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(Continued.)

WILL.

Will is an attribute of God inasmuch as he consciously prompts his own acts, and is intent upon the execution of his purposes, the accomplishment of his designs, the realization of his counsels, and the fulfillment of his ordinances. Will is one of the characteristics of rational, self-conscious, personal agencies. The acts of a person are that person's acts inasmuch as they are consciously prompted by such person, and an accessory to an act is again a person who consciously concurs in prompting such act, though the *materiale* of the act be wholly or in part performed by another. Thus God is active by his own promptings. Every act of God not only presupposes, but implies volition. And, again, volition is, in God, linked with action, the conscious and intentional exertion of power. This is indicated in the words, *Who hath resisted his will?*¹⁾ Of him the Psalmist says, *Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth,*²⁾ and, *Our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.*³⁾ When God acts, his act

1) Rom. 9, 19.

2) Ps. 135, 6.

3) Ps. 115, 3.

The Pulpit.

DEDICATION SERMON.

TEXT: PS. 27, 4.

PRAYER: Lord God, we have again assembled in Thy house, which is this day dedicated to Thee that Thou mayest live and dwell therein and be found by all that seek Thee according to Thy gracious promise: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Be with us now and forever in this Thy house. Grant Thy people at all times and under all circumstances to gather here in Thy name. Preserve them in Thy house against false doctrine and everything which may prove detrimental to their temporal and eternal welfare. Let them always hear Thy precious Word in its purity and perfection through which Thou satisfiest all their wants both bodily and spiritually, temporarily and eternally. Preserve this house against all evil and destruction and let it remain a refuge for thy servants and their children. Let all that enter its doors receive the heavenly blessings which Thou hast promised to Thy children. Let many come to Thy temple and receive the blessings of Thy grace, until they be transferred to the mansions of Jerusalem above, where they shall be with Thee to all eternity. Hear our prayer, O Lord, and grant and satisfy our desire. Amen, Amen.

Why is it, that multitudes of people, chiefly Lutherans from this city and its surroundings, have this day assembled in this newly erected edifice to give praise and thanksgiving? —The object is no other than the dedication of this house to its purpose, that the true and only God, as He has revealed Himself in His holy Word, may enter, live, reign and continually reveal Himself with all His heavenly bless-

ings to all that seek Him therein. And the present day is for this reason a day of great joy not only to the Lutherans here and everywhere, wherever the good tidings of this joyful event are known, but also a day of great joy among the heavenly host. And as we praise the Lord by singing, praying and hearing His Word—thus are to-day songs of praise rendered before the throne of the triune God, in behalf of this occasion.

And now, my friends, it is my lot to speak to you in this hour to inform or remind you of the great importance of this present celebration and to picture to you the unlimited joy within the hearts of all concerned in this event. Let me, then, endeavor to set forth to you, according to our text and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the following truth:

THE DESIRE TO DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD ALL
THE DAYS OF THEIR LIVES, THE GOOD REASON WHY
TRUE CHRISTIANS JOYFULLY ERECT, DEDICATE
AND UPHOLD THEIR CHURCHES.

This desire is twofold:

- I. *That they may behold the beauty of the Lord,* and
- II. *That they may inquire in the temple of the Lord.*

I.

True Christians have the desire to dwell in the house of the Lord to behold the beauty of the Lord, and for this reason they joyfully erect, dedicate and uphold their churches. For as God manifested Himself in the old testament within the temple of Jerusalem, so has He promised to be at all times—until the end of the world—and at all places where two or three assemble in His name. Wherever, therefore, the Word of God is preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution, there the true God is present and there alone the beauty of the Lord may be beheld. For through the true divine

Word God reveals Himself to us and thereby alone we behold Him in His true appearance and unmeasured beauty. In the Word of God, both as it is written and purely preached, God reveals Himself to us as the triune God! We behold in the Word of holy Writ: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, three distinct persons in one eternal, undivided and indivisible essence—God one in essence, three in persons. This we plainly see by the clear testimony of holy Scripture. Thus we read that God is one in essence: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is but one Lord." Deut. 6, 4. And again: "There is none other God, but one," 1 Cor. 8, 4; and once more: "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." But this one God plainly reveals Himself to us in three persons. This glorious revelation we behold at the baptism of Christ. The Father's voice is heard from heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" the Son at the same time is baptized in the Jordan, and the Holy Ghost at this very time descends in the form of a dove and lights upon Him. Furthermore we behold this one God in three persons in the formula of holy baptism, in which it is commanded that all nations should be baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. And at last we find the three persons expressly mentioned in the first Epistle of St. John: "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word (the Son), and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." Thus we behold the true God to be the triune God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—one in essence and three in persons.

This wonderful God, whom we behold wherever His Word is preached, whom we behold in His true church by the means of grace, has revealed Himself the almighty Maker of heaven and earth, and we behold Him as the creator and preserver of all things. All that dwell in the house of the Lord to behold the beauty of the Lord perceive His majesty in all His works and therefore exclaim with David:

“O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches.” Ps. 104, 24. And especially wonderful is the creation of man. God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them. —Yea, He created man unto life everlasting. But He is also the preserver and governor of all creatures. He provides for and satisfieth the desire of every living thing. Thus we behold our God in His wonderful beauty, which He manifests as the creator and preserver of all the universe. All that dwell in the house of the Lord and behold this beauty of the Lord must proclaim: “Lord, Thou art a wonderful God, Thou art great and beautiful in all Thy works. Great is Thy wisdom and love.” —This our great God reveals Himself to us as a holy and just God. As He is the supreme being, God must be perfect in every particular. And so He is. We behold Him in His perfect holiness and there again see His infinite beauty. We at once are convinced, that He is not a God, that hath pleasure in wickedness and that evil cannot dwell with Him. Ps. 5, 5.—We behold that He is holy in His essence, words and works. All that dwell in the house of the Lord and see this beauty of His perfect holiness at once must join in the chorus of all angels and saints: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of host. The whole world is full of His glory.” And as He is holy He demands all people to be holy. He Himself says: “Ye shall be holy for I, the Lord your God, am holy.” Lev. 19, 2. O therefore adore the beauty of the Lord in His holiness. His holiness is accompanied by perfect righteousness. In the house of the Lord we hear: “Thy righteousness, O Lord, is like great mountains, Thy judgments are a great deep,” Ps. 36, 6, and: “Thy right hand is full of righteousness.” Ps. 48, 10.—Therefore the Lord Himself proclaims: “I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.” Jes. 45, 19. And again He says: “There is no God else beside me; a just God.” He is just in all His judgments, un-

blemished in all His righteousness, errorless in all His sayings and proceedings. Therefore all that dwell in the house of the Lord must exclaim: Lord, Thy beauty of perfect holiness and righteousness is great; Thou art a wonderful God, marvelous is Thy revelation.

But, alas, those that dwell in the house of the Lord not alone behold Him in the beauty of His infinite love in creation and preservation, but are also convinced in the house of the Lord of His wrath and displeasure. For we have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Have we not transgressed the law and thus angered the holy and just God, given Him cause to withdraw from us all heavenly and earthly blessings? Yea, we have deserved His displeasure and wrath, and punishment in time and eternity! This is verily true. And this we learn in the house of the Lord, from the true Word of our God—His holy Law. And by this Word, which proclaims to us our temporal and eternal fate, we behold the beauty of the Lord. We perceive thereby the perfection of His holiness and righteousness. According to His holiness and righteousness He cannot pardon the sinner without satisfaction, but must punish him to the full extent of the law. And the sinner in his deplorable state must glorify God by admitting: Lord, Thou art perfect in Thy holiness and righteousness; but I have transgressed Thy law and thus receive the just reward of my iniquity—Thy wrath and punishment in time and eternity. But woe unto us, could we not otherwise glorify God in His holiness and righteousness; woe unto us, if this were the only way in which we could behold His beauty. Then, my friends, His beauty as a holy and righteous God would but increase our misery. Then the knowledge of His love in creation, which He especially revealed unto man, would cause us to howl in agony to all eternity. Were this the only way to behold the beauty of the Lord in the house of the Lord, then surely no sinner could have the desire to dwell in that house.

But, my friends, God also and even more reveals to sinners His holiness and righteousness and love by revealing to them the great work of redemption through Christ, His Son. God's holiness and righteousness required satisfaction for the sinner's transgressions. But as the sinner was utterly unable to render this full satisfaction to the holy and just God, He, God Himself, in His infinite love found a way to satisfy both His holiness and righteousness and also His love toward a sinful world. And what did God do? Behold—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3, 16). So all who dwell in the house of the Lord behold the holiness and righteousness of the great God satisfied in every particular through Christ. They realize that Christ, the Son of God, came to this world, became our brother according to the flesh, without sin, yea, became our substitute, who suffered the full penalty of the law for us, atoned for our sin and thus satisfied the holy and righteous God. This full redemption He acquired for us by His holy conception, birth, life, suffering, and death. As the God-man He reconciled God with the world. And that this reconciliation was perfect, God Himself proclaimed to the whole world by resurrecting His dead and buried Son on the third day. God and mankind united. The sinner who believes in Christ Jesus has no need of fearing the wrath of God, but can rely on God as his benefactor and lover. Through this salvation we behold the beauty of the Lord in His perfect holiness and righteousness, punishing sin relentlessly, and His perfect love and grace by giving His only Son as a substitute for a world of sinners, so that all that believe in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

Now all Christians have good reason to desire to dwell in the house of the Lord to behold His beauty in perfect holiness and righteousness, and can joyfully proclaim: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord" and righteous in all His

ways. They need not fear; for this holy and righteous God finds no iniquity scored against them, for their sins are laid upon Christ. They are now no more condemnable in the sight of God. Our offence to His holiness and righteousness has been fully adjusted. Therefore we behold Him fearlessly in His majesty of holiness and righteousness and for this reason long to dwell in the house of the Lord. But above all we enjoy the beauty of His infinite love by which the reconciliation between God and the world was effected. Surely the beauty of His love is great, yea, greater than we can conceive. The Creator loves his fallen creature, the holy and righteous God yearns in surpassing love for a world of damned and miserable sinners. God gave His Son to save His enemies. And His Son became man and as the God-man suffered, died, was buried, rose again from the dead, ascended to heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. He has made good and sure the sinner's redemption and salvation; He has demolished the kingdom of Satan and reopened unto all sinners the gates of the kingdom of His grace, which is His church, and the gates to the kingdom of His eternal glory. Great is the love of God which He has revealed to us by the redemption of the world through Christ His eternal Son. Thus we continually behold His beauty through the message of the Gospel and the benefits of the holy sacraments. By these means of grace the Holy Ghost enlightens us through true faith and keeps us in the knowledge of Christ, that we can always behold His boundless beauty in His perfect love. Nor has the love of God ceased to exert itself toward us. For St. Paul says, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God," 2 Cor. 3, 5. And again: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure," Phil. 2, 13, and: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," 1 Cor. 12, 3,

and again: "According to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Tit. 3, 5. Therefore we behold the beauty of the Lord in His ever faithful grace whereby we are preserved unto salvation through faith. Great is the love of God, we must all confess as we dwell in the house of the Lord and behold Him in the beauty of His love.

O, therefore, my friends, realize the good reason Christians have to erect, dedicate, and uphold their churches. It is because the Lord reveals Himself in His infinite beauty to all that seek Him there. Rejoice then, my hearers, over the dedication of this church. Come all and seek the Lord, for here He has begun to reveal His beauty and shall continue to do so by His Word and sacraments. Therefore hesitate not but come continually, come all the days of your lives and behold His measureless beauty. Consider this dedication of your church in its great importance and forget not the beauty of the Lord which He has revealed to us this day, in this house given over to His service, and ask Him in fervent prayer to remain therein.

But, my friends, have sinners the privilege of revealing to the Lord the wants and desires of their hearts? Most assuredly! For He Himself says: "Ask, and it shall be given thee." For this reason, also, true Christians desire to dwell in the house of the Lord, that they may inquire in the temple of the Lord. And this is the second reason, why true Christians erect, dedicate, and uphold their churches and why their joy is unlimitedly great on such occasions. This I shall endeavor to show forth to you in the second part of my discourse.

II.

All men have a desire to be joyful and happy, and ponder and meditate how they may satisfy this desire. But, alas! most men seek this object in vain by wrong means, and remain destitute of real and lasting happiness. All who

seek their satisfaction in earthly things, in riches and honors, in meat and drink, in the lusts of the flesh, are utterly deceived in their efforts and remain miserable now and forever.

Though some do succeed in gaining earthly riches, honor and other luxuries, can this really afford them substantial bliss and happiness? Indeed not. The desire of their heart will always call for more and will never be satisfied. And even if it could be accomplished that people would really satisfy the desires of their careworn hearts by obtaining riches, honors, and luxuries, would not this joy be of short duration and would not this sinful pleasure be turned within a few days or years into eternal sorrow and misery? Woe unto those, who seek their satisfaction in this world of trouble and sorrow and anguish and tribulation. They can not satisfy the sore longing of their dissatisfied hearts.

But, my friends, true Christians also have a desire to be happy in time and eternity. And how do they seek their temporal and eternal welfare? By appearing before the Giver of every good and perfect gift with prayer and supplication according to His Word, Ask, and it shall be given unto you. And especially do they make their churches houses of prayer, because He, the Lord Himself, is therein and answers the petitions which His people bring before Him concerning their temporal and eternal welfare. They appear before the Lord with all the yearnings of their hearts, and enquire of Him how they shall be satisfied. And their enquiry is never in vain. They pant and long for salvation, and here in the temple of the Lord they find the Word of their salvation, which reveals unto them all the counsel and holds forth and appropriates to them all the priceless treasures which Christ has earned for them, forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. They are anxious and troubled on account of their sins, and behold, in the temple of the Lord they at once receive the consoling answer: "Behold the

Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," John 1, 29, and are thereby assured that Christ has atoned for the sin of the whole world.—They are terrified by the law and its dreadful curse, and, lo, here they are permitted to hear the comforting answer: "Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believeth," Rom. 10, 4, and, "The Son of man is come to save that which is lost," Matt. 18, 11. And again: "He that believeth in Christ and is baptized shall be saved," Mark 16, 16. They are uneasy because of their weakness and the power of their spiritual enemies, and enquiring in the temple of the Lord, they hear that Christ is the conqueror of Satan, world and flesh.—If we are troubled concerning the day of judgment, we hear in the temple of the Lord, that all who are united with Christ through faith shall not be judged but be delivered from death unto life; for thus we are informed in the house of the Lord: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," Rom. 8, 1. Yea, even in view of death we hear in the temple of God the voice: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." John 11, 25. 26. In the temple of the Lord Christians also partake of the holy sacraments—holy baptism and the sacrament of the true body and blood of Christ—and thereby receive all the blessings which Christ has merited by His life, suffering and death. O, blessed are they, therefore, that enquire in the temple of the Lord and there find by the means of grace forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. Blessed are they that dwell in the house of the Lord and enquire in His temple; for they receive satisfactory answers upon all questions pertaining to their spiritual and eternal welfare. But also in regard to our bodily and temporal welfare we receive satisfactory answers to the queries and petitions of our longing hearts. While toiling and struggling in the hardships of life, we are at once welcomed in

the house of the Lord with the blessed consolation: "The Lord be with you," and are thereby comforted and satisfied as to our daily toil and hardship. If we are innocently persecuted by our enemies on account of our faith and life, we again enquire in the temple of the Lord and receive the answer which alone can satisfy the desire of our hearts; for the Lord says: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven." Matt. 5, 10—12. If we are burdened with sickness, poverty and other bodily tribulations, we again enquire in the temple of the Lord and receive the answer: "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven." Acts 14, 22. — When we are bowed down in grief over the death of our dear ones, we also enquire in the temple of the Lord and hear the blessed news: "Weep not"—your dear ones who departed in Christ are not dead, but sleep. Luke 8, 52. "Weep not," for: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." Rev. 14, 13. "Weep not," for: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." John 11, 25—26. — And when we are ourselves attacked by death, then we hasten to enquire of the Lord and even then receive sweet consolation. We are informed, "Fear not," Christ hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light. "Fear not," for: "The Lord shall deliver thee from every evil work, and will preserve thee to His heavenly kingdom." 2 Tim. 4, 18. "Fear not," for: "The blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John 1, 7. "Fear not," for: "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." Matt. 10, 22. And thus all fear must

vanish and we rejoice: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 15, 54—57.

Blessed are they, therefore, that desire to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of their lives to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in the temple of the Lord, for their eyes shall see the magnificent beauty of the Lord, and their ear shall hear good and blessed tidings, and their hearts shall be gladdened all the days of their life, and their mouths shall rejoice over the beauty and the goodness of the Lord and, therefore, they shall offer sacrifices of joy in the tabernacle of the Lord and sing praise unto his name forever.

May the desire to dwell in the house of the Lord to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in His temple be the reason for which this church has been erected and this day dedicated to its great purpose. May the desire to dwell in this house remain and increase within your bosom, and may this house always be a house of the Lord in which the Lord reigneth by the means of His pure Gospel and the original sacraments. Surely then this house shall bring to you everlasting blessings.

Furthermore, may God grant that this desire to dwell in the house of the Lord be vouchsafed to your offspring, to all coming generations unto the end of the world. Yea, may many others come to behold the beauty of the Lord and enquire in His temple. May God graciously protect and uphold this church, that it may be to you and many after you a storehouse of grace and salvation.

O, therefore, my friends, in this closing hour of our dedicatory services lift up your voice and vow unto the Lord, who has to-day entered this house and is now in our midst: "We will dwell in Thy house, O Lord, forever." Psalm 23.

And Thou, Lord, who knowest the desire of Thy people, Thou wilt graciously grant their longing to be satisfied according to Thy promises in Thy infallible Word. Thou wilt now and forever show forth thy beauty to them and not hide Thyself before them; Thou wilt also permit them to enquire in Thy temple and counsel with them for their temporal and eternal welfare. O, satisfy us, we pray Thee, early with Thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. "Let Thy work, henceforth as unto now, appear unto Thy servants, here and everywhere, and Thy glory unto their children," Psalm 90, 15. 16, that all may dwell in Thy house to satisfy their desire all the days of their life and behold Thy beauty and enquire in Thy temple, until we all enter in Thy everlasting temple of glory, which is not made by hands, which Thou hast prepared for all that believe in Thee and love Thee. Then and there we shall behold Thy beauty face to face, for there we shall see Thee as Thou art with our own eyes and stay in Thy presence to all eternity. There we shall no more enquire but fully understand everything to perfection and dwell in Thy light forever. There we shall stand before Thy heavenly throne and praise Thy name without end.

O Lord God, preserve, therefore, this Thy house and Thy people that dwell in it; be gracious unto Thy servants. Grant that not one may leave Thy house in this hour without testifying with David: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in His temple." We pray Thee, O Lord, hear our prayer and satisfy the desire of Thy people and grant Thy servants "to dwell in Thy house forever." Ps. 23, 6. Amen.

J. F. S. H.
