

HENRIC SCHARTAU
AND
THE ORDER OF GRACE

Biography by Henrik Hägglund and
Fifteen Sermons by Henric Schartau

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Sixteenth Sunday After Trinity

In the Name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Spirit.

Introduction.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life.

This is the assurance which Jesus, the Prince of Life, has given to us mortals, (John 5. 24). After the Creator gave us being, the Father sent His Son into the world "that the world should be saved through Him." Life is the chief privilege of man, and it is the happiest hope of the believer that this life will endure forever. He knows and believes that the Son of God is sent to work this very thing, that through Him we might live eternally happy, in eternal glory and joy. This was the chief mission of Jesus, the chief subject of His discourses, in our text and elsewhere, and it should be the chief object of your careful attention, O man, if you would have a sure foundation for your hope of entering into the joy of eternal life. God has laid no other foundation than the redemption wrought by His Son, neither has He given any other means of attaining it

than that set forth in the solemn words of Jesus, "Verily, verily, I say unto you" etc.

When this means is rightly used, it undoubtedly brings about and works in us true faith in God. This faith is described as a relying on God, especially in view of His infinite mercy in sending His Son in the fashion of a servant to fulfil our duties and to suffer the penalties for our sins. Jesus says concerning one who has such a faith that he has eternal life, and that the believer has received eternal life by passing from death to life. Here a foundation is laid for a blessed death, indeed, to the extent that the essential transformation which takes place in the death of a believer took place before, even in the very moment when, through faith in Jesus, he passed "from dead works to serve the living God." He already possesses the salvation which he expects to enjoy in a greater measure and undisturbedly after death. Jesus represents that as a consequence of this condition the believer will not enter into judgment, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment." The Master does not hereby annul the teaching of His apostle Paul, that "we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ." As the supreme judge of the world, Jesus merely exempts every believing soul from the judgment of condemnation, which has already been pronounced in the Word against those who continue in unbelief and in an unchanged mind, without the blessed fellowship that is in Jesus. Jesus says that the believer is so much the more safe from such condemnation, as he already possesses the salvation which shall, in the

day of judgment, be pronounced upon him by grace. We do not, however, wish to proceed further in the consideration of this matter, until we have approached the seat of mercy and asked for the requisite divine help. "Our Father" etc.

Proposition.

THE BLESSED PASSING FROM DEATH TO LIFE

1. The foundation is laid and the beginning is made, when one passes from spiritual death to spiritual life.
2. The completion is made in the passing from bodily death to the full enjoyment of the glory and joy of eternal life.

First Part.

We here note that the foundation of a blessed passing from death to life is laid, and the beginning thereof made, in the passing from spiritual death to spiritual life.

All men who by intentional wickedness are separated from God are in the Scriptures called dead, for their spiritual condition resembles the bodily condition of one that is dead. In the hour of death one's vision becomes darkened so that one cannot see even at bright midday; similarly a person who is separated from God is overwhelmed with blindness in spiritual matters so that he cannot, even in the clearest light of God's Word, judge of the things that pertain to his peace. In Eph. 4. 18, Paul describes those whom in chapter 2. 1 he calls spiritually dead, saying that their "understanding is

darkened," and that they are "alienated from the life of God," because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart. Secure sinners are as void of feeling and emotion as the dead youth in our text on his bier, quite as unconcerned and careless about their future lot throughout the long and fearful eternity. As the youth was being borne out of the city where he had lived, nearer and nearer to his grave, so too, he who is dead in trespasses and sins is by his sins being led and brought farther and farther from God, nearer and nearer to the pit, to "the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone."

If Jesus had not met the funeral procession at Nain, the dead would have remained dead, and unless He sought and found a sinner where he goes on the paths of death, the sinner would never be awakened from his stupor. But Jesus approaches, He is moved with compassion, and in the Word He grasps the sinner's heart with His hand of grace. The threats and convictions of the law fill the sinner with anxiety concerning his condition and make him fearful of the end of his perverted life, but now he stops and rushes no longer heedlessly on into ungovernable sins.

The sorrow aroused by the law over the misery into which the sinner has plunged himself is increased when flooded by the light of the gospel, which illuminates the law and reminds the sinner of the blessings of God, and of the foolishness and ingratitude with which these have been used or abused. When the sinner thus in the gospel learns to understand what a merciful, gracious, and loving God he has offended and hated, then his sorrow becomes that of God's mind, approaching the char-

acter that God would have it to be. The sinner then departs from his former unrighteousness. He loathes it and, when he realizes his own weakness, he sighs for help out of the deep affliction into which he finds himself plunged. While thus calling upon the Lord, the sinner obtains a clearer insight into the gospel and learns that the help he so urgently needs is to be found in Christ. The Father draws the sinner's mind to consider the testimony which the prophets bear of Christ, and the Holy Spirit praises Jesus as great and indispensable for a sinner's salvation.

When such grace is not "turned into lasciviousness," nor is obstinately resisted, it confers a spark of courage, so that the sinner dares to hope in the mighty and merciful Saviour. God promises unconditionally, without limitation, to forgive those who have such a faith as He promises to confer. He thus puts courage into the heart of the sinner and enables him to apply the promise to himself. While this takes place in his heart, the Spirit of prayer arouses him to "name the name of the Lord" and by faith to "press on and apprehend Christ." The soul battles against doubt and unbelief and is finally victorious, being able to "know in whom he has believed," namely, the very Son of God, who has made payment for sins and for whose sake they are forgiven, according to the promises of God.

As the dead youth became bodily alive, when Jesus said to him, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise," so the passing from spiritual death to spiritual life takes place when a person hears and obeys the summoning voice of Jesus in the word, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon

thee." Then the "Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in His wings," for God fulfills the promises in which the soul has trusted. God grants the believer a share in the merits of the Mediator on whom he relies, and "the blood of Christ cleanses the conscience from dead works." God forgives our sins for the sake of the bloody atonement of Jesus and, with the comfort of the Holy Spirit, He takes away the fear of death with which our conscience had been grievously troubled. Jesus, who is Life itself, then unites with that soul; but where Life dwells, there can be no death. The believer can say with Paul, "I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." By means of such union with Christ a person becomes united with the Holy Trinity and with other believers, even as Jesus prayed, "That they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me." What no law can accomplish, namely, to make the heart alive with love to God and with pleasure in His commandments, this the Holy Spirit, granted to the believer, performs, pouring God's love into such an heart. A person experiencing this love as well as love for all men, and especially for all that believe, can make the certain inference which John made, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren."

Such a passing from spiritual death is the beginning and basis of a person's passing from temporal death into eternal life. In general the teaching of Jesus tends

to establish, "That whosoever believeth shall be saved," but more especially Jesus derives from the true faith and from eternal life the doctrine that a blessed passing over takes place at the moment of bodily death. At the grave of Lazarus Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live." In the new birth the beginning is made of everything that pertains to the privileges, glory, and blessedness of eternal life. The sinful depravity of a believer could not be entirely eradicated in death, unless it had been subdued and had lost its power when the new heart was created in him. The glory which Paul says is to be revealed in a child of God after death is, according to David, already possessed by the true believers, indeed has been ever since they were adopted to be sons and daughters of God. It is concerning the congregation of believers that David sings,

"The king's daughter within is all glorious;
Her clothing is inwrought with gold."

It is from this childhood by faith that Paul derives the right to inherit the glory of eternal life. He says, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him." God's presence, which constitutes the eternal glory of the blessed, began when the Father and the Son came and took their abode with them, when they began to "love Jesus and to keep his word." Although they have here walked in an imperfect knowledge of faith, they have nevertheless enjoyed "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ," by faith derived from the Word, and this has been a beginning

and a preparation for the perfect knowledge in the higher life. Comparing these different degrees of knowledge, Paul calls the former the rudiments of learning appertaining to children, which precedes the mature, manly knowledge to be obtained when we shall gloriously see God in the land of the living.

Second Part.

A Blessed Passing from Bodily Death to Eternal Life.

When the passing from spiritual death to spiritual life has taken place, then, if we are still in that condition, the passing to eternal life takes place whenever bodily death overtakes us. If Christ is our life, we cannot lose anything when we die. Death separates our soul from the body, but it cannot separate us from Christ. The believer passes out from this life through death and enters immediately "into the joy of the Lord." A person justified is, then, in no danger of suffering any loss in death. He is prepared to die, and his death will be a blessed one, whenever the Lord shall call him.

God has the control over life and death, but He does not call a person away as soon as he is prepared for a blessed death. There are other matters for which God would use us, before He permits death to come. God wants to use us in His service wherever He is pleased to place us. He wants to try us in the faith, increase our love, and teach us to deny our willfulness and to "bear the cross after Jesus."

When God considers a person mature and approved, this person may go and receive his crown. This is the end which James has in view for the life of a person

converted, "When he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life." When a pardoned sinner has, as "God's husbandry," like the seed in the earth, endured many changes of refreshing grace and of the drought of temptation until he is mature; "When the fruit is ripe, straightway he putteth forth the sickle," and brings home a ripe sheaf of wheat in due time. This time — God's time — does not always seem to us to be the due time. The widow of Nain could assuredly not feel that her son was called away in due season, unless her mind was duly enlightened. Some ripen rapidly, they speedily run their course and finish it, attaining their goal in a short time, even before they have left the years of youth.

The passing away takes place either violently and by unusual accidents, or usually by sickness, the body becoming in the guidance of God unfit to longer harbor the soul. The eyes no longer see the light. The ears no longer hear the sobs of their friends and relatives. The senses cease to function, and the soul departs from its workhouse. During this transformation there often appears to be much suffering. Indeed, there is some pain in connection with the separation of the soul from the body; but inasmuch as Jesus "has tasted death for every man" and swallowed up its bitterness, He fulfills upon every believer the promise He has given, "If a man keep my word, he shall never taste death." The comfort of the Holy Spirit robs death of its bitterness, and the peace of God which the believer perceives is a shield against the pains of death.

The soul passes out from the body and from all the misery to which it has been subjected while dwelling

there, and it becomes glorified and is escorted by angels to heaven, where joy immediately begins. The evil desires are quenched and all evil thoughts disappear. With shame and indignation Satan sees the soul escape forever from his assaults. The soul leaves the turmoil of the world by which it has been surrounded. The glory of God even previously dwelling in the soul evolves and exalts the soul to a nobility which surpasses everything that "has entered into the heart of man." The soul now tastes the sweetness of God's love, of which it has previously tasted merely a few drops, and it is filled with an indescribable comfort and joy. The holy angels who have ministered to it during the pilgrimage of grace, though in an invisible manner, now accompany it on its ascension to heaven, being both companions and guides. Upon entering heaven, the soul is greeted by the friends which it had acquired by its stewardship and distribution of earthly goods among fellow-believers on the earth. It finds a room in the Father's house, the place provided in the kingdom of His Son. Here it joins the hosts of thousands upon thousands surrounding the throne, praising God and the Lamb for the mercy received during life in the realms of time, and for the salvation now granted and eternally enjoyed.

Finally, "at the end of the days," even the body shall arise glorified from the earth and stand before the judgment seat of Christ, thence, united with the soul, to enter into the kingdom of heaven and to enjoy a glory augmented by the reunion of the body and the soul. As Jesus raised up the widow's son, so He shall also in the last day raise up those who have believed on Him. Then shall the body ascend from the earth, not

with the corruptible elements of which it was composed in life, nor with the lowly character in which it was laid in the grave, but with incorruptible glory and power. Even as the whole man has been redeemed by Christ and the whole man has been the temple of God, so the whole man, body and soul, may then enter into eternal life. We may then with glorified eyes, face to face, behold Him whom we have believed and loved, though we did not see Him. Our body may then in a worthy manner take part in the gladness of the soul and "the pleasures for evermore in the right hand of God." The tongue shall then with unutterable words praise Jesus, who shall have "fashioned anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory," and "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father."

I herewith close the sermon of a probationer, delivered at my request and with the approval of my superiors. This worthy congregation has again been given an opportunity to prove the measure of grace given to me. I have presented a blessed translation from death to life. I have first shown that the beginning and foundation of this passing from death to life are made in the passing from spiritual death to spiritual life. I have next shown that the completion takes place in the passing from temporal death to a full enjoyment of the glory and joy of eternal life.

Application.

We are all strangers, travelers, and pilgrims. We know that we must depart from this life, and there surely is no one who does not in the hour of death wish

for a blessed passing into eternal life. God is my witness, how heartily I wish all of you this good fortune; but you must search the Scriptures and find out whether you have experienced the translation first described, if you have gone out of the camp, away from the service of sin and Satan, if you have passed over to the camp of Jesus and borne His reproach, to be his possession, to live according to His commandments, and not after your own good pleasure nor according to the doctrines of men. If this has not taken place, you are in the greatest danger, for if bodily death overtakes you in this condition, you will pass from spiritual to eternal death. If you perceive that this is your condition, and if you nevertheless find that you can remain unconcerned in view of your misery, alas, pray God to awaken you from your spiritual stupor. He will certainly do this, if you use His Word diligently.

If you have been enlightened by the law to know your wretchedness, then you may be assured that the beginning toward a passing from spiritual death consists in this very thing, that you feel as though you were spiritually dead, and that the completion is effected when the Holy Spirit has persuaded you to believe that your sins, according to God's promises, are forgiven. You must then willingly abandon your own efforts, your own works and deeds, and put your trust in the merits and suffering of Jesus in your behalf.

If and when you have done this, you may in the midst of adversities comfort yourself with the thought in which the children of the world (though without foundation) are wont to take comfort, namely that death is nothing but a transition. Then, my brethren, we may

look out over the fields which are yet inshrouded with darkness toward a better life, glimpses of which are revealed in the Word, and we may in this way be sustained in a longing for a blessed passing from death to life. Amen.