns with fire and brimstone."

2. Others turn back by reason of false modesty. They say, "To beg I am ashamed." You are ashamed of that which is not disgraceful. When the workings of grace become apparent, so that they attract the notice of the world, then you are ashamed to weep, and hence you endeavor to conceal and quench your emotions. The steward presumably thought that it would cost him too dearly to beg, after he had enjoyed plenty, even to the extent that he had been able to give to others. In like manner, it appears difficult for you who have looked upon yourself as a good Christian, and have been so considered by others, now to acknowledge that you are

a sinner under condemnation. You are ashamed to acknowledge that you need comfort, since you have comforted others. But you are a fool; you are ashamed of that which is the greatest honor, namely, that the great God is drawing near to your heart. Do you suppose that you will gain greater honor by being thus ashamed? No, by trying to escape from temporal scorn, you put yourself in danger of eternal shame. You are now ashamed before a crowd of blind and ignorant people, but some day you may with them stand ashamed before the Majesty of God, before the heavenly hosts, yes, before the whole world; for Jesus has said, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in His glory, and the glory of the Father, and of the holy angels."

At first the steward had been at a loss to know what he should do, but when he was unwilling to do what he ought to have done, he chose perverse means out of his misery. When the first anxiety was over, he saw his way clear. He said, "I am resolved what to do." In consultation with his master's creditors he thereupon falsified their bonds. He doubtless altered his accounts also, so that bonds and accounts might agree. In this way, too, his own indebtedness appeared far less, the books as well as bonds showing smaller receipts. What is the significance of all your excuses? Are they not counterfeits, falsifying God's rights and your debts? You say, "I do the best I can," and that, you imagine, is all that God can expect. You feel sure that He can not demand more. But do you not know that God demands your whole heart? He says, "Give me, my son,

thine heart." Does he get it? No, you give your heart to the world. It is only a few externals you leave for God, and you thus make a deceitful subtraction from the great requirement of God, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy might."

Another expedient resorted to by sinners in their spiritual anxiety is that of looking to men for comfort. The unfaithful steward did this instead of going to his master and taking refuge in his mercy. In like manner, you do not exactly seek for grace and salvation, but to be comforted and to find peace. Of course, I do not mean to deny that an awakened sinner whose heart is filled with godly sorrow should have comfort. This he obtains from the God of all comfort, who has said, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." No, but it is unreasonable to look for comfort before you are really sad at heart. Indeed, you wish to be comforted, in order that you may not be thus grieved, and that the first spark of unrest may be quenched before it develops into real anxiety. People are constantly crying for comfort, but they do not turn to God for it, but to men, even to men as blind and perverse as they themselves. These mighty comforters then sing to them the same lull-a-by, whereby they are accustomed to put their own conscience to sleep, and so "the blind lead the blind," and both come nearer to the pit, the pit, whereof Isaiah says that "it is prepared of old, made deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood." Is a sore healed merely because the pain has once subsided? No, be assured that it will return and that, if you never wish to be sorrowful unto repentance, you shall eventually,

without repentance, land where there is indescribable sorrow and, eternally, no comfort.

Third Part.

The Correct and Only Way to Be Taken, When Anxiety for Salvation Arises in the Soul.

Some earnestly anxious soul may now ask, "What shall I do that I may be saved?" To this I reply, You must, in a way, do precisely what the steward was unwilling to do, what he felt unable and ashamed to do, *dig* and *beg*.

1. You must dig, not in a bodily way, nor in such a spiritual way as if it were my counsel to a sorrowful soul that he should make every effort to work and thus try to help himself. Neither do I mean that you should try to dig yourself deeper and deeper into the knowledge of your sinful depravity, deeper than the Holy Spirit finds profitable and admits. Alas, no! There was digging enough for the purchasing of grace, when the earth was opened on Calvary, when the cross was planted on which the Son of God died as a curse for sinners. There was digging enough, when the thorns of His crown made deep pits in the head of the King of kings. There was digging enough, when the lashes of the scourging plowed deep furrows in His back. There was digging enough, when His side was pierced, after He had finished His labor for our sins and ended His toil for our transgressions. Consequently, there has been digging enough in the redemption of Jesus for the establishment of salvation. But your heart is like bed rock, unmoved by the love of Jesus, until it is rent by

the strokes of God's mighty Word and leaves room for the power of redemption unto purity and sanctification. Prior to this, it is like a smoothened road, where the seed cannot strike root, until the earth has been plowed. Hence, Jeremiah says, "Break up your fallow ground and sow not among thorns," and Paul speaks of the human heart and the work of grace thereon as "God's husbandry." It is, then, not your own work of which I speak but that of the Holy Spirit, who begins and perfects such good work. It is He, who must examine how deeply the digging and plowing must go to cause humility and contrition, and it is He who must bring it about.

The only work of digging allowed you is that commanded by the Saviour, "Search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they that bear witness of me." The Saviour here had in mind the faithful work, the untiring thoughtfulness, with which miners dig in the earth and examine into its crevices in search of precious metals and the treasures of the earth. Thus He would have you not grow weary, but search the Scriptures with increasing diligence and devout care, that you may there, in Christ, the rock of salvation, find the incorruptible treasures of heaven. This takes place, when you are rightly enlightened by the Spirit to understand, and by the mighty workings of God enabled to believe, the testimony of Christ, of which the Scriptures are full. "To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins."

2. In the second place, a soul that is concerned about

salvation may *beg*. Begging in the usual sense is by no means commendable, nor profitable for the body or the soul, but in spiritual trials begging is the only way of receiving grace and salvation. When a person is destitute and cannot earn anything for his livelihood, he takes to begging. So too, when you are poor in spirit, when you find that there is not the slightest good in you, nothing that can meet the approval of the holy and righteous God, when you realize that you cannot purchase or merit anything that will help you to obtain God's grace and the inheritance of His kingdom, then the only means remaining is to ask for grace and to beg for mercy. You must, in the first place, come as a beggar to receive grace, but you must not on your way for spiritual alms proceed in your rags. You cannot conceal your wretchedness and nakedness before the omniscient God, nor even before men, for your filth is nevertheless apparent. The only thing you may bring with you is a staff wherewith to support your fatigued soul and, like beggars, to defend yourself and chase the dogs away. I mean a bold hope in God's mercy and grace for the sake of the merits of His only begotten Son. This is the staff on which you must lean when you approach the mercy-seat. By it you are to drive away the dogs who come against you with chains of darkness, the impure spirits who are wont to attack the souls that seek for mercy, to tempt and trouble them with disheartening doubts. Come, then, though vile, approach the door of grace with timid boldness, knock with heartfelt sighing, and beg earnestly even for a crumb of the bread of grace in Jesus' name. If you find no immediate response, if the door remains shut

for a little while, if everything is quiet and it seems as though the Lord had not heard your rapping nor heeded your prayer, you must still not depart in disheartening impatience, but wait quietly for the fulfillment of the promise, "Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Only continue, with earnest perseverance, to sigh and pray for forgiveness, for the sake of the redemption of Jesus, and for the Father's grace by reason of the merits of His Son, and you shall eventually be admitted into the kingdom of grace, yea, be received, not as a faithless servant, but as a beloved child and a dear friend. Then shall the Lord blot out your guilt with the blood of Jesus and compensate for your faults and sins with His perfect righteousness. He shall also endow you with wisdom and power and a mind to understand and obey the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.

Application.

It is remarkable that there is no one who has not at some time been noticeably moved by the Word of God. This is the first workings of grace by which the Holy Spirit seeks to awaken you to anxiety for salvation. It may seem hard for flesh and blood, but do not turn away from this first step on the way of life, even though you fear still greater and more formidable difficulties. If you willingly submit to the workings of the Holy Spirit, heed His reminders, and follow His guidance; if you carefully use the grace He grants you, the first anxiety will become easier than you had expected.

O ye anxious sinners, do not feel ashamed of this,

nor quench the anxiety of your soul. Be assured that although the world despises and hates you at times, it nevertheless harbors an inward feeling of respect for an upright form of Christianity. There will also come a time when the worldly minded will feel constrained to wish that they were like you, saying, with Balaam,

“Let me die the death of the righteous,
And my last end be like his!”

Let not your natural egotism deceive you to make excuses and to minimize your guilt before God. Is it not easier to have it all blotted out at once and remitted for the sake of the payment made by Jesus than to make a vain attempt at falsifying your bonds or, with your own righteousness, to pay the last farthing of an infinite debt? Beware of the false comforts of men. They help you merely “from the ashes into the fire.”

You, my friends, who have passed through the first anxiety of repentance and have found comfort and peace in your Saviour through faith in Him, do not let the love of worldly comfort entice you away from the cross. “If any man would come after me, let him take up his cross, and follow me.” Consider how your Saviour, in order to save you from eternal woe, gave up the joy of heaven and the comfort of the earth to the extent that He could say, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” Do not feel ashamed of Him and His gospel, for He was not ashamed of your wretchedness. He took it upon Himself and became, in your stead, “despised and rejected of men.” Nor is He in His exaltation and glory ashamed of the wretchedness

and infirmity of His children. He is not ashamed to call them brethren. Only continue to sink your hearts by faith into His wounds, into the boundless knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Press forward to a nearer and more intimate, loving, and childlike confidence in Him. Do this by daily using His Word aright, begging for His grace and mercy. He will then eventually in a blessed death take you away from all manner of anxiety and grant you the salvation which He has purchased for you.

Lord Jesus! Thou hast been anxious and grieved for our sins. Grant that Thy power, thus obtained, may work in the hearts of sinners an earnest anxiety for the salvation which Thou hast so dearly purchased. Mercifully do this for the sake of Thine anxiety during thirty years, for the sake of Thine indescribable anguish and Thine eternal pain. Amen, Lord Jesus, amen.