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SERMONS

**SERMONS OF
MARTIN LUTHER
VOL. 8
SERMONS ON EPISTLE TEXTS FOR
TRINITY SUNDAY TO ADVENT**
by Martin Luther

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SERMONS
OF
MARTIN LUTHER

**EDITED BY JOHN NICHOLAS LENKER
TRANSLATED BY JOHN NICHOLAS LENKER AND OTHERS**

VOLUME 8

**SERMONS ON EPISTLE TEXTS FOR TRINITY
SUNDAY TO ADVENT**

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PREFACE

This volume of twenty-four practical sermons from Trinity Sunday to Advent marks an epoch in that it completes in an unabridged form one branch of Luther's writings, the eight volumes of his Gospel and Epistle Postil. They are bound in uniform size, numbered as in the Erlangen edition from the seventh to the fourteenth volume inclusive, paragraphed for convenient reference according to the Walch edition with summaries of the Gospel sermons by Bugenhagen. The few subheads inserted in the text are a new feature for American readers.

These eight volumes of 175 sermons and 3,110 pages are the classic devotional literature of Protestantism. They were preached by its founder to the mother congregation of Evangelical Christendom in the birth-period of the greatest factor in modern civilization. No collection of Evangelical sermons has passed through more editions and been printed in more languages, none more loved and praised, none more read and prayed. They will be a valuable addition to the meager sermon literature on the Epistle texts in the English language. English Protestants will hereafter have no excuse for unacquaintance with Luther's spiritual writings.

What Luther's two Catechisms were in the school room to teach the Christian faith to the youth, that these sermons were in the homes to develop the same faith in adults. They have maintained their good name wherever translated until the present and their contents are above the reach of critics. These Epistle sermons especially apply the Christian truth to everyday life. The order in developing the Christian life with the best help from the prince of the Teutonic church fathers, should be from the Small to the Large Catechism and then to his Epistle sermons. Blessed the pastor and congregation who can lead the youth to "Church Postil Reading"—to read in harmony with their church-going. Blessed is the immigrant or diaspora missionary who finds his people reading them in the new settlements he visits.

Next to the Bible and Catechisms no books did more to awaken and sustain the great Evangelical religious movements under Spener in Germany, Rosenius in Sweden, and Hauge in Norway, than these sermon books devoutly and regularly read in the homes of church members.

The German text will be readily found in the 12th volume of the Walch and of the St. Louis Walch editions, and in the 9th volume of the Erlangen edition of Luther's works.

Grateful acknowledgment is hereby made for translations to the following: To Pastor H. L. Burry, the first sermon for Trinity Sunday; Pastor W. E. Tressel, Third Sunday after Trinity; Prof. A. G. Voigt, D. D., the Fifth and Twenty-fourth Sundays; Dr. Joseph Stump, Sixth, Eighth and Thirteenth Sundays; Prof. A. W. Meyer, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Sundays; and to Pastor C. B. Gohdes for revising the Second Sermon for Trinity Sunday and the sermons for the Second, Tenth, Twelfth and Sixteenth Sundays after Trinity.

J. N. LENKER.

Home for Young Women,
Minneapolis, Minn., Pentecost, 1909.

TRINITY SUNDAY

TEXT: ~~LEB~~ ROMANS 11:33-36.

33 *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out! 34* *For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor? 35* *or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? 36* *For of him and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen.*

THE ARTICLE OF FAITH ON THE TRINITY.

1. This epistle is read today because the festival of Holy Trinity, or of the three persons of the Godhead—which is the prime, great, incomprehensible and chief article of faith—is observed on this day. The object of its observance is that, by the Word of God, this truth of the Godhead may be preserved among Christians, enabling them to know God as he would be known. For although Paul does not treat of that article in this epistle, but touches on it only in a few words in the conclusion, nevertheless he would teach that in our attempts to comprehend God we must not speculate and judge according to human wisdom, but in the light of the Word of God alone. For these divine truths are too far above the reach of reason ever to be comprehended and explored by the understanding of man.

2. And although I have, on other occasions, taught and written on this article fully and frequently enough, still I must say a few words in general concerning it here. True, it is not choice German, nor has it a pleasing sound, when we designate God by the word “Dreifaltigkeit” (nor is the Latin, Trinitas, more elegant); but since we have no better term, we must employ these. For, as I have said, this article is so far above the power of the human mind to grasp, or the tongue to express, that God, as the Father of his children, will pardon us when we stammer and lisp as best we can, if only our faith be pure and right. By this term, however, we would say that we believe the divine majesty to be three distinct persons of one true essence.

3. This is the revelation and knowledge Christians have of God: they not only know him to be one true God, who is independent of and over all creatures, and that there can be no more than this one true God, but they know also what this one true God in his essential, inscrutable essence is.

4. The reason and wisdom of man may go so far as to reach the conclusion, although feebly, that there must be one eternal divine being, who has created and who preserves and governs all things. Man sees such a beautiful and wonderful creation in the heavens and on the earth, one so wonderfully, regularly and securely preserved and ordered, that he must say: It is impossible that this came into existence by mere chance, or that it originated and controls itself; there must have been a Creator and Lord from whom all these things proceed and by whom they are governed. Thus God may be known by his creatures, as St. Paul says: “For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity.” ^{<401>}Romans 1:20. This is (a posteriori) the knowledge that we have when we contemplate God from without, in his works and government; as one, looking upon a castle or house from without, would draw conclusions as to its lord or keeper.

5. But from within (a priori) no human wisdom has been able to conceive what God is in himself, or in his internal essence. Neither can anyone know or give information of it except it be revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. For no one knoweth, as Paul says (^{<421>}1 Corinthians 2:11), the things of man save the spirit of man which is in him, even so the things of God none knoweth save the Spirit of God. From without, I may see what you do, but what your intentions are and what you think, I cannot see. Again, neither can you know what I think except I enable you to understand it by word or sign. Much less can we know what God, in his own inner and secret essence is, until the Holy Spirit, who searcheth and knoweth all things, yea, the deep things of God—as Paul says above—reveals it to us: as he does in the declaration of this article, in which he teaches us the existence in the divine majesty of the one undivided essence, but in such manner that there is, first, the person which is called the Father; and of him exists the second person called the Son, born from eternity; and proceeding from both these is the third, namely, the Holy Spirit. These three persons are not distinct from each other, as individual brothers or sisters are, but they have being in one and the same eternal, undivided and indivisible essence.

6. This, I say, is not discovered or attained to by human reason. It is revealed from heaven above. Therefore, only Christians can intelligently speak of what the Godhead essentially is, and of his outward manifestation to his creatures, and his will toward men concerning their salvation. For all this is imparted to them by the Holy Spirit, who reveals and proclaims it through the Word.

7. Those who have no such revelation, and who judge according to their own wisdom, such as the Jews, Turks and heathen, must consider the Christian's declaration the greatest error and rankest heresy; they must say that we Christians are mad and foolish in imagining that there are three Gods, when, according to all reason—yea, even according to the Word of God—there can be but one God. It would not be reasonable, they will say, that there should be more than one householder over the same house, more than one lord or sovereign over the same government; much less reasonably should more than one God reign over heaven and earth. They imagine that thus with their wisdom they have completely overthrown our faith and exposed it to the derision and scorn of all the world. As if we were all blockheads and egregious fools and could not see their logic as well as they! But, thank God, we have understanding equal to theirs, and can argue as convincingly, or more so, than they with their Alkoran and Talmud, that there is but the one God.

8. Further, we know, from the testimony of Holy Writ, that we cannot expound the mystery of these divine things by the speculations of reason and a pretense of great wisdom. To explain this, as well as all the articles of our faith, we must have a knowledge higher than any to which the understanding of man can attain. That knowledge of God which the heathen can perceive by reason or deduce from rational premises is but a small part of the knowledge that we should possess. The heathen Aristotle in his best book concludes from a passage in the wisest pagan poet, Homer: There can be no good government in which there is more than one lord; it results as where more than one master or mistress attempts to direct the household servants. So must there be but one lord and regent in every government. This is all rightly true. God has implanted such light and understanding in human nature for the purpose of giving a conception and an illustration of his divine office, the only Lord and Maker of all creatures. But, even knowing this, we have not yet searched out or fathomed the exalted, eternal, divine Godhead essence. For even though I have learned that there is an only divine majesty, who governs all things, I do not

thereby know the inner workings of this divine essence himself; this no one can tell me, except, as we have said, in so far as God himself reveals it in his Word.

9. Now we Christians have the Scriptures, which we know to be the Word of God. The Jews also have them, From whose fathers they have descended to us. From these, and from no other source, we have obtained all that is known of God and divine works, from the beginning of the world. Even among the Turks and the heathen, all their knowledge of God—excepting what is manifestly fable and fiction—came from the Scriptures. And our knowledge is confirmed and proven by great miracles, even to the present day. These Scriptures declare, concerning this article, that there is no God or divine being save this one alone. They not only manifest him to us from without, but they lead us into his inner essence, and show us that in him there are three persons; not three Gods or three different kinds of divinity, but the same undivided, divine essence.

10. Such a revelation is radiantly shed forth from the greatest of God's works, the declaration of his divine counsel and will. In that counsel and will it was decreed from all eternity, and, accordingly, was proclaimed in his promises, that his Son should become man and die to reconcile man to God. For in our dreadful fall into sin and death eternal, there was no way to save us excepting through an eternal person who had power over sin and death to destroy them, and to give us righteousness and everlasting life instead. This no angel or other creature could do; it must needs be done of God himself. Now, it could not be done by the person of the Father, who was to be reconciled, but it must be done by a second person, with whom this counsel was determined and through whom and for whose sake the reconciliation was to be brought about.

11. Here there are, therefore, two distinct persons, one of whom becomes reconciled, and the other is sent to reconcile and becomes man. The former is called the Father, being first in that he did not have his origin in any other; the latter is called the Son, being born of the Father from eternity. To this the Scriptures attest, for they make mention of God's Son; as, for instance, in ^{<BIB>}Psalm 2:7: "Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee;" and again, ^{<BIB>}Galatians 4:4: "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son," etc. From this it necessarily follows that the Son, who is spoken of as a person, must be distinct from the person of the Father.

12. Again, in the same manner, the Spirit of God is specifically and distinctively mentioned as a person sent or proceeding from God the Father and the Son; for instance, God says in ~~2928~~ Joel 2:28: “I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,” etc. Here a spirit is poured out who is God’s, or a divine spirit, and who must be of the same essence, otherwise he could not say, “my Spirit ;” and yet he must be a person other than he who sent him or who pours out. Again, because when he was sent he manifested himself, and appeared in his descent in a visible form, like that of a dove or tongues of fire, he must be distinct in person from both the Father and the Son.

13. But in this article of faith, in which we say that the Son of God became man and that he was of the same nature as we ourselves are, in order that he might redeem us from sin and death and give us eternal life without any merit or worthiness of our own, we give Jews and Turks no less occasion for laughter and mockery than when we speak of the three persons. For this is a more absurd assertion by far, in the estimation of human reason, which speculates in its Jewish and Turkish—yea, heathenish—teachings, on this wise: God is an only, almighty Lord of all, who has created all men and given them the law according to which they are to live; accordingly it follows that he will be merciful to the good and obedient, but will condemn and punish the disobedient. Therefore, he who does good works and guards himself against sin, God will reward. These are nothing but heathenish conclusions drawn from earthly, worldly experience and observation, as if God’s government must be conducted on the same principles as that of a father among his children and domestics; for those are considered good rulers and masters who make a distinction with regard to their own interests.

14. Such heathen ideas of wisdom, holiness and service of God are taught and practiced by the Pope. And so we believed, myself and others, while we were under him, not knowing any better; otherwise we would have done and taught differently. And, in fact, he who has not this revelation and Word of God, can neither believe nor teach other than pagan doctrine. With such a faith, how much better were we than the heathen and Turks? Yea, how could we guard ourselves against any deception and lying nonsense that might be offered as good works and as service of God? Then we had to follow every impostor who came with his cowl and cord, as if Christ were represented in him; and we thought that in the observance of these things we would be saved. So the whole world was filled with naught but false service of God—which the Scriptures properly call idolatry—the

product of human wisdom, which is so easily deceived by that which pretends to be a good work and to be obedience to God. For human wisdom knows no better; and how could it know better without the revelation? Even when the revelation was proclaimed, human wisdom would not heed it, but despised it and followed its own fancies. Hence it continued to be hidden and incomprehensible to such wisdom, as Saint Paul says: “For who hath known the mind of the Lord?”

15. But to us this counsel and mind of God in giving his Son to take upon himself our flesh, is revealed and declared. For from the Word of God we have the knowledge that no man of himself can be righteous before God; that our whole life and all our deeds are under wrath and condemnation, because we are wholly born in sin and by nature are disobedient to God; but if we would be delivered from sin and be saved, we must believe on this mediator, the Son of God, who has taken our sin and death upon himself, by his own blood and death rendering satisfaction, and has by his resurrection, delivered us. In this truth we will abide, regardless of the ridicule heaped upon us because of such faith, by heathen wisdom, which teaches that God rewards the pious. We understand that quite as well, if not better, than heathenism does. But in these mysteries we need a higher wisdom than our own minds have devised or can devise, a wisdom given to us by grace alone, through divine revelation.

16. For it is not our intention thus to pry into the counsel, thoughts and ways of God with our understanding and opinions, and to be his counselors, as they do who meddle in the affairs that are the prerogative of the Godhead, and who even dare, in the face of this passage of Saint Paul, to refuse to receive or learn of God, but would impart to him that for which he must recompense again. And thus they make gods after their own fancy, as many gods as they have thoughts; so that every shabby monastic cowl or self-appointed work, in their estimation, accomplishes as much and passes for as much as God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in their eternal divine counsel, determine and accomplish. And they continue to be nothing but wearers of cowls and instructors in works, which works even they can do who know nothing of God and are manifestly scoundrels. And even though they have long been occupied with these things, they still do not know how matters stand between themselves and God. And it will ever be true as Saint Paul says: “For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counselor?”

17. For your own theories—which are no more than what anyone can arrive at, conjecture or conceive in his own mind, without divine revelation—are not a knowledge of the mind of God. And what does it avail if you are not able to say more than that God is merciful to the good and will punish the wicked? Who will assure you that you are good and that you are pleasing to God with your papistic, Turkish monkery and holiness? Is it all that is necessary to assert: God will reward with heaven such as are faithful to the order? No, dear brother, mere presumption, or an expression of your opinion, will not suffice here. I could do that as well as you. Indeed, each may devise his own peculiar idea; one a black, and another a gray monk's cowl. But we should hear and know what God's counsel is, what is his will and mind. This none can tell you by his own understanding, and no book on earth can teach it except the Scriptures. These God himself has given, and they make known to us that he has sent his Son into the world to redeem us from sin and the wrath of God, and that whosoever believes in him should have everlasting life.

DIVINE MYSTERIES INEXPLICABLE TO REASON.

18. Behold, Paul's purpose in this epistle is to show Christians that these sublime and divine mysteries—that is, God's actual divine essence and his will, administration and works—are absolutely beyond all human thought, human understanding or wisdom; in short, that they are and ever will be incomprehensible, inscrutable and altogether hidden to human reason. When reason presumptuously undertakes to solve, to teach and explain these matters, the result is worthless, yea, utter darkness and deception. If anything is to be ascertained, it must be through revelation alone; that is, the Word of God, which was sent from heaven.

19. We do not apply these words of Paul to the question of divine predestination for every human being—who will be saved and who not. For into these things God would not have us curiously inquire. He has not given us any special revelation in regard to them, but refers all men here to the words of the Gospel. By them they are to be guided. He would have them hear and learn the Gospel, and believing in it they shall be saved. Therein have all the saints found comfort and assurance in regard to their election to eternal life; not in any special revelation in regard to their predestination, but in faith in Christ. Therefore, where Saint Paul treats of election, in the three chapters preceding this text, he would not have any to inquire or search out whether he has been predestinated or not; but he

holds forth the Gospel and faith to all men. So he taught before, that we are saved through faith in Christ. He says (^{<5108>}Romans 10:8): “The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart,” and he explains himself by saying that this word should be proclaimed to all men, that they may believe what he says in verses 12 and 13: “For the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him: for, Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

20. But he speaks of the marvelous ruling of God in the Church, according to which they who have the name and honor of being the people of God, and the Church—the people of Israel—are rejected on account of their unbelief. Others, on the other hand, who formerly were not God’s people, but were unbelieving, are now, since they have received the Gospel and believe in Christ, become the true Church in the sight of God, and are saved. Consequently it was on account of their own unbelief that the former were rejected. Then the grace and mercy of God in Christ was offered unto everlasting life, and without any merit of their own, to all such as were formerly in unbelief and sin, if only they would accept and believe it. He declares: “For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all.” ^{<5112>}Romans 11:32.

21. Hereupon follows the text, which Saint Paul begins with emotions of profound astonishment at the judgment and dealings of God in his Church, saying: “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out!”

22. Sublime are the thoughts and counsel of God, transcending by far the mind and comprehension of man, yea of all creatures, when he so richly pours forth his goodness and out of pure grace and mercy elects, as beneficiaries of that goodness, the poor and wretched and unworthy, who are concluded under sin—that is, those who acknowledge themselves before God to be guilty and deserving of everlasting wrath and perdition; when he does all this that they might know him in his real divine essence, and the sentiment of his heart—that through his Son he will give all who believe everlasting life. And, again, that they might know how he will reject and condemn the others—those who, in pride and security, boast of their own gifts and the fact that they are called the people of God in preference to all other nations; who boast that they have special promises, that they have the prophets, the fathers, etc.; who think that God will acknowledge

no nation on earth but themselves as his people and his Church. He will reject them on account of their unbelief, in which they are lettered by the pride and imaginations of their own wisdom and holiness.

23. This is that rich, inexpressible, divine wisdom and knowledge which they possess who believe in Christ, and by which they are enabled to look into the depths and see what the purposes and thoughts of the divine heart are. True, in their weakness they cannot fully reach it; they only can apprehend it in the revealed Word, by faith, as in a glass or image, as Saint Paul says. ^{<4612>}1 Corinthians 13:12. But to blind, unbelieving reason, divine wisdom will be foreign and hidden; nothing of it will enter reason's consciousness and thoughts, nor will reason desire more though a revelation be given.

24. That attitude Saint Paul encountered, especially when the arrogant Jews opposed themselves so sternly and stubbornly to the preaching of the Gospel. Filled with astonishment, he exclaimed: What shall I say more? I see indeed that it is but the deep unsearchable wisdom of God, his incomprehensible judgment, his inscrutable ways. So he says elsewhere: "But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, even the wisdom that hath been hidden, which God foreordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the rulers of this world hath known." ^{<4117>}1 Corinthians 2:7-8.

25. This depth and richness of wisdom and knowledge, we Christians apprehend through faith; for, as Saint Paul says, it cannot be apprehended nor comprehended otherwise. Though the world will not do it, we will firmly believe that God is a true God and Lord, wise, just and gracious, whose riches and depth are ineffable. We will glorify him with our whole heart, therefore, as he ought justly to be praised and glorified by every creature, for his wonderful government of his Church, through his Word and revelation. Whosoever will hear and receive the same shall have light that will turn them to him and give them a knowledge of their salvation—an experience which others can never realize. And he is to be glorified because he manifests such unutterable goodness to all who are in sin and under God's wrath that he translates them, though they are unworthy and condemned, from the power of death and hell into the kingdom of eternal grace and life, if they will only seek grace and believe on Christ his Son. And, on the other hand, he is to be glorified because, as a just judge, he rightfully rejects and condemns those who will not believe the revelation

and testimony of his will in his Son; who insist on, and boast of, their blind fancies, of their own wisdom and righteousness. Being accordingly deprived of such light, such grace and consolation, they must forever be separated and cast forth from the kingdom of God, regardless of what great name and fame may have been theirs when they were supposed to be the people and Church of God.

26. And such are God's unsearchable judgments and his ways past tracing out. Such are his government and works. For by "judgments" is meant that which in his view is right or wrong; what pleases or does not please him; what merits his praise or his censure; in short, what we should follow or avoid. Again, by "his ways" is meant that which he will manifest unto men and how he will deal with them. These things men cannot and would not discover by their own reason, nor search out by their own intellect, and never should they oppose their judgments or speculations to God. It is not for them to say what is right or wrong, whether an act or ruling is divine. They should humble themselves before him and acknowledge that they cannot understand, they cannot teach God in such matters; they should give him, as their God and Creator, the honor of better understanding himself and his purposes than do we poor, miserable worms. "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?"

27. Paul states three propositions which take away from the world all its boasting concerning divine things: To know the mind of the Lord—what are his thoughts and purposes, or what he has determined within himself from eternity; to be his counselor—advising or showing him what to do and how to do it; to give to him—assisting him, by one's own ability, to accomplish his divine purpose. All this is impossible to human nature; it cannot know his mind, and how much less will it be able, with all of its wisdom and activity, to counsel him or give him anything.

28. Therefore, it is a shameful presumption on the part of the world to presume by its own powers to ascertain and discover God's essence, his will and works, and to counsel him as to his duties and pleasures; and shameful is it that it presumes with its works to have merited something from him, and to have earned a recompense; shameful presumption to expect to be honored as having achieved much for God's kingdom and for the Church—strengthening and preserving them and filling heaven with holiness!

29. God must defeat minds so perverted. In his administration he must disregard their opinions and attempts. Thus, being made fools by their own wisdom, they may stumble and be offended at it. So would God, by showing us the realities, convince us of the futility of our own endeavors and lead us to acknowledge that we have not fathomed his mind, his counsel and will, and that we cannot counsel him. No man or angel has ever yet first thought out for God his counsel, or offered suggestion to him. Much less is he compelled to call us into counsel, or recompense us for anything we have given to him.

THREE CLASSES OF PEOPLE.

30. There are three different kinds of people on earth, among whom Christians must live. The first of these are that rude class which is unconcerned about the nature of God and how he rules. They have no regard for God's Word. Their faith is only in their mammon and their own appetites. They think only of how they may live unto themselves, like swine in the sty. To such we need not preach anything of this text: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God." They would understand nothing of it though we were to preach it to them everlastingly. They would rather hear of the husks and swill with which they fill themselves. Therefore we will let them remain the swine that they are, and separated from others as they are. But it is exasperating to have to encounter them among Christians.

31. The second class are they who are still reasonable, concerning themselves, about God's purposes and their fulfillment, and how we may be saved. The heathen, and even we ourselves when under the papacy, contended, according to reason, over these things. Here is the beginning of all idolatry on earth; everyone teaches of God according to his own opinion. Mohammed says: He that believes his Koran and its doctrines is pleasing to God. A monk: He that is faithful to the order and its regulations will be saved. The Pope: He who observes his prescriptions and ritual, who makes a pilgrimage to the apostles at Rome, buys himself an indulgence; he has acquired the forgiveness of sins: but he who neglects it is under the wrath of God. These observances they call judgments and ways, controlling consciences and directing them to eternal life; and they imagine that they are God's judgments and ways.

32. On the contrary, the Word declares that God wants none of these things; that they are error and darkness and a vain service—idolatry, which he hates and which provokes him to the utmost. All must acknowledge who have practiced their own self-appointed observances for any length of time, that they have no real assurance that God will be gracious unto them and take pleasure in them because of their lives and observances. Yet, in their blind delusion and presumption, they go on in their vagaries till God touches their hearts by a revelation of his law; then, alarmed, they must admit that they have lived without a knowledge of God and of his will, and that they have no counsel or help unless they lay hold on the words of the Gospel of Christ.

33. We were all like that heretofore. Even I, a learned doctor of divinity, did not know better. I imagined that with my monk's cowl I was pleasing to God and on the way to heaven. I thought that I knew the mind of God well. I wanted to be his counselor, and to earn a recompense of him. But now I realize that my belief was false; it was blindness. I know that I must learn from his Word; that nothing else avails before him but faith in the crucified Christ, his Son; and that in such faith we must live, and do as our respective callings or positions require. Thus we may know right and wrong in God's sight; for our knowledge is not of our own invention, but we have it from revelation. By revelation God shows us his mind; as Saint Paul says (~~1~~ 1 Corinthians 2:16): "We have the mind of Christ." And again (verse 10): "But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit."

34. The third class are those who transgress, having knowledge. They have the Word of revelation. I am not now speaking of those who knowingly persecute the truth—those of the first class, who are unconcerned about God—but I am speaking of those who recognize the revelation but are led by the devil to override it and go around it. They would conceive ways and judgments of God that he has not revealed. If they were Christians, they would be satisfied and thank God for having given us his Word, in which he shows us what is pleasing to him and how we may be saved. But instead, they allow themselves to be led by the devil to seek for other revelations and to speculate on what God in his invisible majesty is, and how he secretly governs the world, and what he has determined in regard to the future of each particular individual. And so presumptuous is our human nature that it would even interfere, with its wisdom, in God's judgment, and intrude into his most secret counsel, attempting to teach him and direct him. It was because of his arrogance that the devil was cast out

into the abyss of hell; because he aspired to interference in the affairs of divine majesty, and would drag down man in the fall with himself. So did he cause man to fall in paradise, and so did he tempt the saints; and so he tempted Christ himself when he set him on the pinnacle of the temple.

35. Against this third class Saint Paul directs his words, in answer to the impudent questions of wise reason as to why God punished and rejected the Jews, as he did, and allowed the condemned heathen to come into the Gospel grace; why he so administers justice as to exalt the godless and allow the godly to suffer and be oppressed; why he elected Judas as an apostle and afterwards rejected him and accepted a murderer and malefactor. With these words Saint Paul would command the wise to cease their impertinent strivings after the things of the secret majesty, and to confine themselves to the revelation he has given us; for all such searching and prying will be in vain and harmful. Though you were to search forever you would nowhere attain the secrets of God's purposes, but would only risk your soul.

36. If you, therefore, would proceed wisely, you cannot do better than to be interested in the Word and in God's works. In them he has revealed himself, and in them he may be comprehended. For instance, he manifests his Son, Christ, to you, on the cross. This is the work of your redemption. In it you may truly apprehend God, and learn that he will not condemn you on account of your sins, if you believe, but will give you everlasting life. So Christ tells you: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." <BIB>John 3:16. In this Christ, says Saint Paul (<BIB>Colossians 2:3), are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden. Herein you will have more than enough to learn, to study and ponder. You will marvel at the wonderful revelation of God, and you will learn to delight in and love him. It is a mine which can never be exhausted in this life by study, and in the contemplation of which, as Peter says (<BIB>1 Peter 1:12), even the angels never tire, but find unceasing joy and pleasure.

37. I say this so that we may be prepared to instruct and direct those we may meet who, assailed and tormented by such thoughts of the devil, are led to tempt God. They are beguiled by the devil to search and grope, in his false ways, after what may be the intention of God concerning them, and thereby they are led into such apprehension and despair that they are unable to endure it. Such individuals must be reminded of these words, and

be reproved by them. So did Paul reprove the Jews and cavilers of his day when they presumed to comprehend God with their wisdom, to instruct him as his counselors and masters, to deal with him directly themselves, without any mediator, and to render him such service that he would owe them a recompense. Nothing will come of such searching. Against its endeavors he has erected barriers that, with all your striving, you will never be able to overcome. And so infinite are his wisdom, his counsel and riches, that you will never be able to fathom nor exhaust them. You ought to rejoice that he gives you some knowledge of his omnipotence in his revelation, as follows: “For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him be the glory for ever.”

38. Why should we boast, he would say here, when everything that has being—and our own wisdom and capabilities, of course—did not originate itself but had its origin in him and must be preserved by him, must exist through him? He says (<4472>Acts 17:28): “For in him we live, and move, and have our being.” And again (<19A003>Psalm 100:3): “It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.” That is, what we are and are able to do, and the fact that we live and have peace and protection—in short, all the good or evil that happens to us—comes to pass not by accident or chance. It all proceeds from his divine counsel and good pleasure. He cares for us as his people and flock. He governs us and gives us good things. He aids and preserves us in every time of need. Therefore, all honor and glory are due to him alone, from his creatures.

EVERYTHING IS OF GOD.

39. But when he says, Of him, through him, in him, are all things—he says in the simplest way that the beginning, middle and end is of God; that all creatures have their origin in him, also their growth and their limitations. To illustrate: Every little grain of corn has its beginning. A root springs from the dead seed in the ground; then a shoot comes forth and becomes a stalk, a leaflet, an ear of corn, and here it pauses, having the three parts it is intended to have. All creatures also have their beginning, their continuation and end, filling up the period of their existence. When this order ceases, every creature will cease to exist. That which has a beginning and grows but does not attain its end, does not reach perfection, is nothing. To sum it all up, everything must be of God. Nothing can exist without origin in him. Nothing that has come into being can continue to exist without him. He has not created the world as a carpenter builds a house and, departing, leaves it

to stand as it may. God remains with and preserves all things which he has made; otherwise they would not continue to exist.

40. Saint Paul does not simply say—as he does elsewhere —Of him are all things. He adds two other assertions, making a triple expression, and then unites the three thoughts into one whole when he says, “To him be the glory for ever.” No doubt it was his intention therewith to convey the thought of this article of faith and to distinguish the three persons of the Godhead, even though he does not mention them by name, which is not necessary here. The ancient teachers also looked upon this passage as a testimony to the Holy Trinity. Their analysis was: All things are created by God the Father through the Son—even as he does all things through the Son—and are preserved, in God’s good pleasure, through the Holy Spirit. So Paul is wont to say elsewhere; for example (~~486~~1 Corinthians 8:6): “There is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things.” And concerning the Holy Spirit, ~~003E~~Genesis 1:31 says: “And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.”

41. The Scriptures teach us that all creation is the work of one God, or the whole Godhead; and yet, inasmuch as they make a distinction between the three persons of the one Godhead, we may properly say that everything had its origin, everything exists and continues, in the Father as the first person; through the Son, who is Of the Father; and in the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from both the Father and the Son; which three, nevertheless, are comprehended in the one undivided essence.

42. But how such a distinction of persons exists in the divine essence from eternity is a mystery which we shall and must leave unsolved. For we cannot, with our crude understanding, even fathom God’s creatures; no creature is wise enough to understand these three parts of itself—the beginning, the middle and the end. Though they are distinct from each other, nevertheless they are so closely connected that we cannot with our physical senses separate one from the other. Who has ever been able to discover or explain the process by which a leaflet grows from a tree, or a tiny grain of corn becomes a-root, or a cherry grows from the blossom to wood and kernel? Again, who can explain how the bodily members of a human being manifestly grow; what the sight of the eye is; how the tongue can make such a variety of sounds and words, which enter, with marvelous diversity, into so many ears and hearts? Much less are we able to analyze

the inner workings of the mind—its thoughts, its meditations, its memory. Why, then, should we presume, with our reason, to compass and comprehend the eternal, invisible essence of God?

TRINITY SUNDAY

SECOND SERMON. TEXT: ~~ROM~~ ROMANS 11:33-36.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

1. This festival^{fi} requires us to instruct the people in the dogma of the Holy Trinity, and to strengthen both memory and faith concerning it. This is the reason why we take up the subject once more. Without proper instruction and a sound foundation in this regard, other dogmas cannot be rightly and successfully treated. The other festivals of the year present the Lord God clothed in his works and miracles. For instance: on Christmas we celebrate his incarnation; on Easter his resurrection from the dead; on Whit-sunday the gift of the Holy Spirit and the establishment of the Christian Church. Thus all the other festivals present the Lord in the guise of a worker of one thing or another. But this Trinity Festival discloses him to us as he is in himself. Here we see him apart from whatever guise assumed, from whatever work done, solely in his divine essence. We must go beyond and above all reason, leaving behind the evidence of created things, and hear only God's own testimony concerning himself and his inner essence; otherwise we shall remain unenlightened.

2. Upon this subject the foolishness of God and the wisdom of the world conflict. God's declaration that he is one God in three distinct persons, the world looks upon as wholly unreasonable and foolish; and the followers of mere reason, when they hear it, regard every one that teaches or believes it as no more than a fool. Therefore this article has been assailed continually, from the times of the apostles and the fathers down to the present day, as history testifies. Especially the Gospel of St. John has been subjected to attack, which was written for the special purpose of fortifying this dogma against the attacks of Cerinthus the heretic, who in the apostolic age already attempted to prove from Moses the existence of but one God, which he assigned as reason that our Lord Jesus cannot be true God on account of the impossibility of God and man being united in one being. Thus he gave us the prattle of his reason, which he made the sole standard for heaven to conform to.

3. O shameless reason! How can we poor, miserable mortals grasp this mystery of the Trinity? we who do not understand the operation of our own physical powers—speech, laughter, sleep, things whereof we have daily experience? Yet we would, untaught by the Word of God, guided merely by our fallible head, pronounce upon the very nature of God. Is it not supreme blindness for man, when he is unable to explain the most insignificant physical operation daily witnessed in his own body, to presume to understand something above and beyond the power of reason to comprehend, something whereof only God can speak, and to rashly affirm that Christ is not God ?

4. Indeed, if reason were the standard of judgment in such matters, I also might make a successful venture; but when the conclusions of even long and mature reflections upon the subject are compared with Scripture, they will not stand. Therefore we must repeat, even though a mere stammering should be the result, what the Scriptures say to us, namely: that Jesus Christ is true God and that the Holy Spirit is likewise true God, yet there are not three Gods; not three divine natures, as we may speak of three brothers, three angels, three suns, three windows. There is one indivisible divine essence, while we recognize a distinction as to the persons.

SCRIPTURE PROOF THAT CHRIST IS GOD.

Paul, speaking of Christ in ^{<S00B>}Hebrews 1:3, refers to him as the express image of God's substance. Again, in ^{<S01B>}Colossians 1:15 he says of Christ: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation." We must take these words for what they say—that all creatures, even angels and men, are ranked below Christ. This classification leaves room for God only: taking away the creature, only God remains. It is one and the same thing, then, to say that Christ is the firstborn of all creatures and that Christ is true and essential God.

5. To make the matter as clear as possible Paul uses the expression "image of the invisible God." If Christ be the image of God he must be a person distinct from him whose image he is, but at the same time in one divine essence with the Father. He and the Father are not one person, but two, and yet Christ could not be the express image of the Father's person, or essence, if he were not equally divine. No creature can be an image of the divine essence, for it does not possess that essence. To repeat, Christ could not be called the express image of God if he and the Father were not

distinct persons; there must be one imaged and one who is the image. Expressed more clearly and according to Scripture, one person is the Father, who in eternity begets the other; the other is the Son, begotten in eternity, yet both are equally eternal, mighty, wise and just.

6. Though the Jews and Turks ridicule our doctrine, as if we taught the existence of three brothers in heaven, it does not signify. Might I also cavil were it to serve any purpose here. But they do us wrong and falsify our teaching; for we do not conceive of the Trinity as in the nature of three men or of three angels. We regard it as one divine essence, an intimacy surpassing any earthly unity. The human body and soul are not so completely one as the Triune God. Further, we claim the Holy Scriptures teach that in the one divine essence, God the Father begot a son. Before any creature was made, before the world was created, as Paul says, “before the foundation of the world,” in eternity, the Father begot a Son who is equal with him and in all respects God like himself. Not otherwise could Paul call Christ the express image of the invisible God. Thus it is proven that the Father and the Son are distinct persons, and that nevertheless but one God exists, a conclusion we cannot escape unless we would contradict Paul, and would become Jews and Turks.

PAUL AND MOSES AGREE IN TESTIMONY.

7. Again, Paul makes mention of Christ in different phrase, saying: “Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.” ^{<601>}1 Corinthians 10:9. Now, keeping this verse in mind, note how Paul and Moses kiss each other, how clearly the one responds to the other. For Moses says (^{<0412>}Numbers 14:22): “All those men... have tempted me these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice,” and in this connection the speaker is represented by the term “Lord,” everywhere in the Bible printed by us in capitals to indicate a name belonging only to the Eternal, applicable to none but the one true God. Other terms used to designate God are sometimes applied also to men, but this word “Lord” refers only to God.

Now, Moses says: “And the Lord [Adonai, the true God] said... All these men... have tempted me these ten times.” Then comes Paul explaining who this God is—saying they tempted “Christ.” Crawl through this statement if you may; the fact remains that Paul declares it was Christ who was tempted, and Moses makes him the one eternal and true God. Moreover,

Christ was not at that time born; no, nor were Mary and David. Nevertheless, the apostle plainly says, They tempted Christ, let us not also tempt him.

8. Certainly enough, then, Christ is the man to whom Moses refers as God. Thus the testimony of Moses long before is identical with that of Paul. Though employing different terms, they both confess Christ as the Son of God, born in eternity of the Father, in the same divine essence and yet distinct from him. You may call this difference what you will; we indicate it by the term “person.” True, we do not make a wholly clear explanation of the mystery; we but stammer when speaking of a “Trinity? But what are we to do? we cannot better the attempt. So, then, the Father is not the Son, but the Son is born of the Father in eternity; and the Holy Spirit proceeds from God the Father and God the Son. Thus there are three persons, and yet but one God. For what Moses declares concerning God Paul says is spoken of Christ.

9. The same argument substantially Paul employs in ~~4018~~ Acts 20:28, when, blessing the Church of Miletus and exhorting the assembled ministers concerning their office, he says: “Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood.” This, too, is a significant text, proving beyond all controversy that Christ our Lord, who purchased the Church with his blood, is truly God, and to him the Church belongs. For the apostle plainly asserts it was God who bought the Church with his blood and that the Church is his own.

Now, in view of the fact already established that the persons are distinct, and of the further statement that God has purchased the Church through his own blood, we inevitably conclude that Christ our Savior is true God, born of the Father in eternity, and that he also became man and was born of the Virgin Mary in time.

10. If such blood—the material, tangible, crimson blood, shed by a real man—is truly to be called the blood of God, then he who shed it must be actually God, an eternal, almighty person in the one divine essence. In that case we truly can say the blood flowing from the side of the crucified One and spilled upon the ground is not merely the blood of an ordinary man, but God’s own. Paul does not indulge in frivolous talk. He speaks of a most momentous matter; and he is in dead earnest when he in his exhortation reminds us that it is an exalted office to rule the Church and to

feed it with the Word of God. Lest we toy in the performance of such an office we are reminded that the flock is as dear to him as the blood of his dear Son, so precious that all creatures combined can furnish no equivalent. And if we are indolent or unfaithful, we sin against the blood of God and become guilty of it, inasmuch as through our fault it has been shed in vain for the souls which we should oversee.

11. There are many passages of similar import, particularly in the Gospel of John. So we cannot evade the truth but must say God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are three individual persons, yet of one divine essence. We do not, as the Jews and Turks derisively allege, worship three Gods; we worship only one God, represented to us in the Scriptures as three persons.

Christ said to Philip (⁸¹⁴John 14:9), “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” There Christ claims unity and equality with the Father in the one divine essence. So does Paul in ⁵⁰¹⁵Colossians 1:15, where he calls Christ “the image of the invisible God,” at the same time indicating two distinct persons: the Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Father, yet they are one God. Such passages, I say, are frequent. By means of them the sainted fathers valiantly maintained this dogma of the Trinity against the devil and the world, thus making it our heritage.

12. Now, what care we that reason should regard it as foolishness? It requires no skill to cavil over these things; I could do that as well as others. But, praise God, I have the grace to desire no controversy on this point. When I know it is the Word of God that declares the Trinity, that God has said so, I do not inquire how it can be true; I am content with the simple Word of God, let it harmonize with reason as it may. And every Christian should adopt the same course with respect to all the articles of our faith. Let there be no caviling and contention on the score of possibility; be satisfied with the inquiry: Is it the Word of God? If a thing be his Word, if he has spoken it, you may confidently rely upon it he will not lie nor deceive you, though you may not understand the how and the when.

Since, then, this article of the Holy Trinity is certified by the Word of God, and the sainted fathers have from the inception of the Church chivalrously defended and maintained the article against every sect, we are not to dispute as to how God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one God. This is an incomprehensible mystery, it is enough that God in his

Word gives such testimony of himself. Both his nature and its revelation to us are far beyond our understanding.

PHYSICAL LIFE INEXPLICABLE TO REASON.

13. And why should you presume to comprehend, to exactly understand, the sublime, inconceivable divine essence when you are wholly ignorant of your own body and life? You cannot explain the action of your laughter, nor how your eyes give you knowledge of a castle or mountain ten miles away. You cannot tell how in sleep one, dead to the external world, is yet alive. If we are unable to understand the least detail of our physical selves, anything so insignificant as the growth of a mere hair, for instance, can we, unaided by the revelation of God's Word, climb by reason—that reason so blind to things within its natural realm—into the realm of heavenly mysteries and comprehend and define God in his majesty?

If you employ reason from mere love of disputation, why not devote it to questions concerning the daily workings of your physical nature? for instance, where are the five senses during sleep? just how is the sound of your own laughter produced? We might without sin occupy ourselves with such questions. But as to the absolute truth in a matter such as this, let us abide patiently by the authority of the Word. The Word says that Christ is the express image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creatures; in other words, he is God equally with the Father.

14. Again, ^{<8123>}John 5:23 testifies that all should honor the Son as they honor the Father. And in ^{<8124>}John 12:44 we read: "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me." Also, ^{<8141>}John 14:1: "Believe in God, believe also in me." And again, ^{<8165>}John 16:15: "All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine." These and similar passages are armor that cannot be pierced; for they are uttered by God, who does not lie and who alone is qualified to speak the truth concerning himself. Thus the dogma of the Trinity is thoroughly founded upon the holy Scriptures.

THE THIRD PERSON OF THE TRINITY.

15. Now, having established the existence of Christ in the Trinity, we must next consider the third person, the Holy Spirit, in Scripture sometimes termed the "Spirit" of God and sometimes his "Soul." This person is not spoken of as "born"; he is not born like the Son, but proceeds from the Father and the Son. To express it differently, he is a person possessing in

eternity the divine essence, which he derives from the Father and Son in unity in the same way the Son derives it from the Father alone. There are, then, three distinct persons in one divine essence, one divine majesty. According to the Scripture explanation of the mystery, Christ the Lord is the Son of God from eternity, the express image of the Father, and equally great, mighty, wise and just. All deity, wisdom, power and might inherent in the Father is also in Christ, and likewise in the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from Father and Son. Now, when you are asked to explain the Trinity, reply that it is an incomprehensible mystery, beyond the understanding of angels and creatures, the knowledge of which is confined to the revelations of Scripture.

15. Rightly did the fathers compose the Creed, or Symbol, in the simple form repeated by Christian children: “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son... I believe in the Holy Ghost.” This confession we did not devise, nor did the fathers of former times. As the bee collects honey from many fair and gay flowers, so is this Creed collected, in appropriate brevity, from the books of the beloved prophets and apostles—from the entire holy Scriptures—for children and for unlearned Christians. It is fittingly called the “Apostle’s Symbol,” or “Apostle’s Creed.” For brevity and clearness it could not have been better arranged, and it has remained in the Church from ancient time. It must either have been composed by the apostles themselves or it was collected from their writings and sermons by their ablest disciples.

17. It begins “I believe.” In whom? “In God the Father.” This is the first person in the Godhead. For the sake of clear distinction, the peculiar attribute and office in which each person manifests himself is briefly expressed. With the first it is the work of creation. True, creation is not the work of one individual person, but of the one divine, eternal essence as such. We must say, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit created heaven and earth. Yet that work is more especially predicated of the person of the Father, the first person, for the reason that creation is the only work of the Father in which he has stepped forth out of concealment into observation; it is the first work wrought by the divine Majesty upon the creature. By the word “Father” he is particularly and rightly distinguished from the other persons of the Trinity. It indicates him as the first person, derived from no other, the Son and the Holy Spirit having existence from him.

18. Continuing, the Creed says, I believe in another who is also God. For to believe is something we owe to no being but God alone. Who is this second person? Jesus Christ. God's only begotten Son. Christians have so confessed for more than fifteen hundred years; indeed, such has been the confession of believers from the beginning of the world. Though not employing precisely these words, yet this has been their faith and profession.

19. The first designation of God the Son makes him the only Son of God. Although angels are called sons of the Lord our God, and even Christians are termed his children, yet no one of these is said to be the "only" or "only-begotten" Son. Such is the effect of Christ's birth from the Father that he is unequaled by any creature, not excepting even the angels. For he is in truth and by nature the Son of God the Father; that is, he is of the same divine, eternal, uncreated essence.

20. Next comes the enumeration of the acts peculiar to him: "Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead." The distinct personality of the Son is thus demonstrated by acts peculiar to himself. Not the Father and not the Holy Spirit, but the Son alone, assumed human nature of flesh and blood, like unto ours, to suffer, die, rise again and ascend into heaven.

21. In the third place we confess, "I believe in the Holy Ghost." Here again a distinct person is named, yet one in divine essence with the Father and the Son; for we must believe in no one but the true God, in obedience to the first commandment: "I am Jehovah thy God... Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

Thus briefly this confession comprehends the unity of the divine essence—we accept and worship only one God—and the revealed truth that in the Trinity are three distinct persons. The same distinction is indicated in holy baptism; we are baptized into the faith of one God, yet Christ commands us to baptize "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

22. The peculiarity of this third person is the fact that he proceeds from both the Father and the Son. He is therefore called also the Spirit of the

Father and the Son; he is poured into the human heart and reveals himself in the gathering of the Church of Christ in all tongues. Through the Word of the Gospel he enlightens and kindles the hearts of men unto one faith, sanctifying, quickening and saving them.

23. So the Creed confesses three persons as comprehended in one divine essence, each one, however, retaining his distinct personality; and in order that the simple Christian may recognize that there is but one divine essence and one God, who is tri-personal, a special work, peculiar to himself, is ascribed to each person. And such acts, peculiar to each person, are mentioned for the reason that thus a confusion of persons is avoided. To the Father we ascribe the work of creation; to the Son the work of Redemption; to the Holy Spirit the power to forgive sins, to gladden, to strengthen, to transport from death to life eternal.

The thought is not that the Father alone is the Creator, the Son alone Redeemer and the Holy Spirit alone Sanctifier. The creation and preservation of the universe, atonement for sin and its forgiveness, resurrection from the dead and the gift of eternal life—all these are operations of the one Divine Majesty as such. Yet the Father is especially emphasized in the work of creation, which proceeds originally from him as the first person; the Son is emphasized in the redemption he has accomplished in his own person; and the Holy Spirit in the peculiar work of sanctification, which is both his mission and revelation. Such distinction is made for the purpose of affording Christians the unqualified assurance that there is but one God and yet three persons in the one divine essence—truths the sainted fathers have faithfully gathered from the writings of Moses, the prophets and the apostles, and which they have maintained against all heretics.

24. This faith has descended to us by inheritance, and by his power God has maintained it in his Church, against sects and adversaries, unto the present time. So we must abide by it in its simplicity and not be wise. Christians are under the necessity of believing things apparently foolish to reason. As Paul says (⁴⁰¹²1 Corinthians 1:21): “It was God’s good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe.” How can reason adapt itself to comprehend that three are one, and one is three; that God became man; that he who is washed with water in obedience to Christ’s command, is washed with the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and cleansed from all sins? Such articles of faith appear utterly foolish to

reason. Paul aptly calls the Gospel foolish preaching wherewith God saves such as do not depend on their own wisdom but simply believe the Word. They who will follow reason in the things dealt with in these articles, and will reject the Word, shall be defeated and destroyed in their wisdom.

25. Now, we have in the holy Scriptures and in the Creed sufficient information concerning the Holy Trinity, and all that is necessary for the instruction of ordinary Christians. Besides, the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ and that of the Holy Spirit is also attested by miracles not to be lightly esteemed nor disregarded. The Lord our God brings to pass miraculous things for the Christian's sake—for the strengthening of his faith—and not merely as a rebuke to false teachers. Were he to consider the false teachers alone, he might easily defer their retribution to the future life, since he permits many other transgressors to go unpunished for ten, twenty or thirty years. But the fact is, God openly in this life lays hold upon leaders of sects who blaspheme and slander him with their false doctrines. He inflicts upon them unusual punishments for the sake of warning others. Besides being openly convicted of blasphemy and having the condemnation of their own conscience, the misguided ones receive testimony to the fact that these false leaders are instigators of blasphemy against God's name and his Word. All men are compelled to admit God can have no pleasure in their doctrine, since he visits them with special marks of his displeasure, destroying them with severer punishments than ordinarily befall offenders.

26. History records that John the evangelist had as contemporary a heretic, by the name of Cerinthus, who was the first to arise in opposition to the apostolic doctrine and in blasphemy against the Lord Jesus with the claim that Jesus is not God. This blasphemy spread to such an extent that John saw himself compelled to supplement the work of the other evangelists with his Gospel, whose distinct purpose it is to defend and maintain the deity of Christ against Cerinthus and his rabble.

A feature of John's Gospel patent to all is the sublime beginning of his Gospel which renders it distinct from the others. He does not lay stress upon the miraculous doings of Christ, but upon his preaching, wherein he reveals himself powerfully as true God, born of the Father from eternity, and his equal in power, honor, wisdom, righteousness and every other divine work.

With respect to John and Cerinthus it is reported that the former, having gone to a public bath with some of his disciples, became aware that

Cerinthus and his rabble were there, also. Without hesitation he told his disciples to be up and away, and not to abide among blasphemers. The disciples followed his advice and departed. Immediately after their departure the room collapsed, and Cerinthus with his followers perished, not one escaping.

27. We also read concerning the heretic Arius, the chief foe of his time toward the dogma of the deity of Christ. the injury done by this man to the cause of Christ was such as to occupy the Church for four centuries after his death; and still today his heresy has not been altogether rooted out. But the Lord took the matter in hand by the performance of a miracle which could not but be understood.

History records that Arius had ingratiated himself into the favor of Constantine, the emperor, and his counselors. With an oath he had succeeded in impressing them with the righteousness of his doctrine, so that the emperor gave command that Alexander, bishop of Constantinople, should recognize him as a member of the Christian Church and restore him to the priestly office. When the godly bishop refused to accede to this demand, knowing full well the purpose pursued by Arius and his followers, Eusebius and the other bishops who supported Arius threatened him with the imperial edict and expressed the determination to drive him out by force and to have Arius restored by the congregation as such. However, they gave him a day to think the matter over.

28. The godly bishop was fearful. The following of Arius was large and powerful, being supported by the imperial edict and the whole court. The bishop, therefore, resolved to seek help from God, where alone it is found in all things relating to God's honor. He fell down upon his face in the church and prayed all night long that God should preserve his name and honor by methods calculated to stem the tide of evil purpose, and to preserve Christendom; against the heretics. When it was morning, and the hour had come when Alexander the bishop should either restore Arius to office or be cast out of his own, Arius convened punctually with his followers. As the procession was wending its way to the church, Arius suddenly felt ill and was compelled to seek privacy. The pompous procession halted, waiting his return, when the message came that his lungs and liver had passed from him, causing his death. The narrative comments: *Mortem dignam blasphema et foetida mente*—a death worthy such a blasphemous and turpid mind.

29. We see, then, that this dogma has been preserved by God first through the writings and the conflicts of the apostles, and then by miracles, against the devil and his blasphemers. And it shall be preserved in the future likewise, so that, without a trace of doubt, we may believe in God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. This is the faith which we confess with our children daily. To guard against a mixing of persons or the abandonment of the tri-personality, three distinct acts are predicated. This should enable the common Christian to avoid confusing the persons, while maintaining the divine unity as to essence.

We proclaim these things on this Sunday in order to call attention to the fact that we have not come upon this doctrine in a dream, but by the grace of God through his Word and the holy apostles and Fathers. God help us to be found constant and without blemish in this doctrine and faith to our end. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~1 JOHN~~ **1 JOHN 4:16-21.**

16 *God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him. 17* *Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, even so are we in this world. 18* *There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love. 19* *We love, because he first loved us. 20* *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. 21* *And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.*

GOD IS LOVE.

This epistle text is amply expounded in the “Explanation of Certain Epistles of the Apostles” printed in other volumes. Those who wish may read there one or more sermons for themselves or their people. They are too long to insert here.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~GEN 4~~ **1 JOHN 3:13-18.**

13 *Marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth you. 14* *We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death. 15* *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. 16* *Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17* *But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18* *My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth.*

EXHORTATION TO BROTHERLY LOVE.

1. The Epistles and Gospels selected for the Pentecost cycle of Sundays have love as their general theme. They deal not only with the love we owe to Christ and God, which is only to be thankful for the unspeakable blessing of forgiveness of sins and salvation through Christ's blood and death, but also of the love we owe our neighbor; not a love in return for favors, but one that unceasingly gives, forgives and works all good even when unrequited.

2. John here admonishes the Christian to exercise the virtue of love. Considering the evident rarity of love among men, this admonition is necessary. He particularly warns Christians not to wonder at the world's hatred and desire for their death. Such was the hate of Cain for his brother, of which the apostle has just spoken. The world's hate, it must be admitted, repels love and powerfully obstructs its exercise.

3. Is it not surpassing strange that one can hate those who love him and from whom he has received only kindness? Such wickedness is almost inconceivable, we say. What incentive is there for any to render the world

service when in ingratitude it rewards love with hatred? But let us examine ourselves, who are baptized and have received the Gospel, and confess how we requite the supreme love of God in giving us his Son. What a beautiful example of glad gratitude we display! For the shame of it we ought to despise ourselves before God and his angels.

And what shall we say of those who will not endure the preaching of the glorious message of God's grace and blessing, but condemn it as heresy? to whom they who seek to serve, to benefit and save the world by declaring the good news, must be, as Paul says, "as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things," ~~4043~~ 1 Corinthians 4:13. Indeed, no criminal receives more wretched and ignominious treatment and execution, of which the Pope and his followers are a case in point.

THE WORLD'S HATRED.

4. While experience has proven this otherwise incredible fact, John vouchsafes the admonition notwithstanding: "Marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth you." If we are not to wonder at this, is there anything in the world to incite wonder? I should truly think the hearing of a single sermon on the grace of Christ would suffice to bring the world to receive the Gospel with intense joy and never to forget the divine mercy and blessing. It would be no wonder should the earth suddenly open and engulf mankind because of its ingratitude to God who has given his Son to become man for the purpose of redeeming us condemned mortals from sin and death and restoring us to life and salvation. Is it not a horrible thing that any man should shun and oppose such a Savior and his doctrine even more than he does the devil himself?

5. But what is God's attitude toward such conduct? Well does he say to the Jews through the prophet: "O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of bondage; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember now what Balak, king of Moab, devised; and what Balaam, the son of Beor, answered him; remember from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteous acts of Jehovah." ~~3003~~ Micah 6:3-5. And well does Christ say to his ungrateful people: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her ! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens

under her wings, and ye would not!" ^{<4237>}Matthew 23:37. As if he would say, "I surely did not come to effect your death and condemnation by my message. I am about to suffer death and God's wrath for your sins. I bring you God's endless grace and blessing for time and eternity. Then why this bitter hatred against me and my message?"

6. "Since the world hates even God for his kindness," argues John, "marvel not, my beloved, that you suffer the same fate. What does it signify that I show my love by hazarding life and limb to sustain this doctrine of the Gospel and help my neighbor? Mine is but a poor, mean, uncouth, offensive love in comparison with the love that led Christ to die for me and to redeem me from eternal death. If God's supreme, unfathomable love fails to awaken the gratitude of the world, what wonder if the world hates you for all your kindness? Why will you bring down your fist and stamp your foot in anger at such ingratitude? You are yourselves of that race for whom the Son of God had to die. And even were you to die for the Gospel, your sacrifice would be as nothing in comparison to the fact that God, for the sake of the world, spared not his own Son but permitted the world to put him to death."

7. But whence arises the world's hatred? John tells us in verse twelve when he mentions the incident of Cain, who, he says, "was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous." An excellent reason, indeed, for hating—the hater and murderer is evil and the benefactor good! In civil and domestic affairs it is the evil-doers and disobedient who incur displeasure and receive punishment; and such reward is just. But whenever God has dealings with the world, it shows what a rotten fruit it is by hating, persecuting, and putting to death as evil-doers and impostors its very benefactors. This trait it inherits, John tells us, from its ancestor Cain, the great fratricide saint. He is a true picture of the world of all times, and ever its spirit and fashion is patterned after him.

8. When mother Eve, the dear, godly woman, bore her first son, she declared in her joy and her hope of God's promise of the future seed that should bruise the serpent's head: "I have gotten a man with the help of Jehovah" (^{<0000>}Genesis 4:1); and she named him Cain, which means "obtained," as if she would say, "I have obtained the true treasure." For she had not before seen a human being born; this was the first, precious fruit of man. Over Cain she rejoiced, pronouncing herself blessed. This son

was trained in the hope that he should be a savior of the future race, a comfort to his brothers and sisters with all their offspring. Nor was he unaware of these proud hopes. Proudly he lorded it over his brother, who in contrast had to bear the ignominious name of Abel, meaning “nothing,” or “vanity,” as if voicing the thought of the parents’ hearts: “Alas! this one has no future. Cain is the rightful heir to the blessing God has promised man; he is lord and master of his brethren.”

9. It is likely that the godly father and mother for many years drew their solace from the hope placed in their first-born son, as they looked forward with intensest longing to the redemption from their deplorable fall. Doubtless they trained both sons very carefully and instructed them concerning their own sin and fall and the promise God had given them, until they were fully grown and had entered into the priestly office. Cain the first-born was particularly zealous in that respect, desiring to be first inasmuch as he offered his first fruits of the earth, given by God and obtained by his own labor, as he no doubt had seen his father offer. Abel, however, the inferior, the poor shepherd, offered the firstlings of his sheep, given him of God and obtained without effort and toil of his own. Now, God in a wonderful way manifested his preference concerning the gifts upon the altar. Fire descended from heaven and consumed Abel’s offering, but Cain’s remained. The fire was the sign of God’s favor. The text says: “And Jehovah had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect.” ~~0004~~Genesis 4:4-5.

10. Thereupon Adam and Eve saw that the hope and solace centering in their first-born son, were a delusion. They began to learn the wonderful judgments of God, who gave precedence to Abel, the male counterpart of Cinderella—which is all he was in his own sight when he compared himself with his brother. Now Cain, with full confidence in his position, spoiled by the delusion of his parents that as the first-born he was God’s preference, felt himself outraged. His hypocrisy, hitherto masked, comes to the surface. He burns with secret hate against God, with hate and anger against his brother, which he takes no trouble whatever to disguise. The parents rebuke him, but effect nothing. The flame of his resentment rises higher, and meeting him alone upon the field, he fells him to the ground. Far from contemplating amendment of life or seeking grace from God, he has no mercy upon the only brother he has on earth, who has done him no harm whatever. He cannot forgive him and leave him in unenvied possession of the grace of God.

11. Such was the solace and joy poor Adam and Eve lived to experience in their first children! From this time on their earthly life was fraught with gloom and sorrow, particularly since they could not but see the source of these in their own fall and they would have pined to death had not God comforted them with another son. For when it became evident that the hope they had placed in Cain was a delusion, and that they were deprived of the son who, beyond a doubt, possessed the grace of God, they, without another son, would not have known where to look for the solace of the promised seed.

CAIN THE WORLD, ABEL THE CHURCH.

12. Note, in this man Cain is pictured the world in its true, characteristic colors; in him its true spirit stands reflected. Certainly his equal has never been. In him are unquestionably prefigured the very flower, the very quintessence, of holiness on earth—the most pious servants of God. On the other hand, that poor, wretched, abject male counterpart of Cinderella, Abel, well represents the obscure little brotherhood, the Church of Christ. She must yield to Cain the lord the distinction of being everything before God, of being the recipient of every gift of God, of being entitled to all honor and every privilege. He feels important in his imagined dignity, permits this spirit to pervade his sacrifices and his worships, and thinks that God cannot but favor and accept his offering rather than that of his brother.

Meanwhile, the pious Abel goes his way, meekly suffering his brother's contempt. He willingly yields Cain the honor, esteems himself vastly inferior and beholds no consolation for himself aside from the pure mercy and goodness of God. He believes in God and hopes for the promised future seed. In such faith he performs his sacrifice as a confession, a sign, of his gratitude.

13. This illustration is intended by God as solace for his little throng; for the incident is not written for Abel's sake but for the sake of the humble children of God, whose condition is like that of Abel. God has not forgotten them, though they are haughtily ignored by proud Cain, who regards them as nothing in his presence. God graciously looks upon them and rejects proud Cain with his birthright and offering.

14. Innocent Abel becomes the object of anger and hatred when the Word of God lays hold of Cain revealing God's displeasure where he had fancied

himself worthy, and God's unwillingness to regard his offering and devotion as superior to this of his brother and more meritorious. Cain begins bitterly to hate and persecute his brother. He finds no rest until Abel is laid low and cut off from the earth. Now you have the cause of the world's hatred and anger against Christians; simply this, as John says of Cain: "Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous."

15. What offense had godly Abel committed against his brother to be so hated? He had even regarded that brother as the first-born, as vastly superior to himself, and had done him all honor and loved him as became a brother. He was easily satisfied, desiring simply the grace of God. He prayed for the future seed, that is, for the salvation and happiness of his parents, his brother and the entire human race. How could Cain be unmerciful and inhuman enough in his frenzy to murder his own flesh and blood?

The answer is found in the fact that the devil had filled Cain's heart with pride and vanity over his birthright. He considered himself a man of distinction, with every claim upon God's favor and sinless, whilst his brother was nothing whatever. Cain's heart is devoid of true brotherly love; he has only contempt for Abel. He cannot endure God's manifest favor toward his brother, and will not be moved by the injunction to humble himself and seek God's grace. Anger and envy possess him to the extent that he cannot tolerate his brother alive. In violation of God's commandment and his own conscience, he becomes a murderer, and then goes his way as if he had done right.

16. This is what John means when he says that Cain had no other cause for his crime than that his own works were evil and his brother's righteous. Similarly, that obedient daughter of Saint Cain, the world, hates the Christians; and for no other reason than the latter's love and goodness of heart. Witness the examples of the holy patriarchs, the prophets and, most of all, of Christ himself.

17. What sin against the world did the beloved apostles commit? They desired the injury of none, but went about in extreme poverty and toil, teaching mankind how, through faith in Christ, to be saved from the devil's kingdom and from eternal death. This the world will not hear and suffer; hence the hue and cry: "Kill, kill these people ! Away with them from off the earth ! Show them no mercy !" Why this hostility? Because the apostles sought to relieve the world of its idolatry and damnable doings. Such good

works the world could not tolerate. What it desires is nothing but praise and commendation for its own evil doings, expecting from God the impossible endorsement, “Your deeds are good and well-pleasing to me. Pious children of mine are you. Just keep on cheerfully killing all who believe and preach my Word.”

18. In the same way does the world conduct itself today with reference to our Gospel. For no other reason are we hated and persecuted than because we have, through God’s grace, proclaimed his Word that recovered us from the blindness and idolatry in which we were sunken as deeply as the world, and because we desire to rescue others. That is the unpardonable sin by which we have incurred the world’s irreconcilable anger and its inextinguishable hatred. It cannot permit us to live.

We preach no other doctrine than faith in Christ, which our children pray and they themselves confess in words. We differ only in our claim that Christ having been crucified for us and having shed his blood to redeem us from sin and death, our salvation is not effected by our own works, or holiness or devotion. The fact that we do not regard their faithless worship equal to Christ himself, but teach men to trust in the grace of God and not their own worthiness, and to render him gratitude for his grace—this fact is intolerable to the world. It would be well for our adversaries if they would receive such teaching, since it would render them more than ever what they profess to be: our superiors in wisdom, knowledge and reputation—a claim we are willing to concede. But Cain’s works are evil and Abel’s righteous. The world simply cannot tolerate the Gospel, and no unity or harmony is ever to be hoped for. The world will not forsake its idolatry nor receive the faith. It would force us to renounce the Word of God and praise its Cain-like worship, or take death at their hands.

19. Therefore, John says, “Marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth you,” for it is compelled to act according to the nature inherited from its father Cain. It would have all merits and concede to Abel none. The world comprises the exalted, the wise, the learned, the mighty. The Scriptures represent these as under necessity to hate and persecute the poor throng of the Church of Christ by reason of the good works done by them. They can under no consideration tolerate the idea of being taught by this despised and humble throng the doctrine of salvation through the grace and mercy of God alone, not through man’s own merits. They cannot endure the

teaching that their offering—the mass, regarded by the Papists as a work of superlative merit and holiness—avails nothing before God.

20. In the text the nature of the world is portrayed for our recognition. So to understand the world as to know what may be expected from it is essential and valuable knowledge for the Christian. Thus armed he will not be dismayed and become impatient of suffering, nor permit its malice and ingratitude to mislead him to hate and desire for revenge. He will keep his faith and love, suffering the world to go its way if it refuse to hear his message. The Christian should expect nothing better from the world than its bitter persecution in return for his good works and love. The Church of Christ on earth, let him remember, is never to have an easier lot. He is not to judge according to show and appearance, thinking: “They are the great throng, the wisest and cleverest people on earth; how is it possible that they should all be in error and under condemnation?”

21. It is necessarily true that discipline and peace are impossible without the most excellent, exalted, erudite, clever people—royal, princely, noble in achievement and honor. Cain is never plain and lowly. He is always eminently clever, wise, holy and in every way vastly Abel’s superior. In fact, he must in himself represent all desirable things, as his name indicates. And the same characteristic is manifest in his children, who are ingenious in the invention of every variety of art. Deplorable the fact that a man of Cain’s qualifications, born of godly parents and signally honored of God, should display such hatred and inhumanity toward poor Abel merely because of God’s Word and Abel’s faith.

22. Such knowledge is comforting to the godly little company of Christians, who are confident they have God’s favor and know it to be the occasion of their persecution; they have no protection and succor but are exposed to the same fate as Abel. If they fare better, they may thank God for it. But they are ever to abide in love toward God, whose love they have received and felt, and likewise toward men, their enemies not excepted. This was Abel’s way; could he have lived again, he would have kept his brotherly love for his murderer, forgiving him and even imploring God’s forgiveness for him.

*“We know that we have passed out of death into life,
because we love the brethren.”*

LOVE MOVES CHRISTIANS.

23. To abide in love should be the motive for us Christians. John contrasts it with the motive of the world in hating us—its wickedness. The world's hatred of you, as John words imply, is not strange. The contrast between you and the world is exceedingly great. Through its own evil works, unbelief, pride, contempt for the Word and grace of God, and the persecution of the godly, the world has become by this time the victim of Satan and eternal death. It spurns all counsel and aid directed toward its rescue. Stiff-necked and hardened, under evident condemnation by its own conscience, it has chosen to persist in its doom. But we believers in Christ, God be praised! are different people. We have come forth from death; we have passed through death and entered into life through the knowledge and faith of the Son of God, who has loved us and given himself for us.

24. Such grace and goodness of God, says the apostle, should prompt you not to be offended and vanquished by the world's ingratitude, hate and malice, and thus to cease from holy endeavor and become likewise, evil, which course will result in the loss of your treasure. It is yours, not by your own effort, but by grace alone; for at one time you as well as they languished in the kingdom and power of death, in evil works, far from faith and love.

Remember to comfort yourselves, therefore, with the thought of this great blessing, an advantage you enjoy above the others. What if the world, abiding in death, does hate and persecute you who abide in life? Whom can its hatred injure? It cannot take from you the life which it lacks while you possess it, nor deliver you to death, from which you have passed, through Christ. When it does its worst it may perhaps falsely slander you, or deprive you of your property, or destroy your corrupt body—the final home of maggots and in any event doomed to corruption—and thus through the death of the body help you gain true life. Thus vengeance will be yours rather than its own. Yours will be the joy of being transplanted from death into life, whereas the world must abide in death. While they of the world think to deny you both the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of earth, they themselves lose body and soul. What more terrible retribution could their hatred and envy receive? For the sake of denying gratification to the devil and the world, and much more for your own welfare, you must not allow your persecutions to rob you of your peace and salvation, nor to lead you to lose your faith through impatience and desire for revenge.

Rather, pity their wretchedness and doom. You lose nothing by their oppression; yours is the gain, theirs the loss. For the slight grief inflicted upon you with reference to body and time, it shall dearly pay both here and hereafter.

25. How do we know we have passed from death unto life? John says, because we love the brethren. Just what does he mean? Is it not our doctrine that Christ first loved us, as John elsewhere says? that before we ever loved him he died and rose again for us? When we fully believe in our Savior's love, then our own hearts respond with perfect love to God and our neighbor. Why, then, does John say, "We have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren" ?

26. The explanation is found in the words "We know." John says plainly, "From the fact that we love the brethren, we know we have passed out of death into life." Love of the brethren is the test whereby we may ascertain who are the true believers. The apostle directed this epistle especially against false Christians; many there are who extol Christ, as did unbelieving Cain, and yet fail to bear the fruit of faith. John's reference is not to the means whereby we pass from sin and death to life, but to the proof whereby we may know the fact—not to the cause, but to the effect.

27. It is not sufficient to boast of having passed from death into life; there must be evidence of the fact. Faith is not an inactive and lifeless thing. When there is faith in the heart, its power will be manifest. Where power is not in evidence, all boasting is false and vain. When the human heart, in its confidence in divine mercy and love, is thrilled with spiritual comfort, and also warmed into kindness, friendliness, humility and patience towards the neighbor, envying and despising none but cheerfully serving all and ministering unto necessity even to hazarding body and life —when this is the case, then the fruits of faith are manifest.

Such fruits are proof that the believer has truly passed from death into life. Had he not true faith, but doubted God's grace and love, his heart would not prompt him, by reason of his love and gratitude to God, to manifest love for his neighbor. Where man has faith, and where he realizes God's infinite mercy and goodness in raising him from death to life, love is enkindled in his heart, and he is prompted to do all manner of good, even to his enemies, as God has done to him.

28. Such is the right interpretation and understanding of John's expression: "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren." It leaves in its integrity the foundation, justification, or deliverance from death, through faith alone. This is the first element of Christian doctrine. Granting that faith does justify, the next question is whether the faith is real or simulated, being merely a deceptive show and unsupported claim. The clear information imparted by the apostles is, that love, indeed, does not deliver from death, but that deliverance from death and the presence of life becomes a matter of sight and knowledge in that love has been wrought. With true faith we must have come to the point where we no longer, like Cain, in our pride and conceit, despise our neighbor; where we are not filled with envy, hatred and bitterness; where we desire, and to the extent of our power, promote the interests of our neighbor and work him all good.

29. John draws to a close by showing the opposite side of the picture, in that he addresses earnest words that reecho like peals of thunder to those who make the carnal boast of being Christians while destitute of love. He cites several facts as evidence that where love is lacking, necessarily faith and deliverance from death are absent, likewise. Thus no opportunity is given for self-deception or a frivolous excuse based upon wordy boasting of one's faith. The reality of the inner life is known by the presence of love, which in turn attests the presence of faith in the heart.

I. "HE THAT LOVETH NOT ABIDETH IN DEATH."

30. Here, in clear, decisive words, the conclusion is expressed that no man may boast of life unless he has love. If it is true that faith must be active, it is conversely true that the absence of fruitage demonstrates one's continuance in the old Cain-like manner of existence, torpid and dead, bereft of solace and the experience of God's grace and life. Let no one presume to think he has passed into life so long as he is devoid of love and the fruits of faith. Let him become serious, and in alarm make ready to become a true believer, lest he remain in eternal death and under greater condemnation than those who have never heard the Gospel.

**II. “WHOSOEVER HATETH HIS BROTHER IS A MURDERER:
AND YE KNOW THAT NO MURDERER HATH ETERNAL LIFE
ABIDING IN HIM.”**

31. Still clearer and stronger becomes the argument that lack of love means continuance in death. The stern and frightful judgment is here expressed that the unloving person is no better than Cain the fratricide. His heart is under the influence of deadly hate and murderous malice against the brother who refuses to be subservient to his desires. Kindling rage will prove its existence by appropriate works unless restrained by the fear of disgrace and punishment. He wishes his brother nothing good, but rejoices in his misfortune.

All this, however, is impossible for one who believes that he has been delivered from death. One who knows the wretchedness and misery of death from experience, but has entered upon life with its solace and joy, blessings he seeks to maintain—such a person will desire for others the same blessing; he cannot rejoice in another’s death. Therefore it is true conversely: “We know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.”

HATRED NATURAL TO HUMAN REASON.

32. Thus we see the nature of the human heart without faith and the knowledge of Christ; at bottom it is but the heart of a Cain, murderous toward its neighbor. Nor can anything better be expected from him who is not a Christian. The Scriptures repeatedly denounce such faithless hypocrites as bloodthirsty and deceitful. “Jehovah abhorreth the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.” ~~1986~~ Psalm 5:6. “For their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood.” Proverbs. 1:16. See also verse 11. All mankind are by nature the children of the murderer Cain. They are, of course, no better than their father. While Cain was a man most magnificent, intelligent and wise, being the first fruit born of those holy parents Adam and Eve, and in his superior endowment with natural virtues infinitely superior to all who come after him, he was nevertheless an unbeliever before God. Hence he became the murderer of his brother.

**III. “Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us:
and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But
whoso hath the world’s goods, and beholdeth his brother in
need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the
love of God abide in him?”**

33. These words delineate true Christian love and hold up the sublime example, or pattern, of God's love manifest in Christ. Christ's blood and death is God's own blood and death. Paul in ~~4018~~ Acts 20:28, speaks of God having purchased the Church "with his own blood." The heart of man by faith receives and apprehends this sacrifice. Under its transforming influence he is disposed to work good to his neighbor as he has himself received good. He even jeopardizes his life to that end, being conscious of his redemption from eternal death, and knowing physical death powerless to affect his eternal life. But the heart that fails to appropriate Christ's sacrifice is without faith and insensible to God's love and eternal life.

34. John uses an illustration plain enough for anyone to understand, and from which we may judge that the soul found wanting in small duties will be deficient in great ones. According to the apostle, if one possesses this world's goods and sees his neighbor want, he being able to render assistance without injury to himself, and yet closes his heart against that neighbor, not assisting him with even the slightest work of love, how can the love of God dwell in him since he appreciates it so little that he will not spare his needy brother a penny? How can he be expected, then, to render a greater service—to even lay down his life for his brother? What right has such a soul to boast—how can he know—that Christ has laid down his life for him and delivered him from death?

35. How frequently are such people to be found! Having this world's goods and being able to help the needy, they close their hearts against the unfortunate, as did the rich glutton toward poor Lazarus. Where shall we find in imperial courts, among kings, princes and lords, any who extend a helping hand to the needy Church, or give her so much as a crust of bread toward the maintenance of the poor, of the ministry and of schools, or for other of her necessities? How would they measure up in the greater duty of laying down their lives for the brethren, and especially for the Christian Church? Note the terrible judgment that they who are devoid of brotherly love are in God's sight murderers and cannot have eternal life.

36. But the merely selfish may well escape our censure in comparison with those who not only close their purses to the poor but shamelessly and forcibly deprive and rob their needy neighbor of his own by overreaching, by fraud, oppression and extortion; who take from the Church the property rightfully hers and especially reserved for her, snatching the bread from her mouth, so to speak. Not only is the papistical rabble today guilty of such

sin, but many who would be known as evangelical practice the same fraud with reference to the parochial estates and general property of the Church, and, in addition, tyrannically harass and torment the poor ministers. But oh, how heavy and terrible the impending judgment for those who have denied to Christ the Lord in his thirst even the cup of cold water!

IV. “MY LITTLE CHILDREN, LET US NOT LOVE IN WORD, NEITHER WITH THE TONGUE; BUT IN DEED AND TRUTH.”

37. The world and the false Christians in word pretend great love; but in practice, when love should manifest itself in deeds, it is found to be insincere. So John admonishes that where our love is not ardent enough to lead us to lay down our lives for our brethren, however much we may profess Christ, that love is assuredly only a vain show, a false pretense, wherewith we deceive ourselves and remain in infidelity and death, and in a more deplorable condition than those who are wholly ignorant of the Gospel. Therefore, let him who would proceed safely and prove himself a Christian remember to prove himself such by his deeds and works. Then men will know that he does not, a murderer and liar, like others, follow the devil. They will know, on the contrary, that he truly and with the heart clings to the Word of God, having passed from death to life.

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~~4086~~ 1 PETER 5:5-11.

5 Likewise, ye younger, be subject unto the elder. Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another: for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. **6** Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time; **7** casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you. **8** Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: **9** whom withstand steadfast in your faith, knowing that the same sufferings are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world. **10** And the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall himself perfect, establish, strengthen you. **11** To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

HUMILITY, TRUST, WATCHFULNESS, SUFFERING

1. This is the conclusion of Saint Peter's epistle. It is an exhortation to good works, such as a Christian, or believer, should practice. It is evident that the doctrine of the Gospel is not such as is charged by some, forbidding good works, or not earnestly commanding and urging them. Most diligently and repeatedly it urges the doctrine of works—such works as are, indeed, good works. There are in this epistle four natural heads which furnish us four good sermons.

I. HUMILITY.

2. The apostle has, in the verses immediately preceding our text, exhorted the elders, that is, preachers, to be in their lives “ensamples to the flock,” not “lording it over the charge

allotted” to them, but using their office for the service of others. And here in our text he exhorts the others, especially the young, to “be subject unto the elder.” And, in general, he admonishes all to “gird” themselves “with humility, to serve one another.” So Paul likewise admonishes that we should honor one another. Humility is the noblest and sweetest virtue love brings forth, and it is the most essential to peace and discipline. But especially does it become and adorn the young, making them pleasing and precious to God and men, bringing forth an abundance of good fruits.

3. If mankind could be led so to believe this that the virtue of humility would be generally practiced, it would be well everywhere. This would be a beautiful world, filled with discipline and good works. I would much prefer to see a city in which the young are reared in this virtue than a hundred monasteries of barefooted and Carthusian friars, though they lived ever so strictly. Alas! the greatest and most frequent complaint heard anywhere is concerning the disobedience, wantonness and pride of the younger generation found among all ranks. Therefore it is necessary to use all diligence that this exhortation be instilled into the hearts of the young and urged upon them, in the hope that it may benefit them.

4. First of all, Peter presents the divine command. We are not left to our own good pleasure in the matter—to show humility or not, as we please. God earnestly asks it of us, and asks that we do it lovingly and willingly. Otherwise his anger will be poured out upon us and we will have no happiness nor favor, not even among men. For everyone is a foe to pride and arrogance. These offenses are condemned by the whole world, even by strangers whom they do not concern.

One may be guilty of pride and not see his own shame, yet he cannot suffer it in another; he will hate and condemn that one. This vice hurts no one save himself. He makes himself hateful and contemptible before God and men. Everyone calls him a great, proud bag of filth and cries shame upon him. God metes out judgment and scorn to him, witnessing that he will not let this vice go unpunished, but will put the offender to shame. As Peter here says: “God resisteth the proud.”

5. Men should be moved by the examples which daily come to light in fulfillment of this passage. If we should have no regard for our own honor and standing before the world, neither for the contempt and the curses of all men; if the illustrious example of the noble character and eternal majesty of God’s Son, our Lord, should not stir us (which ought to move us if we

have one spark of Christianity in us), as we behold his unspeakable and incomprehensible humility which, rightly viewed, should melt the Christian's heart—if all this does not move us, we should be humbled by the many awful examples of God's fearful wrath which, from the beginning, he has hurled against pride.

6. What is more terrible than the eternal, irreparable fall and banishment of once lofty angelic nature that resulted when the devil robbed himself of the honor and glory enjoyed by the noble blessed spirits, and of the contemplation of eternal God, and brought upon himself everlasting and intolerable damnation by seeking to make himself equal with God, and through similar pride, led the human race to its awful fall? But what a blind, condemned creature are you, who, with your filthy, shameful pride and haughtiness, become like the spirit of evil, thereby turning all the world into your enemy and opposing yourself to the divine majesty, before which even the angels must tremble! If you have no fear of losing the favor and prayers of mankind, at least be afraid lest God send down upon your head his lightning and thunder, with which he crushes iron, rocks, and mountains, and hurl you forever into the abyss, as he hurled down the proud spirit and his angels.

7. Saint Peter exhorts both those who are in the office of the ministry, and other Christians, to whom God has given something, that they abide in their calling and office and conduct the same humbly, gladly obeying and serving others. Right here this vice of pride is the most hurtful to Christianity. For its whole government, life and essence are so ordered by God that no one should exalt himself and lord it over others, as the Pope, the true Antichrist has done. Only humility and deeds of Christian love and service should prevail in all classes and in all offices and works.

PRIDE OPPOSED TO THE FIRST TABLE.

8. Pride in this order of the Church is really and directly opposed to the first table of the law. It is a genuinely devilish pride in God's name and Word on the part of such people as would be wise in matters of faith and would lord it over God's Word. They puff themselves up if, forsooth, they have a gift more than others, and they hold God and all men as nothing. This vice is common among the great, learned and wise bishops and preachers. It prevails among those who learn of them and cling to them, especially beginners who, inexperienced and undisciplined, are brought into

prominence. Such puff themselves up and boast: “I also am a learned doctor. I love the Spirit and other gifts just as well as, and even in greater measure than, these preachers.” So they think they deserve to be heard and honored above others. They consider themselves so wise that all the world, in comparison, are geese and fools.

And the greater one’s gifts, the greater and more harmful such pride. It is common in other professions, also. He who has a little ability, or bears the title of doctor, makes much ado about it, and despises others. He acts as if what he has were not given him by God, but as if it were his by nature and birth, and therefore he deserves the praise and worship of all men. Such persons do not realize they are acting in opposition to God, and that they will themselves plunge into the abyss of hell before they can hurl God down from his heavenly throne.

9. See, from the examples of our own time, how God has overthrown such people. Thomas Munzer, with his tumultuous prophets, and later the Anabaptist faction, were proud of heart, would not listen to admonition, and lo! suddenly they went down to ruin, not only in utter disgrace, but to their own miserable and eternal loss and that of many people who had been misled by them. So, too, there are at the present day many proud spirits. Some dare not yet publicly show themselves. Such as have perceived that they are learned, or are held in regard by men, thereupon grow boastful and, despite all their skill and learning, abide without the Spirit and without fruit, even if they do not work more harm in addition to bringing themselves into condemnation.

10. Thus it is in all kinds of gifts and offices where men are not God-fearing and humble. For example, those who are intrusted with the civil government—princes, counselors, lawyers (where they are not “theologians,” that is, Christians) are so insolent and proud that they imagine themselves alone to be the people, whom others are to reverence as gods. In their pride, they despise God and men, and by their arrogance they lead the land and the people to destruction. These have already the judgment upon themselves that they, as God’s enemies, must be hurled down. For they have cut themselves loose from God’s kingdom and grace; and the blessings of baptism and of Christ, with his suffering and blood, are lost upon them.

11. We have now shown how pride conflicts with the demands of the first table of the law. Men do not employ the spiritual treasures and gifts to

God's honor nor to the good of their neighbors. Thus they mar these gifts and, in their wicked course, go to the devil, into whose likeness they have grown.

PRIDE OPPOSED TO THE SECOND TABLE.

12. Further, this vice is just as general in the sphere of the second table of the law—among the common people and in the temporal life of the world, each one boasting of himself and despising others. Prince and nobleman think that all the world is nothing in comparison with themselves.

Commoner and peasant, puffed up because they have much wealth, imagine they must defy everybody, and do good to nobody. These deserve to be spit upon by all men. Such pride does not become them better than ornaments of gold or silver would become an image of stone or a wooden block. Finally, the women, with their foolish pride of dress, must not be forgotten. One prides herself on being better or more beautifully adorned than her neighbor. She is, in truth, a finely decorated goose. She imagines that no other woman equals her. Yea, there is scarcely a house-servant or maid but brags over others.

13. In short, we have come to the point where all men, with their insolence and boastfulness, seek to lord it over others. None will humble himself to another. Each thinks he has full right to act as he does, and is under no obligation to yield to others. And the civil government has grown so weak that that there is no hope of restraining the haughtiness of all classes, from the highest to the lowest. At last, God must strike with thunder and lightning to prove to us that he resists such people and will not tolerate pride. Therefore the young, who can still be led, should be exhorted and trained, as far as possible, to guard themselves against this vice.

14. Peter uses for his purpose a peculiar term when he says, “Gird yourselves with humility.” “Gird” has the meaning of being bound or joined together most firmly; or, as a garment, most carefully woven through and through so that it cannot tear. He illustrates by this term how Christians, with all diligence, should strive after the virtue, and manifest and practice it among themselves, as if upon them as a band it was a special obligation. Thus, he says, must you be twined together and bound to each other, and your hands clasped together. So must you be joined by humility, which cannot be dissolved, dismembered, or torn, even though occasion be given one, here and there, incited by the devil, or the evil word of someone else,

to fly into a passion, and grow defiant and boastful, as if to say: Must I suffer such things at the hands of this man? But rather say to yourselves. We are Christians, and must bear with each other and yield, in many things; for we are all one body, and we are placed together here on earth for the sole reason that we may, through love, serve one another.

15. And each should recognize his own weakness. He should remember that God has given others also something and can give them yet more, and that therefore he should gladly serve and yield to others, remembering that he needs their help. Each one is created for the sake of others, and we are all to serve one another. God gives the same grace and salvation to all, so that none may exalt himself above his neighbor; or, if he lift himself up, that he lose the grace conferred and fall into deeper condemnation. Therefore we must hold fast to this humility, so that the unity may not be destroyed. For Satan seeks to destroy this also, and uses every possible means to lead people to despise each other and to be proud and insolent in their treatment of each other. And these are things to which flesh and blood, even without special incitement, are inclined. Thus humility is easily and quickly lost if men are not alert to fight against the devil and their own flesh.

THE BEAUTY OF HUMILITY.

16. Humility is one of the beautiful garments and ornaments with which Christians should adorn themselves before God and the world. Paul, in ^{<BIB>}Colossians 3:12, says, "Put on humility." He regards this virtue as more precious than all earthly crowns and splendor. This is the true spiritual life. It is not to be sought elsewhere, by running into the cloisters or the deserts, by putting on gray gown or cowl. Peter here admonishes all classes to cultivate this virtue. This sermon on good works concerns every station in every house, city or village. It is for all churches and schools. Children, servants and the youth should be humbly obedient to parents, superiors and the aged. On the other hand, it is for those in the higher stations of life who serve their inferiors, even the lowest. If all men so observed this virtue the world would be full of good works. For it is impossible that humility should do evil. It is profitable and pleasant to all men.

17. By this virtue, true saints and Christians can better be known than by monastic seclusion and holiness. It requires no great effort to wear a gray cowl. It is not even such a great trial to lie on the ground at night and to arise at midnight; scoundrels, thieves, and murderers must often do the

same. But to wear and hold fast to this angelic garment, humility—this the world is not so willing to accept as monasticism and its works. And thus it comes to pass that flesh and blood do not strive after this holy life. Each man seeks an easy life, in which he can live to himself and need serve no one nor suffer anything at the hands of others; just as the monks have sought and chosen.

18. Peter adds to this admonition the reason: “For God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.” As I have said above, he strives to show the earnestness of God’s command. The command is accompanied by a threat. He does not simply say, God punishes the proud, or God is hostile to them; but he “resisteth” them, he sets himself against them. Now, what is the pride of all men toward God? Not so much as a poor, empty bubble. Their pride puffs itself up and distends itself as though it would storm the sky and contend against the lightning and thunder, that can shatter heaven and earth. What can the combined might of all creatures accomplish if God oppose himself thereto? And how does a miserable man, whose heart is overwhelmed by a small pestilence, rise against the majesty of heaven which can, any moment, cast him down into the abyss? What are earth and ashes proud of? says Sirach, 10:9.

19. Is it not enough and more than enough that other sin and disobedience are laid to our account, by which we anger God and merit heavy punishment, without our trying further to provoke him with our pride and haughtiness, so that he must arise in his majesty and resist us? With other sins he can have patience, that he may exhort and incite us to repentance. But if, in hardened impenitence, we defy and oppose him, he cannot but rise up against us. Who is there that will bear it, or be able to stand, when God sets his countenance and his power against a poor man already subject, every moment, to death and the power of the devil ?

THE CONSEQUENCE OF PRIDE.

20. From the beginning, innumerable instances in history have proved the truth of this saying, “God resisteth the proud.” They show how he has always overthrown and destroyed the proud world and has cast down the haughty, scornful kings and lords. The great king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, was humbled when banished from his royal throne to the companionship of the beasts of the field and compelled to eat grass with them, ⁽²⁰⁸⁾ Daniel 4:30ff. Again, remember how suddenly the great king

Alexander was hurled down, when after the victory and good fortune God had given him, he began to grow proud, and wanted to be revered as a god? Again, there was King Herod Agrippa, ^{<44223>}Acts 12:23. The proud, learned emperor Julian, a virulent mocker and persecutor of Christ, whom he had denied—how soon was he drowned in his own blood! And since then, what has become of all the proud, haughty tyrants, who proposed to oppress and crush Christianity?

21. The Pope, also, has ever, in devilish pride, exalted himself, and in the temple of God set himself forth as God. Further, in worldly pomp and pride he has lifted himself above all others. He has even learned, from heathen emperors, as Diocletian and other tyrants, to have men kiss his feet. Yea, he has forced emperors and kings to submit to this humiliating act. What open, inhuman insolence and pride Pope Alexander the Third practiced when, by threatening against him his empty ban, he compelled the pious and mighty German emperor, Frederick Barbarossa, to prostrate himself at his feet while he stepped upon him and said, Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; and when the emperor protested against such shameful pride and said, Non tibi, sed Petro (Not to thee, but to Peter), the Pope, with increasing scorn, replied, “Et mihi, et Petro” (Both to me, and to Peter). This is pride carried almost to its highest point.

22. The Turk, too, is prouder now than ever, and, I hope, has reached the heights of pride, beyond which he cannot and shall not proceed. Meantime, may he not attack and humble us! But it will come to pass, in the end, that God will overthrow both pope and Turk through his divine power, and, as Daniel says, without the aid of men. This word will not fail, “God resisteth the proud.” Its truth must appear in human events, so that men may see what is meant by the declaration, “God resisteth”; otherwise no one would believe it. Though the Turk and all the world should be a thousand times more proud and powerful, this should not help them when he who is above sees and grows angry, and lifts his hand. He asks as little about the power of all Turkish emperors and of the Pope as about a dead fly.

23. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,” ^{<S1031>}Hebrews 10:31. This, however, is nothing else than with scorn and defiance to oppose his will, so that he, in turn, must set himself against man and must lift his hand. Therefore, let everyone beware lest he boast and grow defiant in the presence of the divine majesty. Not only must he beware, that he may not awaken God’s anger, but that he may have grace

and blessing in the things he ought to do. For, if thou beginnest something in thine own power, and wisdom, and haughtiness, think not he will grant thee success and blessing to carry out thy purpose. On the other hand, if thou humblest thyself, and beginnest aught in accordance with his will, in the fear of God and trusting in his grace, there is given thee the promise, “He giveth grace to the humble.” So, then, thou shalt not only have favor with men, but success shall crown thine efforts. Thou shalt prove a useful man, both to God and to the world, and shalt complete and maintain thy work despite the resistance of the devil. For where God’s grace is, there his blessing and protection must follow, and his servant cannot be overthrown or defeated. Though he be oppressed for a time, he shall finally come forth again and be exalted. So Peter concludes by saying:

*“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God,
that he may exalt you in due time.”*

24. Peter shows in these words what true humility is and whence it comes. The heart, through knowledge of its sin, becomes terrified in the presence of God’s anger and anxiously seeks grace. Thus a humility is born, not merely external and before men, but of the heart and of God, from fear of God and knowledge of one’s own unworthiness and weakness. He who fears God and “trembles at his word” (^{<23115>}Isaiah 66:5), will surely defy or hector or boast against nobody. Yea, he will even manifest a gentle spirit toward his enemies. Therefore, he finds favor both with God and men.

25. The cause of this, Peter says, shall be “the mighty hand of God.” As though he would say: Ye may not do nor leave undone this thing for the sake of men, but ye ought to humble yourselves under the hand of God. God’s hand is powerful and mighty in a twofold respect: It dashes down and overthrows the proud and self-secure, however hard and iron their heads and hearts may be. They must languish in dust and ashes; yea, must lie despondent and desperate in the anguish and torments of hell, if he touch them but a little with the terrors of his anger. These are experiences through which the saints also pass, and concerning whose severity they make lamentation. “For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine indignation,” ^{<19115>}Psalm 38:2-3. “For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping. Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast taken me up, and cast me away,” ^{<19A209>}Psalm 102:9-10. “I am consumed by the blow of thy hand. When thou with rebukes dost correct

man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth,"
 <B90>Psalm 39:10-11.

THE REWARD OF HUMILITY.

26. In the second place, God's hand is mighty to raise, to comfort and strengthen the humbled and the fearful, and, as Peter says here, to exalt them. Those who in terror have been cast down should not, therefore, despair, or flee before God, but rise again, and be comforted in God. God wants it preached and published that he never lays his hand upon us in order that we may perish and be damned. But he must pursue this course in order to lead us to repentance: otherwise we would never inquire about his Word and will. And if we seek grace, he is ready to help us up again, to grant us forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life. The Psalms and the Prophets here and there speak of this. "Jehovah hath chastened me sore; but he hath not given me over unto death," <19B818>Psalm 118:18. "Jehovah raiseth up them that are bowed down," <19E608>Psalm 146:8.

27. God will "exalt you in due time," says Peter. Though God's help be delayed, and the humbled and suffering seem to lie oppressed all too long under God's hand, and on that account to languish, nevertheless, let them hold to the promise Paul has given: God "will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able," <603>1 Corinthians 10:13, but he will hear your cry, and will, at the right time, help; and with this let them be comforted. But again, let the proud fear, even though he permit them to go unpunished and to continue in their boastful course for a time. He watches their lives, and, when the proper time comes, he will descend all too heavily upon them, so that they cannot bear it. He has already stretched forth his mighty hand, both to cast down the godless and to exalt the humble.

II. "CASTING ALL YOUR ANXIETY UPON HIM, BECAUSE HE CARETH FOR YOU."

28. What will become of him who lives a God-fearing and humble life, suffering the insolence, pride and wantonness of the world? Or, where will he find protection and defense, to abide in his godly ways? We see daily how the pious are harassed and persecuted, and are trod on by the world. The Apostle says: "Ye Christians must endure temptation and adversity, want and need, both physical and spiritual, in the world, and your heart is oppressed with anxiety and cares, and ye think within yourselves: O, what

will become of me? How shall I be supported? What if I should die ?” (The world only concerns itself about how it may be enriched and be filled, and anxious, unbelieving consciences would, through themselves and their own good works, seek to have a gracious God and to die in peace.) “In view of all this,” he says, “only hearken, I will counsel and instruct you aright as to what disposition you should make of your troubles.”

There is a brief passage in ^{}Psalm 55:22 which reads: “Cast thy burden upon Jehovah, and he will sustain thee: he will never suffer the righteous to be moved.” Follow ye this advice. Let not your burden rest upon yourselves; for ye cannot bear it, and must finally perish beneath its weight. But, confident and full of joy, cast it from you and throw it on God, and say: Heavenly Father, thou art my Lord and God, who didst create me when I was nothing; moreover hast redeemed me through thy Son. Now, thou hast committed to me and laid upon me, this office or work, and things do not go as well as I would like. There is so much to oppress and worry, that I can find neither counsel nor help. Therefore I commend everything to thee. Do thou supply counsel and help, and be thou, thyself, everything in these things.

29. Such a prayer is pleasing to God, and he tells us to do only what we are commanded, and throw upon him all anxiety as to the issue and what we shall accomplish. As also other passages of Scripture declare: “Commit thy way unto Jehovah, trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass,” ^{}Psalm 37:5. No heathen, philosopher, jurist, if he have not God’s Word, can throw his care and complaint upon God. He thinks that all the world, especially the great, the wise, who rule, must accomplish everything by their own planning and circumspection. And where trouble arises—for it is quite common for even the greatest- and wisest people to make mistakes—he becomes a madman or a fool, and begins to murmur and argue against God and his government, as though God’s rule merited criticism. But such men receive their deserts when God permits their calculations and hopes to fail, and lets the reverse obtain. For they will not admit they have need of him. They think they have sufficient wisdom and power, and that God must respect their plans. Thus, they spend their lives in many vain, useless cares and projects, and must, in the course of their experience, learn and confess, many a time, that the very opposite of their judgment is the truth.

30. Christians have the rare faculty, above all other people on earth, of knowing where to place their care, whilst others vex and torture

themselves and at length must despair. Such must be the consequence of unbelief, which has no God and would provide for itself. But faith understands this word Peter quotes from the Scriptures: "Because he careth for you." It joyfully meditates thereon and does and suffers faithfully. For faith knows this to be its duty. Its trouble, however, it commits to God, and proceeds with vigor against all that opposes. It can call upon God as a father, and it says: I will do what God has commanded me and leave the result with him.

31. The Christian must take this course if he would proceed safely and happily in matters of the highest import. In time of danger and in the hour of death, when, with all his worrying, he cannot discover where he is or how he is journeying, he must, with eyes, senses and thoughts closed to the world, surrender himself in faith and confidence and cast himself upon God's hand and care and protection, and say: God has permitted me to live until this hour, without my solicitude. Moreover, he has given me his beloved Son as a treasure and sure pledge of eternal life. Therefore, my dear soul, journey on in joy. Thou hast a faithful Father and Savior, who has taken thee into his own hand, and will preserve thee.

32. The Christian Church collectively must so proceed in the discharge of its high spiritual office, of which Peter speaks here, that no man or creature, by his own wisdom and power, can sustain or accomplish any work. No power, might, or protection that can comfort, or upon which one may rely, is to be sought in the world. Wholly in God, and in God alone, must help be sought. By his divine power God must uphold the Church. He has, from the beginning, always and wonderfully preserved it in the world, in the midst of great weakness, in disunion occasioned by schismatics and heretics, in persecution by tyrants. And the government is wholly his, though he commits the office and service to men, whom he would summon and use to administer his Word and sacrament. Therefore, each Christian, especially if he fills such an office and partakes of this fellowship, should be intent, in that whereunto God has called and appointed him, upon serving God faithfully and doing that which is commanded him. The anxiety respecting the Church's continued existence and her preservation against the devil and the world, can be left to the Lord. He has taken this upon himself and thus has removed the burden from our shoulders, that we might be certain of the permanence of the Church. If its preservation were committed to human counsel, might and will, the devil, with his power, would soon overthrow and destroy it.

33. Likewise, in every office and station, each one should follow this counsel of Saint Peter. A prince should seek to protect his land and people, to promote God's Word, to maintain discipline and peace, to do justice to every man, to punish the disobedient, etc. Councils, officials, and those in authority should faithfully advise and direct to this end. Pastors and preachers should rightly and fearlessly declare God's Word and truth. Every citizen and subject should be intent upon his work and duty, and whatever, in connection therewith, is unusual he must simply commit to God.

But the world does not pursue this course. Each one says: Why should I incur so much danger, opposition and hostility? Again, why should I labor and toil for naught? I will not accomplish my work at any rate. In this spirit of fear and worry, his proper office and work are delayed, or he is always careless.

But let such people know that they are not Christians, nor do they promote God's kingdom or profit the offices conferred on them. If they do not propose to mend their ways, they should give up the office bestowed on them by God. It is not enough to simply sit at ease in one's office and accept the plaudits of men. We all like to render esteem and honor to office and station. But know this, that you are not in office to parade about in beautiful garments, to sit in the front row, and be called "Gracious Master" and "Esquire." You are to conduct faithfully the office with which God has clothed and honored you, regardless of human honor and profit, shame or injury.

34. But men are not generally inclined to believe and trust God. They are not inclined to remember that he cares for us; that he has assumed and must bear the greatest of burdens, which no man on earth can bear; that he cared for us before we were born, and could still, of himself, execute all things dispensing with all human help, but he prefers to accomplish his purpose through human means, and to employ us as instruments in these divine works—governing, punishing, teaching, comforting.

35. The world is particularly culpable in this matter of pride. When divinely charged with some great work, it always seeks to determine, in advance, by its own wisdom, all future danger and accidents, and tries to anticipate them. The world looks for man's help, and seeks friendship and assistance wherever it can. It makes alliances, and resorts to other schemes. It puts its trust in these and then considers itself strong enough to meet opposition,

and is sure of its cause by reason of its own efforts. This is not showing faith in God. It is not committing our cause and all care for ourselves to him. It is maintaining the cause through one's own anxiety and forethought. It is ignoring and disbelieving the fact that nothing can be accomplished by one's own vexed effort. No human wisdom has power to foresee the future. If we looked back at the examples furnished by history, we should learn how woefully human wisdom is deceived when it relies upon itself. The results are not what was expected, but the very opposite.

36. The Scriptures give many pertinent examples of the kings of Judah and Israel, whom the prophets often and severely rebuked because they sought refuge and help among strange nations and kings. The prophets warned them that they should not trust in human aid, but should do according to God's Word and command. They told them he would protect and uphold them. But the kings would not hear. They continued to form friendships and alliances with the kings of Egypt, Syria, Babylon and Assyria, and thus invited them as guests into the land, whereupon the heathen kings came with force and led away captive the inhabitants and laid everything desolate. That was their reward for not heeding God's Word; for not believing that he cared for them, and desired to protect and defend them if they would but trust and obey him.

The wisest and most eminent, even among the heathen, have lamented, in the light of their own experience, that they have been shamefully deluded by their counsels, even though founded on the most careful deliberations. Nor can it be said that the world has grown wiser in consequence of its own or others' sufferings.

37. This exhortation is preached to no one except the few who are Christians. They have regard for God's Word, and, now humbled, have learned that they should not rely on their own wisdom and reason, or upon human help and comfort. They have come to the belief that God cares for them. So they do what they know is right and are in duty bound to do, and suffer themselves not to be hindered by such fears as possess the world concerning dangers, injuries, and adversities. They commend all such things to God, and at his word go right through with courage.

38. Let me illustrate from my own experience. What should I have done when I began to denounce the lies of the indulgence system, and later the errors of the papacy, if I had listened and given heed to the terrible things all the world wrote and said would happen to me? How often I heard it

said that if I wrote against such and such eminent people I would provoke their displeasure, which would prove too severe for me and the whole German nation. But, since I had not begun this work of myself, being driven and led thereto by reason of my office (otherwise I should have preferred to keep silence), I must continue. I commended the cause to God and let him bear the burden of care, both as to the result of the work and also as to my own fate. Thus I advanced the cause farther, despite tumultuous opposition, than I had ever before dared to think or hope.

39. Oh, how much good would God accomplish through us if people could be persuaded, especially the eminent lords and kings, that what Peter here says is true: “He careth for you !” How much he could do if they believed that truth instead of seeking, through their own wisdom and reason, to equip, strengthen, and compose themselves by aid of human might and assistance, friendship and alliance, for the accomplishment and maintenance of their cause! It is apparent that mortal plans fail and have always failed, and that they accomplish nothing. God hinders and resists man’s work when he will not trust him. Hence God can grant no success or favor to that which is founded on human wisdom or on trust in human powers. This is a truth men must finally perceive by experience, and they must lament because they would not believe it.

40. Let him who would be a Christian learn to believe this. Let him practice and exhibit faith in all his affairs, bodily and spiritual, in his doing and his suffering, his living and his dying. Let him banish cares and anxious thoughts. Courageous and cheerful, let him cast them aside; not into a corner, as some vainly think to do, for when burdens are permitted to conceal themselves in the heart they are not really put away. But let the Christian cast his heart and its anxieties upon God. God is strong to bear and he can easily carry the burden. Besides, he has commanded that all this be put upon himself. The more thou layest upon him, the more pleasing it is to him. And he gives thee the promise that he will carry thy cares for thee, and all things else that concern thee.

41. This is a grand promise, and a beautiful, golden saying, if men would only believe it. If a powerful ruler here on earth were to give such a promise, and were to demand that we let him have all the concern about gold and silver and the needs of this life, how cheerfully and contentedly would every one cling to such promise! But now a greater lord says all this, one who is almighty and truthful, who has power over the body and

life, and who can and will give us everything we need, both temporal and eternal. We should have in all this, if we only believed it, half of heaven, yea, a perfect paradise on earth. For what is better and nobler than a quiet, peaceful heart? For this all men are striving and laboring. So have we been doing hitherto, running to and fro after it. Yet it is found nowhere except in God's word, which bids us cast our cares and burdens on God and thus seek peace and rest. It counsels us to throw upon him everything that threatens to oppress and worry us. God would not have anxiety dwell in our hearts, for it does not belong there; it is put there by the devil.

42. Therefore, a Christian, even though obliged to suffer all manner of adversity, temptation and misfortune, can cheerfully go forward and say: Dear Lord God, thou hast commanded me to believe, to teach, to govern and to act; this I will attempt in thy name, and I will commend to thee whatever may happen to me in the course of duty. There you have a man who is equal to any task, and can do much good. For he is freed from the greatest misfortune and has laid the heaviest weight upon God, whilst another man does nothing except fill his heart with anxiety and gloom. This other can apply himself to no good work. He becomes unfit both to do and to suffer. He is afraid of every trifle and, because of his vexation or impatience, can do nothing worth mentioning.

What is the world doing now? Princes, lords, counselors, citizens, and peasants—all want only power, honor, and wealth. None desires to render service. Everyone fears that this or the other thing might happen to him. Though the world never needed more careful rule than at the present time, lords and princes, simply because they are such, idly sit adorned with beautiful crowns, though they have received their trust from God to discharge their princely office. For the world must be governed, the youth must be educated, the wicked must be punished. But if thou desirest the honor only, and art not willing to step in the mire, to suffer people's displeasure, and through it all learn to trust God and for his sake do everything, thou art not worthy of the grace given for the accomplishment of a good and praiseworthy work. In punishment, resting under God's wrath, thou must remain unfit for every good work.

III. ‘BE SOBER, BE WATCHFUL: YOUR ADVERSARY THE DEVIL, AS A ROARING LION, WALKETH ABOUT, SEEKING WHOM HE MAY DEVOUR: WHOM WITHSTAND STEDFAST IN YOUR FAITH.’

43. The apostle has set forth two things to be practiced throughout the Christian life; namely, Christian humility—which is fear of God—and faith and confidence in God. Now he admonishes his readers to battle and warfare, that these blessings may be preserved. He shows us our enemy and adversary who seeks to rob us of our treasure and deprive us of our salvation and eternal blessedness. Hence he would say: Be not concerned about living a life of earthly glory, and let not anxious cares fill your soul But be intent on humbling yourselves before God. Trust in him. Let this be your care, that you may abide in the grace of humility. Let it never be wrested from you. For the devil seeks to instill these forbidden cares, and to produce disobedience against God, that he may tear faith and God’s Word out of your heart.

WATCHFULNESS ENJOINED.

Therefore, you must not ignore these facts, and meanwhile strive after something else. You are not to go along in false security or sleep and snore as though there were no danger. You must rather know that you have not been placed in a garden of roses here, but in the midst of heavy conflicts, where you must be on your guard, always watchful and prepared for resistance. For you have an adversary who is not insignificant or to be despised, but is strong, mighty, and moreover wicked and ferocious. He does not fight with stone and wood, destroying rocks and trees, but he has his eye fixed on you Christians. He never grows tired or weary, but without rest and ceasing he pursues you not only to spy upon you and to harass you, in which he can be withstood, but he desires utterly to devour you.

44. His sole purpose and plan is to murder and destroy men, spiritually and bodily; even as, at the beginning, when man had been created, he led and cast him into death. He practices his schemes with awful and deadly effect in the world against those who do not believe in Christ, and he will never stop until the judgment day. One can perceive his incessant activity. He bustles about and openly raves and roars against all Christendom. He uses for his purpose the Turks, and other tyrants and godless people, not to speak of the sorrow and murder he works by so possessing people that in their frenzy they do themselves injury, or without cause murder others. He

otherwise, through wicked and shameful snares, leads men into misfortune and sorrow.

In short, the world is nothing else than the devil's murderous cave, both spiritually and physically. God, in order to somewhat hinder and restrain physical murder, has ordained temporal government, parental and other authority. These in their office are to be sober, watchful, and diligent. We ought to thank God for his preservation of such authority, for otherwise there would be no peace—everywhere on earth nothing but murder. Nevertheless, the awful murder the devil perpetrates on those who are without God's Word and faith, is not thereby checked.

45. Some other defense and protection, then, another kind of watchfulness, must be sought, in order that men may remain undestroyed and unharmed in the presence of this bloodthirsty murderer. Of this Peter speaks here to the little company of Christians, and says: Ye, through Christ's blood and death rescued from the devil's lies and murderous intent, have been made alive and have been transplanted into the heavenly life, like your beloved fathers, Adam, Abel, and others. They are no longer under bondage to Satan, but live in Christ, though the body lie for a time in the earth and truth and life must be supplied to their body and soul. But because ye still dwell in the world, ye are exposed to all danger. Physically, ye are yet in the murderer's house; therefore ye must take good heed, that he may not kill you again, and murder your souls dwelling in these mortal bodies. It shall harm you none that the soul was ruined and the body is yet subject to death. "Because I live," says Christ (~~6149~~ John 14:19), "ye shall live also." However, ye must struggle if ye are to abide in the truth and life. To this ye are appointed whilst ye live here on earth; otherwise ye would already be in Paradise. But the devil has not yet been consigned wholly to the punishment of his damnation, which will be at the last day, when he will finally be cast down from his airy height, and from the earth, into the abyss of hell. Then he will no more be able to attack us, and there will no longer be cloud or veil between us and God and the angels.

SOBERNESS ESSENTIAL.

46. In order, now, he continues, that ye may be saved from his murderous designs, and may preserve the life you have begun, ye must be sober and watchful; not only mindful of the body, but much rather of the mind and soul. It is true that a Christian who is to resist the devil must be physically

sober, for a full hog and drunkard cannot be watchful nor can he plan defense against the devil. Yet must a Christian much more guard himself, lest the soul become sleepy or drunken. As the soul is burdened by the body when the latter is overwhelmed by drunkenness, so, when the soul is watchful and sober, the body also is temperate and prepared to hear God's Word. But where the body is oppressed by drunkenness, there the soul must first have been a drunkard, not heeding God's Word nor giving attention to prayer. Where the soul is drunken and drowned in such security, it will not avail that the body suffer hurt by strict fasting and self-mortification, after the fashion of the Carthusians and hermits.

47. Saint Peter, then, forbids not only bodily drunkenness, but also drunkenness of the soul. One's soul is drunk when he lives in carnal security, without thought and anxiety as to whether he have and hold God's Word or not: when he asks no questions, either about God's wrath or his grace; and when he, moreover, lets himself be filled with the sweet poison of false doctrine through the mob of evil spirits Satan employs for this purpose, until he grows numb, loses faith and clear judgment and finally becomes overfull of drunkenness and spews it out upon others.

48. The same thing results when men begin to be wise in divine things by following human reason. Saint Peter aptly describes this false doctrine with the expression, "cunningly devised fables," ^{<6016>}2 Peter 1:16. He says: "We did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Such are the beautiful words and sermons which make a great show of wisdom and holiness, and naturally please men. For instance it is a cunningly devised fable when one with the aid of philosophy, which reason can understand, sets forth in grandiloquent words what a fine thing it is for a man to live honorably, chastely, and to practice good works and virtues. The aim is, with such pretense, to have us believe that we, through these works (not alone through faith), are justified before God; that is, are redeemed from sin and death.

49. Again, other factious spirits travel about with worthy sayings which they have heard from us—externals do not help souls; the Spirit must do the work—and then they proceed to fling contempt on baptism and the Lord's Supper. So Thomas Munzer, with his seditious peasants, and the Anabaptist rabble, went about, with great demonstration, preaching about the shameful, wicked life of the world, especially of the authorities,

declaring that these were godless people and tyrants, and deserved God's wrath and punishment; that therefore men should depose and execute them, and establish a new government, of only pious and holy people.

These and similar things Peter calls "cunningly devised fables." They are exaggeratingly pretended to be the product of great wisdom and art, and are rendered sweet and palatable to reason. So has all idolatry, heresy, and false doctrine, from the beginning on, prevailed, being fashioned and most beautifully adorned by people learned and wise and held in the esteem of the world.

50. How admirable did the position of Arius and his adherents appear in comparison with the true faith concerning the divinity of Christ, when they declared that though Christ should be exalted above all angels and creatures, and that all honor, dominion and power in heaven and on earth belong to him, yea, that he is quite equal to God—all this, yet he is not "homo-ousios"; that is, he is not in one undivided, divine, eternal essence, which is of such unity that it could be imparted to no one else. It would be too much to say that a man is God, etc. With such pretense was a great multitude of Christians seduced. Even few bishops remained in the pure doctrine and faith. And afterward this poison prevailed among the wise people of Asia and Greece, until Mohammed, with his Saracens and Turks, had miserably corrupted the greatest part of the world.

51. Likewise the Pope has adorned and colored with a glorious form his abominations and idolatry, claiming for his order of service that it is a meritorious and beautiful thing. Again, he calls attention to the serviceableness of the beautiful, orderly government and power of the Church, with its well regulated gradations of office and position—bishops superior to the ordinary priests, and over the bishops Saint Peter's chair at Rome. In that chair is vested the authority for the convocation of general councils so often as these may be necessary. These councils are to judge and decide in all matters of faith, and their decisions everyone must follow and obey. Again, he boasts what great service and consolation to the whole world is the work of the priests in the mass, when they daily renew and offer to God the sacrifice made by Christ on the cross. This is the sweet wine in the "golden cup" of the scarlet harlot of Babylon, with which she has made drunken all kings and nations, [Ⓞ] Revelation 17:2-4.

52. Where the devil finds those who give ear to such fables, he takes them captive and so fills them with these falsehoods that they neither see nor

hear anything else. They think their belief is the only one, and they will not suffer themselves to be instructed out of God's Word. And so, in their madness, without rightful intelligence of faith and all principles of pure doctrine, they continue in their darkened mind, with their fantastic, lying prattle, without repentance and amendment, having no grace to learn or do anything good. This is amply proved by the example of all seditious spirits.

53. Therefore, Peter admonishes us to be "sober and watchful," especially in spirit, and to guard ourselves against this sweet poison and these beautiful, adorned lies and fables of the devil. He teaches us how to equip and defend ourselves against his wicked devices.

"Whom withstand steadfast in your faith."

54. The true defense and resistance, in which we are to be sober and watchful, is to be well grounded in God's Word and cling firmly thereto when the devil seeks, with his cunningly devised fables, born of human understanding and reason, to overthrow our faith. Reason is the devil's bride, and always vaunts itself wise and skillful in divine things, and thinks what it holds to be right and good must be accounted so before God. But faith holds to God's Word alone. It knows that before God, human wisdom, skill and power, and whatever gifts and virtues man may have, count for nothing. Only his grace and the forgiveness of sins in Christ has value. Therefore, faith can repel and defeat all these fine pretensions and cunning fables.

55. Worldly dominion and authority boasts before God in this fashion: My crown is a crown in God's sight, for my power and sovereignty have been given me by God. Therefore, whatever I say he must respect and regard as valid, and everyone must endorse my words and actions.

The wise philosopher or jurist would thus give expression to his boasts and pretensions: We are the learned, the Wise rulers of the world, and have admirable laws and statutes. We have superior and beautiful doctrines concerning good works and virtues. Men must listen to us and allow our judgment to have precedence. He who can do, or does, such things as we have done is, in God's sight, superior to others.

FAITH, NOT WORLDLY WISDOM, ESSENTIAL.

56. No, dear man, says faith to this, I grant that the things of which thou boastest have been ordained and confirmed by God; but they are not of

value save for this temporal life. The world regards it a crown to be known as wise. But in the presence of God thou shouldst lay aside thy crown, let thy might and power, thy law and wisdom, go, and say: God, be merciful to me a poor sinner! Reason has this advantage, that it is equipped and adorned with God's promise to confirm its rule here on earth and to be pleased therewith; but with the provision that reason shall not interfere in God's government, or boast over against him. Let it be known that what is called wisdom and prudence on earth, is foolishness before God. What in the sight of the world is commended and honored as beautiful, valuable, as of honor and virtue, is before God sin, and subject to his wrath. What on earth is called life, is before God nothing but death.

57. If, now, the parental, governmental, and other authority which he, himself, has arrayed and through his word established, and which is even administered by Christians, does not endure before him in that other life, how much less will he allow that to stand which man has devised or subtly contrived out of his own head and heart! Wouldst thou be wise and prudent, then cultivate these virtues in the sphere appointed thee, in thy home, the State, and whatever office thou hast. In these temporal things, rule as well as thou canst. Thou wilt find little enough to help in all thy books, thy reason and wisdom. But when thou beginnest to devise out of thine own reason the things of God, though they may all seem trustworthy wisdom, yet, as Peter says, they are nothing else than fables and lies.

58. For example, a monk's words: Whoever dons a cowl can lead a holy life, for he is cut off from the world, can banish all care and sorrow, and can undisturbed, in peace and quietness, serve God—these words appear wisely spoken, but at bottom they are nothing but unreliable and useless chatter. This is proved from God's Word, which teaches that God has forbidden us to invent our own worship; also, that God would have us serve him in our ordinary life and station and not by fleeing therefrom. Hence, such monkery can not be a holy, godly life. In <19B985>Psalm 119:85, we read: "The proud have digged pits for me, who are not according to thy law." That is, they preach to me about praiseworthy things, and represent their cause as most worthy, in order to overcome me. But when I look at their words aright, I do not find them to be in accord with thy Word and commandments, which (says he) "are faithful." A lie is always beautiful. It attracts and pretends to be truth. It has, further, the advantage that it can adorn itself from the wardrobe of God's Word, and, perverting the Word, can use it in an uncertain sense. On the other hand,

the truth does not so glitter, because it does not make itself plain to reason. For example, a common Christian, a type of the brethren, hears the Gospel, believes, uses the sacraments, leads a Christian life at home with wife and children—that does not shine as does the fascinating lie of a saintly Carthusian or hermit, who, separated from his fellow men, would be a holier servant of God than other people. Yet the latter is useful to nobody. He lets others preach and rule, and labor in the sweat of their brows.

GOD'S WORD THE CHRISTIAN'S GUIDE.

59. The one important thing, then, is to see to it that we have God's Word, and that we regulate all the teachings and claims of men in accordance therewith. We will thus distinguish between the true and the false. We must remember, also, that human reason holds a far inferior position to faith and is not to be acknowledged as trustworthy, save as it is authorized by God for temporal authority. He who has faith can easily perceive when reason conflicts with God's Word or seeks, in its wisdom, to rise superior thereto; just as, in worldly things, each one in his station, office, or calling, knows full well, when another attempts the same work, whether he does it right or not. So every householder well understands that in his home wantonness and wrongdoing on the part of the servants are not to be tolerated. However, in divine things, reason can so attire and adorn itself as not to be recognized except by one who, guided by faith, has a right knowledge of God's Word.

Reason will not refrain from intruding, with its wisdom and prudence, into the affairs of God, where it has no orders. Thus the devil creates endless misery, as he did at the beginning in the case of our first parents. And yet reason will not permit, in its own domain, the slightest interference of one unskilled in reason's code.

60. If a cobbler were to arise in the Church and censure the people because they did not wear his make of shoes, and should try to convince people that such a procedure was necessary to salvation, they would pursue him out of the Church with shoes and slippers, and cry after him: Stay at home in your shop with your shoes and lasts! What does that concern the spiritual estate?

But when a factious spirit stands up and in his supposed wisdom grunts forth: I am a holy, pious man. I have a special illumination from the spirit. Therefore do not believe what the others say, which is nothing but the dead

letter, that one person can be God and man; that a virgin can be a mother; that a man can be cleansed from sin by water and the spoken Word, etc.,—when he does this, then there is no one to offer resistance. Reason then gains the victory if it only claims the glory of guidance by the Spirit, of a holy life, etc., even though God’s Word and faith are not present in their purity. Behold, what mischief the Turk, with his Mohammed, has wrought and is still working, solely by claiming the honor of worshipping the one God, and asserting that he alone has the true God! He declares that only he and his followers are God’s people on earth, to honor which God they war and fight against the Christians. He presses his cause the more vigorously because he has such large fortune and victory; so even many Christians who come among them adopt their faith and become Turks. But none of the Turks turn Christian.

61. Therefore, no other counsel can be offered for resisting the devil and escaping destruction by him, than this, that we remain firm in faith, says Saint Peter. One must have a heart which holds fast to God’s Word and fully understands the same and holds it to be true. For faith cannot exist or endure without the Word, nor can it hear or understand aught else. One must separate the Word far from all reason and wisdom, placing it above these. He must hold reason as nothing—yea, as dead—in matters pertaining to God’s government and to how man is to escape sin and eternal death. Reason must keep silent and give to God’s Word alone the honor which belongs to the truth, “bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,” as Saint Paul says, ^{<4016>}2 Corinthians 10:5. If reason is to be my teacher in these things, what need is there of faith? And why should I not throw away all the Scriptures? We Christians, says Paul (^{<4010>}1 Corinthians 1:20-21), preach something else and higher than reason comprehends, for the wisdom of the world is mere folly. If reason taught me that the mother of Christ is a virgin, the angel Gabriel might have remained in heaven and kept silent concerning the matter. Your faith, says Paul again (^{<4010>}1 Corinthians 2:4), should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Now you have seen the tricks and wiles of the devil with which he seeks to devour you, which he bases on reason as opposed to God’s Word.

62. Peter admonishes all Christians, especially the preachers, how to defend themselves against the devil’s intrigues and artifices, with which he seeks to capture them. In order that Christians may be properly equipped, Saint Peter calls attention to two things: First, we must know the enemy

and realize his purpose; second, we must be armed to meet him and defend ourselves, that we may stand before him and conquer. He is a terrible, mighty foe, says Peter, and is the god of this world. He has more wisdom and more deceptive snares than all men, and can so blind and unsettle reason that it will cheerfully believe and follow him.

He is, moreover, a wicked and bitter enemy to you who in Christ have life. He cannot bear to see you Christ's. He thinks and plots about nothing else than your overthrow. And think not that he is far from you, or that he will pursue you from a distance. He has encamped close to you and right around you; yea, in your own territory—that is, in your flesh and blood. There he seeks how to reach you, and overtake you when unguarded, attempting now this, now that. Misguided faith, doubt, anger, impatience, covetousness, evil passions, etc., are points of attack—any place where he finds an opening or discovers that you are weak. Therefore, think not that he is simply jesting. He is more furious and hungry than a famished and angry lion. He does not purpose merely to wound or prick you, but wholly to consume you, so that nothing of body or soul will remain.

63. Whoever would withstand such a foe must be equipped with other armor and weapons than those furnished by human wit and understanding, by human powers or ability. Your defense is nothing else, says Peter, than faith, which holds and grasps God's Word. And because the believer holds fast to this, the devil can gain nothing. It is God's truth and power, before which, with his lying and murdering, he cannot stand; he must yield and flee. Therefore ⁴⁹¹⁶Ephesians 6:16 says: "Taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one." These fiery darts are chiefly those he hurls into the heart through the beautiful thoughts of human reason. He thus transforms himself into an angel of light, to displace right thoughts and faith, and to introduce human whims and false faith. His aim is, also, to lead into doubt, distrust, hatred, and anger toward God.

Thus it is, too, in the other temptations and trials of life, when Satan drives men into sin and disobedience against God's commandment, into such sins as avarice, usury, anger, revengefulness, unchastity, and other vices. Here he uses the same insidious arts, first tearing God's Word out of the heart, then blinding reason with sweet and beautiful thoughts. He says: The thing proposed is not so wicked. God will not be so angry with you. He can afford to be patient with you, you still love the Gospel. With such

suggestions as these he carries you away and plunges you under God's fearful anger and condemnation.

64. If you would withstand these wiles, there can be no other plan or counsel than this: Fight with God's Word in firm faith against these suggestions and allurements. Further, keep in mind both your former misery and your present treasures of grace. Remember how you were once under God's wrath when, without fear of God and without faith, you were the devil's own, subject to all his will, and must have perished had not God, in boundless goodness, forgiven you your sin and bestowed on you his grace. And now give heed that you may not lose this treasure, to which end the Holy Spirit has been promised you. You need not succumb if you remain in faith. Again, if you experience weakness and suffer want, you are bidden to call upon him, certain that he will hear you. The promise is: "If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name," ^{<B162>}John 16:23. Also: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you," ^{<B167>}John 15:7.

65. Peter would, with his admonitions, make Christians bold and confident for resisting the temptations of the devil and defending themselves. He would not have us feel terrified nor despair before Satan, even though that wicked one press us hard through the instrumentality of the world and of our own flesh, as well as by his direct onslaughts. We are not to fear though he seem too strong for us, and though surrender to his prowess seems inevitable. We are to have a manly heart and fight valiantly through faith. We must be assured that, if we remain firm in the faith, we shall have strength and final victory. The devil shall not defeat us; we shall prove superior to him.

We have been called of God and made Christians to the end that we renounce the devil and contend against him, and thus maintain God's name, Word, and kingdom against him. Christ, our head, has already, in himself, smitten and destroyed for us the devil and his power. In addition, he gives us faith and the Holy Spirit, whereby we can wholly defeat Satan's further wickedness and his attempts to overthrow us.

66. A Christian should bear all this in mind, I say, and learn to experience the strength and power of faith. So will he not yield to temptation and enticement. Nor will he, from love of the devil or the world, to his own eternal hurt, and for the sake of small temporal advantage, pleasure, or

honor, cast from him God's grace and the Holy Spirit, and put himself again under God's eternal anger and condemnation.

IV. "KNOWING THAT THE SAME SUFFERINGS ARE ACCOMPLISHED IN YOUR BRETHREN WHO ARE IN THE WORLD."

67. This is a very precious and comforting passage, the truth of which Peter learned not only by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but from his own experience. One instance of his experience was when, in the high-priest's house, he thrice denied his Lord, and soon thereafter fell into such anxiety and despair that he would have followed the traitor Judas had not Christ turned and looked on him. It was for this reason that Christ, so soon after his resurrection, first of all commanded that the glad tidings should be announced to Peter. Christ also said to him, before all this happened: "Simon, I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren," ^{<4223>}Luke 22:31-32.

CONDUCT IN SUFFERING.

Peter makes faithful use of the present passage for his readers' comfort: Ye must expect, in the world, says he, to suffer many and severe things, both in temptations of soul and body, against the first and the second table of the law, Satan lying in wait for you with his deceitful and murderous arts.

68. Weak Christians suffer beyond measure because they are plagued and beset so constantly by the devil. Their afflictions so sorely oppress them that they conclude that no one suffers so severely as do they. Especially does this seem the case in the great spiritual temptations which come to those endowed with peculiar gifts and who are called to positions of prominence in the Church. So Paul often laments his great temptations, which the common people do not understand and cannot endure. God, moreover, is careful to lay on each one just the cross he is able to carry. Still these sufferings are such that even the great and strong must languish and wither beneath them were it not for the comfort God bestows. These troubles grip the heart, and consume the very marrow, as the Psalms often lament.

69. Some of those living in cloisters, and other pious, tender consciences, have learned by experience how hard such burdens are to bear, especially in the darkness of the papacy, where they receive but little genuine

comfort. There are, also, some inexperienced and forward spirits who have seen but have not understood these things, and who yet desire to be regarded as people of large experience. When, however, the test comes, they are found wanting. It is related of one of this class, who heard others bemoaning their temptations, that he prayed God to let temptation visit him also; whereupon God permitted him to be tempted with carnal lust. But when he found he could not bear it, he again prayed God, asking that the burden of his brother, whom he regarded inferior to himself, be given him. But when this request was granted, he prayed yet more earnestly that God would give him back his former burden.

70. Amid such temptations Peter comforts suffering Christians by telling them that they are not the first, nor the only ones, to be thus assailed. They are not to feel as if it were a wonderful, rare, unheard of cross which they bear, or that they bear it alone. They are to know that their brethren, the Christians of all times, and scattered through all the world, must, because they are in the world, suffer the same things at the hand of Satan and his minions. It assuages and comforts beyond measure for the sufferer to know that he does not suffer alone, but with a great multitude.

71. It is true that in external temptations this comfort is easily grasped, because of the knowledge of others' experiences. But when Satan assails thee alone with his poisonous darts—for example, when he tempts thee to doubt God's grace, as if thou alone hadst been cast off; or when he suggests horrible blasphemies, hatred of God, condemnation of his government, and so tortures and fills with anguish thy heart that thou art led to think that no man on earth is more fearfully assailed than thyself—then there is need to make use of this comfort which Peter offers thee and all Christians. In other words, Peter would say: "My friend, let not the devil and thy sufferings terrify thee or lead thee to despair. Thou shouldst know this for a certainty, that thou sufferest not alone. No matter how shamefully he attacks thee, he has done and is doing the same to others."

The devil seeks, not only our own destruction, but also that of all Christendom. It is ever his purpose to tear out of men's hearts, in the midst of their sufferings, God's Word and faith. He would rob them of their comfort in Christ, and depict God in the most horrible and hostile light, that the heart may have not one kind thought regarding him. And he can do this; not only with lofty, refined, subtle thoughts, but also by gross suggestions from without, before which a man must fear and shudder. I,

myself, saw and heard a girl who complained of a temptation of this nature; namely, that while she stood in the church and saw the sacrament elevated, the thought occurred to her: Lo, what a big knave the priest is elevating. And she was suddenly so frightened at the terrible thought that she sank to the floor.

72. Such terror and anxiety proceed from the fact that one imagines that no one else has ever experienced such dreadful assaults. He thinks he has a special, strange, and unusual affliction. Although it is true that men's temptations differ and come from different sources and one may imagine his own a peculiar kind, yet the sufferings and temptations of all Christians are alike in this, that the devil tries to drive them all from the fear and confidence of God into unbelief, contempt, hatred, and blasphemy against God. Therefore, the apostles are accustomed to call Christians' sufferings a fellowship in pain and tribulations. They point all men who suffer to the agonies of Christ our Lord, as the head and exemplar. Peter says ^{<0011>}1 Peter 1:11: "The Spirit of Christ... testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them." And Paul says, "I fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh," ^{<0024>}Colossians 1:24.

73. If one would speak of specially severe sufferings, surely no human heart can comprehend, much less tell, how great and heavy were the anxiety and sorrow of our first parents on account of their miserable fall. And what sorrow must Adam have witnessed during the nine hundred years of his life in the experiences of his first son Cain, and his children! No man has ever borne such a burden as lay on both parents for nearly a hundred years after Abel's death, until their third son was born. Truly, these nine hundred years were a period of sorrow and misery.

Perhaps, on the last day, we shall discuss with this our father the solitary suffering of that time, of which we know nothing. And we shall willingly confess that in sorrow's school he stands far above us and we have been only insignificant pupils. It must have been most severe and dangerous for him, since he had no example before him of similar suffering with which to comfort himself.

74. Likewise, if thou couldst rightly understand what the other holy patriarchs, the prophets and apostles—especially Paul and Peter—and later all the beloved martyrs and saints, have endured thou wouldst be forced to say that all thy temptation and suffering are nothing in comparison. But

above all these must we reckon the experiences of the Lord Christ, whose heart was so pierced by Satan's fiery darts and bitter thrusts that the bloody drops of sweat were pressed out of his body. He has gone before and surpassed us on the way of sorrow. We, with all our suffering, can only follow his footsteps.

OF TEMPTATION.

75. Therefore, learn well this saying of Peter, and think not that thou alone endurest this severe, fearful temptation and these onslaughts of the devil. Remember that thy brethren, not only they who are dead—who also have set thee a good example—but also those who live with thee in the world, have suffered and do suffer such terror and distress. For they have the very same enemy Christ and all Christendom have. Thou canst be glad and shout: God be praised! I am not the only one that suffers, but with me there is a great multitude, all Christians on earth, my beloved brothers and sisters, even down to the last who shall walk this earth. And in this passage Peter comforts and strengthens me, as Christ commanded him, who also has tasted of these sorrows, and, indeed, in far greater measure than I and others have.

76. I have at times thought, in my trials, that I should like to argue with Peter and Paul as to whether they were tried more severely than I. For, when he can do nothing else, the devil resorts to the plan of leading a man to fix his attention solely on his own affliction, and oppresses him with the thought: No man has been so cast off by God, or has sunk so deep into anxiety and distress. The devil has often so wearied me with such arguments that at length I could offer no further opposition to him, but simply turned him over to Christ, who can quickly silence him with arguments. If we have not Christ with us, Satan proves far too strong for us. We cannot silence him. He soon renders helpless all our skill, and slays us with our own sword.

77. Ah, these seditious leaders and other self-secure spirits are poor, miserable people, who know nothing at all of this conflict! They drown in their own imaginations, and think they are perfect. And some of them are so shameless and without fear as to blaspheme, saying that God himself could not take their virtue from them. The devil simply strengthens them in these thoughts, and hardens them the more. This very thing is a sign that

they do not yet know the devil; they are already blinded and taken captive by him, so that he can ruin them when he pleases.

78. Genuine Christians are not thus self-confident and boastful when they are attacked. In severe conflicts and anxieties they labor that the devil may not deprive them of the sword. I know that I am learned and have seen something of what the devil can do; but I must bear him witness, from my daily experience, that he can overcome me unless I am well established in faith and have Christ in my heart. Thomas Munzer was so firm and inflexible, as he thought, that he dared to say that he would not behold Christ, if he did not himself wish to speak with him. But at last, when the devil began to attack him, men saw what his pride and boasts were. No, they are not the ones to accomplish anything, who go about so boastful, as if they had consumed the devil. They do not see that they, themselves, were long since devoured seven times over by him and are held fast in his jaws.

79. The heretic Arius was also secure and proud enough against the pious bishops and Christians. Yea, when he was punished for his error by his bishop, and admonished to desist, he became the more obstinate. He complained about the bitter persecution to which he was subjected. But his suffering was that they would not approve his horrible blasphemy. Just so in every age the heretics and blasphemers, yea, even open murderers and tyrants, pose as martyrs when they are not permitted to run against God's Word and against pious people. So confident do they try to be that they have no fear of God. They count the devil a dead bee until, at length, he suddenly seizes and destroys them in a moment.

80. But the poor, tempted Christians have need of the comfort and the strength furnished by God's Word. They must anxiously contend lest they lose, in their hours of severe temptation, God, Christ, faith, and Our Father. Therefore, the mission intrusted to Peter, to strengthen his brethren, is most needful. So the same comfort was necessary in his own temptations, and he was even given it beforehand by Christ, who declared that he had prayed for him that his faith might not be extinguished nor fail, which faith, however, from the time of his denial on to the third day did almost die, and scarcely the smallest spark remained.

Hence he now, as a true apostle, comforts those who are in the like fears and straits of a sinking and expiring faith. He says to all the suffering and comfortless: My dear brother, think not that thou alone sufferest distress

and temptation. Many of thy brethren have suffered quite as heavily, perhaps more heavily. I, myself, have been as weak as thou canst ever be. If thou dost not believe this, look and see what occurred in the house of Caiaphas, the high-priest, when I, who protested my readiness to go with Christ into prison and death, at a word spoken to me by a maid, fell, and denied and abjured most shamefully my beloved Lord. For three whole days I lay in misery. I had no one to comfort me and none who suffered equally with myself. I had no consolation except that my dear Master gave me, with his eyes, one friendly look.

81. Therefore, no one should regard his distress and need as too heavy and fearful, as if it were an entirely new thing, something which had never been experienced by others. To thee it may be something new and untried. But look about thee, at the great multitude of the Church, from the beginning until this hour. The Church has been set in the world to suffer the attacks of the devil, and without ceasing it must be sifted as wheat, as Christ's words suggest, ^{<4223>}Luke 22:31.

My friend, thou hast not yet seen nor experienced what our first parents endured their whole life long, and after them all the holy fathers until Christ. Peter, also, has been farther in this school than I and thou, and I would say that the same temptation as his could hardly be found. Paul says of him and the beloved apostles (^{<4640>}1 Corinthians 4:9): "For, I think, God hath set forth us the apostles last of all, as men doomed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, both to angels and men"—so that Satan may torment us according to his will, and thus work out his pleasure upon us. And what are the sufferings of all men combined when compared with Christ's agony and conflict, in that he sweat blood for thee?

82. When the devil plagues and assails thee with his manifold temptations, refer him to Christ, with whom to dispute about the severe temptations, the death struggle, the anguish of hell, etc. Comfort thyself that thou art one of a great company of sufferers, past present and future. O beautiful, glorious company! All under one lord and head, who took from the devil his power and hell-fire. In short, thy affliction cannot prove so great that thou wilt not find it paralleled in the lives of the apostles, prophets, patriarchs and all the saints, especially of Christ himself; with whom, if we suffer, let us not doubt, says Paul, that we shall "be also glorified," ^{<4817>}Romans 8:17.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~ROM~~ ROMANS 8:8-22.

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to vanity not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

CONSOLATION IN SUFFERING, AND PATIENCE.

1. Paul's language here is peculiar. He speaks in a manner wholly different from the other apostles. There is something particularly strange about the first sentences of the passage. His words must be faithfully studied and their meaning learned by personal experience. The Christian life consists altogether in the practice and experience of what the Word of God tells us. He who has no experimental knowledge of the Word will have but little conception and appreciation of Paul's words here. Indeed, they will be wholly unintelligible to him.
2. Up to the point where our text begins, Paul has been assuring us in this epistle that through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ we attain the high privilege of calling God our Father; that the Holy Spirit bears witness in our hearts of our sonship, and makes us bold enough to come, by faith in Christ the Mediator, joyfully before God, trusting him to fill and bless us. Then Paul draws the conclusion, first, that we are children of God; next, he says: "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." The second conclusion is the outcome of the first. For the reason that we have the boldness and assurance to call God our Father in sincerity and nothing doubting, we are become not only children but heirs, heirs of God and

brethren to Christ, joint-heirs with him. But all this, as Paul says, is true “if so be that we suffer with him” (~~887~~ Romans 8:7).

3. The high prerogative of heirship, Paul faithfully enjoins, is dependent on a sacred duty. Let him who would be Christ’s brother, and joint-heir with him, remember he must also be a joint-martyr and joint-sufferer with Christ. The apostle’s meaning is: Many are the Christians, indeed, who would be joint-heirs with Christ and gladly enjoy the privilege of sharing his inheritance, but who object to suffering with him; they separate themselves from him because unwilling to participate in his pain. But Paul says this will not do. The inheritance follows only as a consequence of the suffering. Since Christ, our dear Lord and Savior, had to suffer before he could be glorified, we must be martyrs with him, with him be mocked by the world, despised, spit upon, crowned with thorns and put to death, before the inheritance will be ours. It cannot be otherwise.

A consistent sympathy is essential to Christian faith and doctrine. He who would be Christ’s brother and fellow-heir must also suffer with him. He who would live with Christ must first die with him. The members of a family not only enjoy good together but also share in their ills. As the saying is, “He who would be a companion in eating must also be a companion in labor.”

4. Paul would earnestly admonish us not to become false Christians who look to find in Christ mere pleasure and enjoyment, but to remember that if we are to participate in the “eternal weight of glory” we must first bear the “light affliction, which is for the moment.” ~~4017~~ 2 Corinthians 4:17.

By the words “if so be that we suffer with him” the writer means that we are to do more than exercise the sympathy that grieves over another’s misfortune, though such sympathy is binding upon Christians and is a superior Christian virtue, a work of mercy: we ourselves must suffer, non solum affectu, sed etiam effectu, that is, we are overwhelmed by like sufferings. As Christ our Lord was persecuted, we also must endure persecution. As the devil harassed him, we also must be harassed unceasingly. And so Satan does torment true Christians. Indeed, were it not for the restraining hand of the Lord our God, the devil would suffer us to have no peace. Paul has reference to a heartfelt sympathy intense enough to enter into actual suffering. He says to the Hebrews (~~3812~~ Hebrews 10:32-23): “Ye endured a great conflict of sufferings; partly, being made a gazing stock both by reproaches and afflictions.”

5. And in the verse preceding our text he tells us that as our blissful inheritance through brotherhood and joint-heirship with Christ is not a mere fancy and false hope of the heart, but a real inheritance, so our sympathy must amount to real suffering, which we take upon ourselves as befitting joint-heirs. Now Paul comforts the Christian in his sufferings with the authority of one who speaks from experience, from thorough acquaintance with his subject. He seems to view this life as through obscurities, while beholding the life to come with clear and unobstructed vision. He says: “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward [in us].”

6. Notice how he turns his back to the world and his face to the future revelation, as if seeing no suffering anywhere, but all joy. “Even if it does go ill with us,” he would argue, “what indeed is our suffering in comparison with the unspeakable joy and glory to be revealed in us? It is too insignificant to be compared and unworthy to be called suffering.” We fail to realize the truth of these words because we do not see with our bodily eyes the supreme glory awaiting us; because we fail to grasp fully the fact that we shall never die but shall have a body that cannot suffer nor be ill. If one could conceive the nature of this reward he would be compelled to say: “Were it possible for me to suffer ten deaths by fire or flood, that would be nothing in comparison to the future life of glory. What is temporal suffering, however protracted, contrasted with eternal life? It is not worthy to be called suffering or to be esteemed meritorious.”

7. In this light does Paul regard suffering, as he says, and he admonishes Christians to look upon it similarly. Then shall they find the infinite beyond all comparison with the finite. What is a single penny measured by a world of dollars? though this is not an appropriate comparison since the things compared are both perishable. The suffering of the world is always to be counted as nothing measured by the glorious and eternal possessions yet to be ours. “I entreat you, therefore, beloved brethren,” Paul would say, “to fear no sufferings, not even should it be your lot to be slain. For if you are actually joint-heirs, it must be your fortune, a part of your inheritance, to suffer with others. But what is your pain measured by the eternal glory prepared for you and obtained by the sacrifice of your Savior Jesus Christ? It is too insignificant to be contrasted.” So Paul makes all earthly suffering infinitely small — a drop, a tiny spark, so to speak; but of yonder hoped-for glory he makes a boundless ocean, an illimitable flame.

8. Why cannot we take his view of the insignificance of our afflictions and the magnitude of the future glory? The extravagance of our conduct is apparent in the fact that but a harsh word uttered by one to his fellow will make the injured one ready to overturn mountains and uproot trees in his resentment. To them who are so unwilling to suffer, Paul's word of encouragement here is wholly unintelligible. Christians are not to conduct themselves in this impatient manner. It ill becomes them to make extravagant complaint and outcry about injustice. "But," you say, "I have truly suffered injustice." Very well, so be it. But why do you make so much of your sufferings and never give a thought to what awaits you in heaven? Why not exalt the future glory also? If you desire to be a Christian, truly it will not do to conduct yourself in this impatient manner. If you must air your grievances, surely you may do it quietly and decorously.

9. In this life it must be otherwise than in the life of glory. If you essay to be a joint-heir with the Lord Jesus Christ and do not suffer with him, to be his brother and are not like unto him, Christ certainly will not at the last day acknowledge you as a brother and fellow-heir. Rather he will ask where are your crown of thorns, your cross, the nails and scourge; whether you have been, as he and his followers ever have from the beginning of time, an abomination to the world. If you cannot qualify in this respect, he cannot regard you as his brother. In short, we must all suffer with the Son of God and be made like unto him, as we shall see later, or we shall not be exalted with him in glory.

10. Upon this same topic Paul addresses also the Galatians (~~8:17~~ Galatians 6:17): Henceforth let no one confuse me, say nothing to me about the doctrine that friendship is rewarded on earth; for I bear branded on my body the marks of my Lord Jesus Christ. His reference is to the signs in ancient paintings of Christ, where the Savior was represented as bearing his cross upon his shoulders, with the nails, the scourge, the crown of thorns and other emblems in evidence. These marks or signs, Paul instructs, all Christians as well as himself must exhibit, not painted on a wall but branded in their flesh and blood. They are made when inwardly the devil affrights and assails us with all manner of terrors and overwhelming afflictions, and at the same time outwardly the world slanders us as heretics, laying her hand to our throats whenever possible and putting us to death.

THE REWARD.

Such marks, or scars, for Christ the Lord, Paul admonishes all Christians to exhibit. Thus he encourages them not to be terrified though they suffer every conceivable wrong, such as our brethren here and there have suffered now for several years. But brighter days are in store for us when once the hour of our enemies and the power of darkness shall come. Our adversaries annoy us now with malignant words and slanderous writings, and indeed they may take our lives. So be it. We must in any event suffer if we are ever to attain true glory. But what they will secure by putting us to death they certainly shall experience.

11. In Paul's reference to the glory that shall be revealed in us there is a hint as to the cause of man's unwillingness to suffer: faith is yet weak and fails to descry the hidden glory; that glory is yet to be revealed in us. Could we but behold it with mortal vision, what noble, patient martyrs we should be! Suppose one stood on yonder side of the Elbe with a chest full of gold, offering it to him who should venture to swim across for it. What an effort would be made for the sake of that tangible wealth!

12. Take the case of the adventurous officer. For a few dollars per month he defies spears and guns, exposing himself to almost certain death. The merchant hurries to and fro in the world in a frenzied effort to amass riches, hazarding life and limb, apparently careless of physical cost so long as God's mercy preserves to him but the shattered hulk of a body. And what must not one endure at court before he realizes, if he ever does, the fulfillment of his ambition?

In temporal things man can do and suffer everything for the sake of honor, wealth and power, because these are manifest to earthly vision. But in the spiritual conflict, because the reward is not discernible to the senses it is very difficult for the old man in us to believe that God will finally grant us glorious bodies, pure souls and hearts of gladness, and make us superior to any earthly king. Indeed, the very reverse of this condition obtains now. Here is one condemned as a heretic; there one is burned or in some other way put to death. Glory, wealth and honor are not in evidence now. So it seems hard for us to resign ourselves to suffering and wait for the redemption and glory yet unrevealed.

Again, no hardship is too great for the world to undergo for the sake of sordid gain; it willingly suffers whatever comes for that which moth and rust consume and thieves steal.

13. Paul means to say: “I am certain there is reserved for us exceeding glory, in comparison wherewith all earthly suffering is actually of no consideration; only it is not yet manifest.” If we have to face the slightest gale of adversity, or if a trifling misfortune befalls us, we begin to make outcry, filling the heavens with our false complaint of a terrible calamity. Were our faith triumphant, we would regard it but as a small inconvenience to suffer, even for thirty or forty years or longer; indeed, we should think our sufferings too trifling to be taken into account. May the Lord our God only forbear to reckon with us for the sins we have committed! Why will we have so much to say about great sufferings and their merits? How utterly unworthy we are of the free grace and ineffable glory which are ours in the fact that through Christ we become children and heirs of God, brethren and joint-heirs with Christ!

Well may we resolve: “I will maintain a cheerful silence about my sufferings, boasting not of them nor complaining about them. I will patiently endure all my merciful God sends upon me, meanwhile rendering him my heartfelt gratitude for calling me to such surpassing grace and blessing.” But, as I said, the vision of glory will not enter our hearts because of our weak and miserable flesh, which allows itself to be more influenced by the present than by the future. So the Holy Spirit must be our schoolmaster to bring the matter home to our hearts.

14. Note particularly how Paul expressly states that the glory is to be revealed in us. He would remind us that not only such as Peter or Paul are to participate in the blessing, as we are prone to believe, but that we and all Christians are included in the word “us.” Indeed, even the merest babe obtains at death, wherein it is a joint-sufferer with mankind, this unspeakable glory, which the Lord Jesus into whose death it was baptized has purchased and bestowed upon it. Though in the life beyond one saint may have more glory than another, yet all will have the same eternal life. Here on earth men differ in point of strength, comeliness, intellect, yet all enjoy the same animal life. So in the other life there will be degrees of radiance or glory, as Paul teaches (1 Corinthians 15:41), yet all will share the same eternal happiness and joy; there will be one glory for all, for we shall all be the children of God.

15. Now the first point of consolation is that we turn our backs upon all suffering, saying: “What is all my pain, though it were tenfold greater, compared to the eternal life unto which I am baptized, to which I am called? My sufferings are not worthy to be so termed in connection with the exceeding glory to be revealed in me.” Paul magnifies the future glory to make the temporal sufferings the more insignificant. Then follows:

“For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the revealing [manifestation] of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope: [For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope;]”

16. Here is the second point of consolation. Paul holds up as an example to us the condition of the whole creation. He exhorts us to endure patiently, as the creature does, all the violence and injustice we suffer from the devil and the world, and to comfort ourselves with the hope of future redemption. Remarkable doctrine this, unlike anything elsewhere found in the Scriptures, that heaven and earth, sun, moon and stars, leaf and blade, every living thing, waits with sighing and groaning for the revelation of our glory.

THE TRAVAIL OF CREATION.

17. Such sighing and agony of the creature is not audible to me, nor is it to you. But Paul tells us he sees and hears it, not expressed by one creature alone, but by all God has made. What does he mean? What is the sighing and longing of creation? It is not that annually the leaves wither and the fruits fall and decay: God purposes that every year new fruits shall grow; he decrees the shattering of the fallen tree. But Paul refers to the creature’s unwilling subjection to the ungodly; “subject to vanity,” he phrases it.

For instance, the blessed sun, most glorious of created things, serves the small minority of the godly, but where it shines on one godly man it must shine on thousands and thousands of knaves, such as enemies of God, blasphemers, persecutors, with whom the world is filled; also murderers, robbers, thieves, adulterers. To these it must minister in all their ungodliness and wickedness, permitting its pure and glorious influence to benefit the unworthy, most shameful and abandoned profligates. According to the apostle, this subjection is truly painful, and were the sun a rational

creature obeying its own volition rather than the decree of the Lord God who has subjected it to vanity against its will, it might deny every one of these wicked wretches even the least ray of light; that it is compelled to minister to them is its cross and pain, by reason of which it sighs and groans.

Just as we Christians endure many kinds of injustice and consequently sigh for and implore help and deliverance in the Lord's prayer, so do the creatures sigh. Although they have not human utterance, yet they have speech intelligible to God and the Holy Spirit, who mark the creatures' sighs over their unjust abuse by the ungodly.

18. Nowhere else in the Holy Scriptures do we find anything like Paul's declaration here concerning the earnest expectation and waiting of the creatures for the revelation of the children of God; which waiting the apostle characterizes as a sighing in eager desire for man's redemption. A little later he compares the state of the creature to a woman in travail, saying it cries out in its anguish. The sun, moon and stars, the heavens and earth, the bread we eat, the water or wine we drink, the cattle and sheep, in short, all things that minister to our comfort, cry out in accusation against the world because they are subjected to vanity and must suffer with Christ and his brethren. This accusing cry is beyond human power to express, for God's created things are innumerable. Rightly was it said from the pulpit in former times that on the last day all creatures will utter an accusing cry against the ungodly who have shown them abuse here on earth, and will call them tyrants to whom they were unjustly subjected.

19. Paul presents this example of the creatures for the comfort of Christians. His meaning is: Be not sorrowful because of your sufferings; they are small indeed when the ensuing transcendent glory is considered. You are not alone in your tribulation and your complaint at injustice; the whole creation suffers with you and cries out against its subjection to the wicked world. Every bleat of the flock, every low of the herd, is an outcry against the ungodly as enemies of God and not worthy to enjoy the creatures' ministrations; not even to receive a morsel of bread or a drink of water. Along this line St. Augustine is eloquent. "A miserly wretch," he says, "is unworthy the bread he eats, for he is an enemy of God."

Paul tells us the whole creation groans and travails with us, as if desiring relief from anguish; that it suffers like a woman in travail. For instance: the heavenly planets would gladly be freed from serving, yes, in the extent of

their anguish would willingly suffer eclipse; the earth would readily become unfruitful; all waters would voluntarily sink from sight and deny the wicked world a draught; the sheep would prefer to produce thorns for the ungodly instead of wool; the cow would willingly yield them poison rather than milk. But they must perform their appointed work, Paul says, because of him who has subjected them in hope. God will finally answer the cry of creation; he has already determined that after the six thousand years of its existence now passed, the world shall have its evening and end.

20. Had not our parents sinned in paradise, the world would never be dissolved. But since man has fallen in sin, we all — the whole creation — must suffer the consequence; because of our sins, creation must be subjected to vanity and dissolution. During the six thousand years, which are as nothing compared to eternal life, all created things must be under the power of a condemned world, and compelled to serve with all their energies until God shall overthrow the entire world and for the elect's sake purify again and renew the creature, as Peter teaches. ^(~~GEN~~)2 Peter 3:13.

21. The sun is by no means as gloriously brilliant as when created. Because of man's ungodliness its brightness is to an extent dimmed. But on the day of visitation God will cleanse and purify it by fire (^(~~GEN~~)2 Peter 3:10), giving it a greater glory than it had in the beginning. Because it must suffer in our sins, and is obliged to shine as well for the worst knave as the godly man, even for more knaves than godly men, it longs intensely for the day when it shall be cleansed and shall serve the righteous alone with its light.

Neither would the earth produce thistles nor thorns were it not cursed for our sins. So it, with all creatures, longs for the day when it shall be changed and renewed.

22. This is the explanation of Paul's remarkable declaration concerning the "earnest expectation of the creation." The creature continually regards the end of service, and freedom from slavery to the ungodly. This event will not take place before the revealing of the sons of God; therefore the earnestly expectant creation desires that revelation to come without delay, at any moment. Until such manifestation the world will not consider godly souls as children of the Father, but as children of the devil. So it boldly abuses and slanders, persecutes and puts to death, God's beloved children, thinking it thereby does God service. In consequence the whole creation cries: "Oh, for a speedy end of this calamity, and the dawning of glory for the children of God!"

23. We have plain authority for the interpretation of the groaning of creation in Paul's further words, "the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will." He thus makes all creation — sun and moon, fire, air, water, heaven and earth with all they contain — merely poor, captive servants. And whom do they serve? Not our Lord God; not for the most part his children, for they are a minority among those ministered unto. To whom, then, is their service given? To the wicked — to vanity. The created things are not, as they would be, in righteous service. The sun, for instance, would choose to shine for Paul, Peter and other godly ones. It begrudges to wicked characters like Judas, Pilate, Herod, Annas and Caiaphas the least ray of light; for it is useless service, yielding no good. To serve Peter and Paul would be productive of pleasure and profit; well may its benefit be bestowed upon these godly ones. But the sun must shine as well for the wicked as for the ungodly. Indeed, where it fittingly serves one godly individual, thousands abuse its service.

The case is similar with gold and other minerals, and with all the articles of food, drink and clothing. To whom do these minister? Wicked desperadoes, who in return blaspheme and dishonor God, condemn his holy Gospel and murder his Christians. This is wasted service.

24. So Paul says, "The creature was made subject to vanity;" it must render service against its consent, having no pleasure therein. The sun does not shine for the purpose of lighting a highway robber to murder. It would light him in godly deeds and errands of mercy; but since he follows not these things the service of the blessed sun is abused and that creature ministers with sincere unwillingness. But how is it to avoid service?

A wicked tyrant, a shameful harlot, may wear gold ornaments. Is the gold responsible for its use? It is the good creature of the Lord our God and fitted to serve righteous people. But the precious product must submit to accommodating the wicked world against its will. Yet it endures in hope of an end of such service — such slavery. Therein it obeys God. God has imposed the obligation, that man may know him as a merciful God and Father, who, as Christ teaches (~~415~~ Matthew 5:45), makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good. For the Father's sake the blessed sun serves wickedness, performing its service and bestowing its favors in vain. But God in his own good time will reckon with those who abuse the glorious sunlight and other creatures, and will richly recompense the created things for their service.

25. Beloved, Paul thus traces the holy cross among all creatures; heaven and earth and all they contain suffer with us. So we must not complain and excessively grieve when we fare ill. We must patiently wait for the redemption of our bodies and for the glory which is to be revealed in us; especially when we know that all creatures groan in anguish, like a woman in travail, longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For then shall begin their redemption, when they shall not be slaves to wickedness but shall willingly and with delight serve God's children only. In the meantime they bear the cross for the sake of God, who has subjected them in hope. Thus we are assured that captivity will not endure forever, but a time must come when the creatures will be delivered.

“Do ye likewise, beloved Christians,” Paul would advise, “and reflect that as the creature will rejoice with you on the last day, so does it now mourn with you; that not you alone must suffer, but the whole creation suffers with you and awaits your redemption, a redemption so great and glorious As to make your sufferings unworthy to be considered.”

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

SECOND SERMON. ~~ROMANS~~ ROMANS 8:18-22.

REDEMPTION OF THE CREATURES.

1. We have heard how Paul comforts the Christians in their sufferings, pointing them to the future inconceivable and eternal glory to be revealed in us in the world to come; and how he has, for our greater consolation, reminded us that the whole creation as one being suffers in company with the Christian Church. We have noted how he sees, with the clear, keen eye of an apostle, the holy cross in every creature. He brings out this thought prominently, telling us it is not strange we Christians should suffer, for in our preaching, our reproofing and rebuking, we easily merit the world's persecution; but creation must suffer being innocent, must even endure forced subjection to the wicked and the devil himself.
2. Could the sun voice its experience from Adam's time down, what misery it has witnessed and endured, undoubtedly it would tell of its heavy cross in being compelled to serve innumerable adulterers, thieves, murderers, in fact, the devil's whole kingdom. Yet it is a noble and admirable work of creation, fit to serve only God, angels and pious Christians, who thank God for it. But it must serve those who blaspheme and dishonor God and who are guilty of all wickedness and lawlessness. Notwithstanding its dislike of such service, it is with every other created thing obedient to God.
3. This is a fine and comforting thought of the apostle's, that all creatures are martyrs, having to endure unwillingly every sort of injustice. The creatures do not approve the conduct of the devil and of the wicked in their shameful abuse of creation, but they submit to it for the sake of him who has subjected them to vanity, at the same time hoping for a better dispensation in the fulfillment of time, when they shall again be rightly received and abuse be past. Hence Paul points to another life for all creation, declaring it to be as weary of this order as we are and to await a new dispensation. By his reference to the earnest expectation of the

creature he means that it does not expect to remain in its present condition, but with us looks toward heaven and hopes for a resurrection from this degraded life into a better one where it will be delivered from the bondage of corruption, as he says later.

4. By these sayings Paul gives us to understand that all creation is to attain a perfection far beyond its present state where with us it must be subject to tyrants. These tyrants wantonly abuse our characters, our bodies, our property rights, just as the devil abuses our souls. But we must suffer our lot, remembering that mankind is captive on earth in the kingdom of the devil, and all creation with it. The earth must submit to be trodden and to be cultivated by many a wicked one, to whom it must yield subsistence. Likewise is this submission true of the elements — air, fire, water — all creation having its cross, yet hoping for the end of the dispensation.

5. There is a refined and comforting perception in the apostle's exposition where he represents the entire creation as one being, with us looking forward to entrance upon another life. We are satisfied that our present life is not all, that we await another and true life. Likewise the sun awaits the restoration coming to it, to the earth and all creatures, when they shall be purified from the contaminating abuse of the devil and the world.

6. And this condition is to come about when the children of God are revealed. True, they are God's children on earth, but they have not yet entered into their glory. Similarly, the sun is not now in possession of its real glory, for it is subject to evil; it awaits the appointed time when its servitude shall cease. With all creation and with the true saints it waits and longs, being meanwhile subject to vanity — that is, the devil and the wicked world — for the sake of God alone, who subjects, yet leaves hope that the trial shall not continue forever.

7. We are children of God now on earth. We are blessed if we believe and are baptized, as it is written: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." ^{<1166>}Mark 16:16. And again: "As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name." ^{<1112>}John 1:12. Baptism is a visible rite and we behold with mortal vision those who receive it; the Word of the Gospel we hear, and we have in ourselves the witness of the Holy Spirit that our faith, however weak, is acceptable to God. But who among men recognizes us as children of God? Who will apply the term to a class imprisoned and tortured and

tormented in every conceivable way, as if they were children of the devil, condemned and accursed souls?

8. Not without significance is Paul's assertion that the glory of God's children is now unmanifest but shall be revealed in them. In ^{<SCRB>}Colossians 3:3-4 he declares: "Ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory." So long as God's children are here upon earth they are not arrayed in the garb of his own, but wear the livery of the devil. It would be fitting for the children of the devil to be bound, fettered and imprisoned and to suffer all manner of misfortune; but it does not so come to pass. They have the world's pleasures. They are wealthy and powerful, have honor and money in plenty and withal bear God's name and wear the garb of his children, as if having his approval. Meanwhile they regard us as heretics and enemies of God. Thus the rightful order of things is reversed: they who are God's appear to be the devil's, and the devil's to be God's. This condition is painful to the pious. Indeed, heaven and earth and all creatures cry out in complaining protest, unwilling to be subject to evil and to suffer the abuse of the ungodly; to endure that dishonor of God that opposes the hallowing of his name, the extension of his kingdom and the execution of his will on earth as in heaven.

9. Because God's children are thus unrevealed and denied their true insignia, all creation, as Paul says, cries out with them for the Lord God to rend the heavens and come down to distinguish his children from those of the devil. Considering the unrevealed state of God's own on earth, the ungodly in their great blindness are not able to discern them. The doctrine of the righteous which magnifies God's grace manifest in Christ is by the wicked termed error, falsehood, heresy and diabolical teaching. So Paul says the whole creation waits for the manifestation of the children of God.

THE CHRISTIAN'S GLORY TO BE REVEALED.

John, also, says: "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him." ^{<GRD>}1 John 3:2. That is, when our Lord Jesus Christ comes with his loved angels and we are drawn up into the clouds to meet him in the air, he will bring to God's children a glory consistent with their name. They will be far more splendidly arrayed than were the children of the world in their lifetime, who went about in purple and velvet and

ornaments of gold, and as the rich man, in silk. Then shall they wear their own livery and shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Such is the wonderful glory of the revelation that the radiant beauty of poor Lazarus who lay in wretchedness at the rich man's gate surpasses all expectation. Upon this topic, see Wisdom of Solomon, ^{<2P>}Song of Solomon 5:2ff.

10. The hope of this wonderful glory, Paul says, is ours and that of all creation with us, for creation is to be purified and renewed for our sakes. Then will we be impressed with the grandeur of the sun, the majesty of the trees and the beauty of the flowers. Having so much in prospect, we should, in the buoyancy of our hope, attach little importance to the slight suffering that may be our earthly lot. What is it compared to the glory to be revealed in us? Doubtless in yonder life we shall reproach ourselves with the thought: "How foolish I was! I am unworthy to be called the child of God, for I esteemed myself all too highly on earth and placed too little value upon this surpassing glory and happiness. Were I still in the world and with the knowledge I now have of the heavenly glory, I would, were it possible, suffer a thousand years of imprisonment, or endure illness, persecution or other misfortunes. Now I have proven true that all the sufferings of the world are nothing measured by the glory to be manifested in the children of God."

11. We find many, even among nominal Christians, with so little patience they scarce can endure a word of criticism, even when well deserved. Rather than suffer from the world some slight reproach, some trifling loss, for the sake of the Gospel, they will renounce that Gospel and Christ. But how will it be in the day of revelation? Beloved, let us be wise now and not magnify our temporal sufferings; let us patiently submit to them as does creation, according to Paul's teaching. We may imagine the earth saying: "I permit myself to be plowed and cultivated for man's benefit, notwithstanding the Christians whom I bless are in the minority, the great mass of those profiting by me being wicked men. What am I to do? I will endure the conditions and permit myself to be tilled because my Creator so orders; meanwhile I hope for a different order eventually, when I shall no longer be subject to wickedness and obliged to serve God's enemies."

12. Peter also alludes to the new order of creation, saying: "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat... But according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." ^{<1P>}2 Peter 3:10 and 13. In

other words: Here on earth men as a rule are dishonorable and wicked and obey not the will of the Lord God as it is done in heaven; but the day will come when only righteousness and holiness shall dwell on the earth — none but godly, righteous souls. As in heaven all is righteousness, the devil being banished, so on the last day, Satan and all the ungodly shall be thrust from the earth. Then will there be none but holy ones in both heaven and earth, who will in fullness of joy possess all things. These will be the elect. This is Peter's meaning in the words, "According to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Paul adds that all creation waits with us for the revelation, groaning and crying out in anguish.

13. But Paul protects the creature from condemnation and reproach for sinful submission to abuse. He says, in effect: "True, it is subject to vanity, yet not willingly." Likewise I do not desire to suffer reproach as a heretic and a deceiver, but I endure it for God's sake, who permits it. This attitude on my part does not make me partaker of the sin committed against me by enemies of the truth who reproach me. The case is the same as that of the creature suffering abuse for the sake of him who has subjected it. And you Christians are to imitate the example of creation. The sun seems to say: "Great God, I am thy creature; therefore I will perform, I will suffer, whatsoever is the divine will." So when the Lord God sends upon you some affliction and says, "Endure a little suffering for my sake; I will largely repay it," you are to say: "Yes, gladly, blessed Lord. Because it is thy will, I will suffer it with a willing heart."

OF HOPE.

It also belongs to the consolation against suffering to be conscious that the suffering will not last forever, but will sometime have an end — on the day of judgment, when the godless shall be separated from the godly. For this life on earth is nothing else than a masquerade where people walk in masks, and one sees another different than he is. He who appears to be an angel is a devil, and those considered the children of the devil are angels and the children of our dear Lord. Hence it is that they are attacked, plagued, martyred and put to death as heretics and children of the devil. This masquerade must be tolerated until the day of judgment; when the wicked will be unmasked and will no longer be able to pass as holy people.* The text now continues:

“That the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.”

“[Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.]”

14. We Christians are not the only beings to receive deliverance, Paul declares; the creature in bondage has the same hope of release as the poor, enslaved human being. Sun, moon and every other created thing is captive to the devil and to wicked people, and must serve them in every form of sin and vice. Hence these sigh and complain, waiting for the manifestation of the children of God, when the devil and the ungodly shall be thrust into hell, and for all eternity be denied sight of sun and moon, the enjoyment of a drop of water or a breath of air, and forever deprived of every blessing.

15. So the apostle tells us, “Creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption.” In other words, creation must now subserve most shameful ends. Sun, moon and all creatures must be slaves to the devil and the ungodly because God so desires. He wills for his beautiful creation to lie at the feet of Satan and his adherents and to serve them for the present. Likewise many a sensitive heart is compelled to obey a tyrant or a Turk because the Lord has imposed that servitude upon it. Some may even have to clean the Turk’s boots, or perform still more menial duties, and in addition suffer all sorts of indignities from that individual.

16. These words, “Creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption,” signify that all created things must until the final reckoning be servants and menials, not to the godly, but to the devil and wicked men. Paul himself regards with pity the sun and other creatures because of their forced service to Satan and to tyrannical beings. The created works no more desire such servility than we desire subjection to the Turk. Nevertheless, they submit and wait — for what? The glorious liberty of the children of God. Then shall they be released from slavery and be no longer bound to serve the wicked and worthless. More than that, in their freedom they will have a grandeur far in excess of their present state and shall minister only unto God’s children. They will be done with bondage to the devil.

“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”

17. Paul uses forcible language here. Creation is aware, he says, not only of its future deliverance from the bondage of corruption, but of its future grandeur. It hopes for the speedy coming of its glory, and waits with the eagerness of a maiden for the dance. Seeing the splendor reserved for itself, it groans and travails unceasingly. Similarly, we Christians groan and intensely desire to have done at once with the Turks, the Pope, and the tyrannical world. Who would not weary of witnessing the present knavery, ungodliness and blasphemy against Christ and his Gospel, even as Lot wearied of the ungodliness he beheld in Sodom? Thus Paul says that creation groaneth and travaileth while waiting for the revelation and the glorious liberty of the children of God.

18. “And not only so,” he adds, “but ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” We pray, we cry with great longing, in the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy kingdom come,” meaning: “Help, dear Lord, and speed the blessed day of thy second advent, that we may be delivered from the wicked world, the devil’s kingdom, and may be released from the awful distress we suffer — inwardly from our own consciences and outwardly from the wicked. Afflict to the limit these old bodies of ours so long as we may obtain others not sinful, as these; not given to iniquity and disobedience; bodies that can never know illness, persecution or death; bodies delivered from all physical and spiritual distress and made like unto thine own glorified body, dear Lord Jesus Christ. Thus may we finally realize our glorious redemption. Amen.”

19. Paul uses a peculiar word here in the text, which we cannot render by any other in our language than “travail.” It carries the idea of pains and pangs such as a woman knows in childbirth. The mother’s ardent desire is to be delivered. She longs for it with an intensity that all the wealth, honor, pleasure and power of the world could not awaken. This is precisely the meaning of the word Paul applies to creation. He declares it to be in travail, suffering pain and anguish in the extremity of its desire for release. But who can discern the anguish of creation? Reason cannot believe, nor human wisdom imagine, the thing. “It is impossible,” declares reason. “The sun cannot be more glorious, more pleasing and beneficent. And what is lacking with the moon and stars and the earth? Who says the creature is in travail or unwillingly suffers its present state?”

The writer of the text, however, declares creation to be weary of present conditions of servitude, and as eager for liberation as a mother for deliverance in the hour of her anguish. Truly it is with spiritual sight, with apostolic vision, that Paul discerns this fact in regard to creation. He turns away from this world, oblivious to the joys and the sufferings of earthly life, and boasts alone of the future, eternal life, unseen and unexperienced. Thus he administers real and effectual comfort to Christians, pointing them to a future life for themselves and all created things after this sinful life shall have an end.

20. Therefore, believers in Christ are to be confident of eternal glory, and with sighs and groans to implore the Lord God to hasten the blessed day of the realization of their hopes. For so Christ has taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come." May he who has commanded give us grace and strength to perform, and a firm faith in our future glory. Our faith is not to be exercised for the attainment of early riches, but as a means to bring us into another life. We are not baptized unto the present life, nor do we receive the Gospel as ministering to our temporal good; these things are to point us to yonder eternal life. God grant the speedy coming of the glad day of our redemption, when we shall realize all these blessings, which now we hear of and believe in through the Word.

AMEN.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~ROMS~~ **1 PETER 3:8-15.**

8 Finally, be ye all like-minded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tender-hearted, humble-minded: **9** not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling; but contrariwise blessing; for hereunto were ye called, that ye should inherit a blessing. **10** For, He that would love life, And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips that they speak no guile: **11** And let him turn away from evil, and do good; Let him seek peace, and pursue it. **12** For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, And his ears unto their supplication: But the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil. **13** And who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is good? **14** But even if ye should suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed are ye: and fear not their fear, neither be troubled; **15** but sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord.

EXHORTATION TO THE FRUITS OF FAITH.

- 1.** Here you have enumerated again a long list of eminently good works enjoined upon Christians who believe and have confessed their faith in the Gospel. By such fruits is faith to be manifest. Peter classifies these works according to the obligations of Christians to each other, and their obligations to enemies and persecutors.
- 2.** Immediately preceding the text, Paul has been instructing concerning the domestic relations of husband and wife; how they should live together as Christians in love and companionship, giving due honor and patiently and reasonably bearing with each other. Now he extends the exhortation to Christians in general, enjoining them to live together in Christian love, like brothers and sisters of a household. In the rehearsal of many preeminently noble virtues and works, he portrays the ideal church, beautiful in its outward adornment, in the grace wherewith it shines before men. With such virtues the Church pleases and honors God, while angels behold with joy and delight. And what earthly thing is more desirable to man's sight? What happier and more pleasing society may he seek than the company of

those who manifest a unity of heart, mind and will; brotherly love, meekness, kindness and patience, even toward enemies? Surely, no man is too depraved to command such goodness and to desire companionship among people of this class.

3. The first virtue is one frequently mentioned by the apostles. Paul, for instance, in ^{<5216>}Romans 12:16, says: “Be of the same mind one toward another.” Also in ^{<4048>}Ephesians 4:3: “Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Harmony is the imperative virtue for the Christian Church. Before the other virtues — love, meekness — can be manifest, there must first be concord and unity of heart among all. It is impossible that outward circumstances of human life be always the same; much dissimilarity in person, station, and occupation is inevitable.

To this very unlikeness and to the natural depravity of flesh and blood is due the discord and disagreement of men in this world. Let one become conscious of personal superiority in point of uprightness, learning, skill or natural ability, or let him become aware of his loftier station in life, and he immediately grows self-complacent, thinks himself better than his fellows, demands honor and recognition from all men, is unwilling to yield to or serve an inferior and thinks himself entitled to such right and privilege because of his superiority and virtue.

4. Pride is the common vice of the world, and the devil fosters it among his numerous followers thereby causing every sort of misery and unhappiness, corrupting all ranks and stations, and rendering men vicious, depraved and incapable of executing good. In opposition to this vice the apostles diligently admonish Christians to be of one mind, regardless of station or occupation, since every individual must remain in the position to which he has been ordained and called of God. All ranks and stations cannot be one. Particularly is this true in the Church; for in addition to the outward difference of person, station, and so on, there are manifold divine gifts unequally distributed and varyingly imparted. Yet these many dissimilarities, both spiritual and secular, are to be amenable to the unity of the spirit, as Paul calls it, or a spiritual unity. Just as the members of the physical body have different offices and perform different functions, no one member being able to do the work of the other, and yet all are in the unity of one bodily life; so also Christians, whatever the dissimilarity of language, office and gift among them, must live, increase and be preserved in unity and harmony of mind, as in one body.

5. This matter of harmony is the first and most necessary commandment enjoined by the doctrine of faith; ay, this virtue is the first fruit which faith is to effect among Christians, who are called in one faith and baptism. It is to be the beginning of their Christian love. For true faith necessarily creates in all believers the spirit that reasons: “We are all called by one Word, one baptism and Holy Spirit, to the same salvation; we are alike heirs of the grace and the blessings of God. Although one has more and greater gifts than another, he is not on that account better before God. By grace alone, without any merit of ours, we are pleasing to God. Before him none can boast of himself.”

6. How can I think myself better than another by reason of my person or my gifts, rank or office? Or what more than I has another to boast of before God concerning himself? No one has a different baptism or sacrament, a different Christ, from mine, or grace and salvation other than I have. And no individual can have another faith than have Christians in general, nor does he hear any other Gospel or receive a different absolution, be he lord or servant, noble or ignoble, poor or rich, young or old, Italian or German. When one imagines himself different from or better than his fellows, desiring to exalt and glorify himself above others, he is truly no longer a Christian; because he is no longer in that unity of mind and faith essential to Christians. Christ with his grace is always the same, and cannot be divided or apportioned within himself.

7. Not without reason did the beloved apostles urge this point. They clearly saw how much depends upon it, and what evil and harm result from disregard of the commandment. Where this commandment is dishonored, schisms and factions will necessarily arise to corrupt pure doctrine and faith, and the devil will sow his seed, which afterwards can be eradicated only with difficulty. When once self-conceit rules, and one, pretending more learning, wisdom, goodness and holiness than his fellows, begins to despise others and to draw men to himself, away from the unity of mind which makes us one in Christ, and when he desires the first praise and commendation for his own doctrine and works, his own preaching, then the harm is already done; faith is overthrown and the Church is rent. When unity becomes division, certainly two sects cannot both be the true Church. If one is godly, the other must be the devil’s own. On the other hand, so long as unity of faith and oneness of mind survives, the true Church of God abides, notwithstanding there may be some weakness in other points. Of this fact the devil is well aware; hence his hostility to Christian unity. His

chief effort is to destroy harmony. “Having that to contend with,” he tells himself, “my task will be a hard and wearisome one.”

8. Therefore, Christians should be all the more careful to cherish the virtue of harmony, both in the Church and in secular government. In each instance there is of necessity much inequality. God would have such dissimilarity balanced by love and unity of mind. Let everyone be content, then, with what God has given or ordained for him, and let him take pleasure in another’s gifts, knowing that in eternal blessings he is equally rich, having the same God and Christ, the same grace and salvation; and that although his standing before God may differ from that of his fellows, he is nevertheless in no way inferior to them, nor is anyone for the same reason at all better than or superior to himself.

9. In temporal affairs, every inequality in the world can be harmonized by a unity of mind and heart. In relations other than spiritual there is mutual love and friendship. How great the outward dissimilarity between man and wife — in person, nature and employment! likewise between masters and their subjects. Yet, in mutual conscientiousness they mutually agree and are well satisfied with each other. So it would be possible to enjoy life upon earth in peace and happiness were it not that the devil cannot suffer it. He must divide hearts and alienate love, allowing no one to take pleasure in another. He who is illustrious, of noble birth, or has power or riches, feels bound to despise others as silly geese or witless ducks.

SYMPATHY A CHRISTIAN VIRTUE.

10. The other virtues enjoined by Peter are easily recognized — “Compassionate, loving as brethren, tenderhearted, and humbleminded” [Luther translates “friendly” — courteous]. These particularly teach that Christians should esteem one another. God has subjected them all to love and has united them, with the design that they shall be of one heart and soul, and each care for the other as for himself. Peter’s exhortation was especially called for at that time, when Christians were terribly persecuted. Here a pastor, there a citizen, was thrown into prison, driven from wife, child, house and home, and finally executed. Such things happen even now, and may become yet more frequent considering that unfortunate people are harassed by tyrants, or led away by the Turks, and Christians are thus dispersed in exile here and there. Wherever by his Word and faith God has gathered a church, and that spiritual unity, the bond of Christianity, exists

in any measure, there the devil has no peace. If he cannot effect the destruction of that church by factiousness, he furiously persecutes it. Then it is that body, life and everything we have must be jeopardized — put to the stake — for the sake of the Church.

11. Christians, according to Peter, should, in the bond of a common heart and mind, sympathetically share the troubles and sufferings of their brethren in the faith, whoever and wherever the brethren may be. They are to enter into such distresses as if themselves suffering, and are to reason: “Behold, these suffer for the sake of my precious faith, and standing at the front, are exposed to the devil, while I have peace. It does not become me to rejoice in my security and to manifest my pleasure. For what befalls my dear brethren affects me, and my blessings are the cause of their misfortune. I must participate in their suffering as my own.” According to the admonition of ^{83B} Hebrews 13:3: “Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; that is, as if in the same bonds and distress. Remember them that are illtreated, as being yourselves also in the body;” as members of the same body.

12. We are all bound to one another, just as in the body one member is bound to another. As you know by your own physical experience, “Whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it,” as Paul says in ⁴²⁶ 1 Corinthians 12:26. Note how, when a foot is trodden upon or a finger pinched, the whole body is affected: eyes twitch, nose is contorted, mouth cries out — all the members are ready to rescue and help. No one member can forsake the others. In reality not the foot or the finger is injured, but the whole body suffers the accident. On the other hand, benefit received by one member is pleasing to all, and the whole body rejoices with it. Now the same principle should hold in the Church, because it likewise is one body of many members with one mind and heart. Such unity naturally entails the participation by each individual in the good and evil of every other one.

13. This virtue of sympathy, resulting as it does from a unity of mind and faith, is impossible to the world. In the world every man looks only upon what benefits himself and regards not how others, especially the godly, fare. Indeed, the world is capable of scornful smiles and extreme pleasure at sight of Christians in poverty and distress, and in their sufferings it can give them vinegar and gall to drink. But you who claim to be a Christian, should know it is yours to share the sufferings of your brethren and to

prove your heartfelt sympathy with them. If you cannot do more, at least show it with comforting words or prayer. Their suffering concerns you as well as themselves, and you must expect the same afflictions from the devil and the wicked world.

OF LOVE.

14. “Loving as brethren.” This virtue must prevail among Christians everywhere. They are to manifest toward one another the love and faithfulness of brothers according to the flesh. It is a law of nature that brothers have a peculiar confidence in one another, being of the same blood and flesh and having a common inheritance. Particularly is this true when in distress. Although they may not be united in other respects, yet when stranger blood assails and necessity comes, they of the same flesh and blood will take one another’s part, uniting person, property and honor.

15. Likewise Christians should exercise a peculiar brotherly love and faithfulness toward one another, as having one Father in heaven and one inheritance, and in the bond of Christianity being of one faith, united in heart and mind. None may despise another. Them among us who are still weak, frail and eccentric in faith and morals, we are to treat with gentleness, kindness and patience. They must be exhorted, comforted, strengthened. We should do by them as do the brothers and sisters of a household toward the member who is weak or frail or in need. Indeed we cannot otherwise dwell in peace. If we are to live together we must bear with one another much weakness, trouble and inconvenience; for we cannot all be equally strong in faith and courage and have equal gifts and possessions. There is none without his own numerous weaknesses and faults, which he would have others tolerate.

OF MERCY.

16. “Tenderhearted, humbleminded” [friendly]. Here Peter has in mind mankind in general — friends and enemies, Christians and persecutors. Owing to original sin, man is naturally disposed to seek revenge, especially upon those who injure him without cause. If he can do no more, he at least maliciously invokes evil upon his enemy and rejoices in his misfortune. Now, Christians more than any others in this world are innocently persecuted, injured, oppressed and aggrieved, even by those having the name and honor of Christians, a thing of frequent occurrence today. God’s

people are aggrieved by such treatment, and if the natural instinct of flesh and blood could have its way, they would gladly revenge themselves; just as they of the world mutually exercise their revenge, not content until passion is cooled.

17. But a Christian should not, and indeed consistently he cannot, be unmerciful and vindictive, for he has become a child of God, whose mercy he has accepted and therein continues to live. He cannot seek pleasure in injury to his neighbor or enjoy his misfortune. He cannot maintain a bitter or hard and stubborn heart toward him. Rather he is disposed to show mercy even to his hostile neighbor, and to pity his blindness and misery; for he recognizes that neighbor as under God's wrath and hastening to everlasting ruin and condemnation. Thus the Christian is already more than revenged on his enemy. Therefore he should be friendly towards the hostile neighbor and do him every kindness he will permit, in an effort to lead him to repentance.

18. Yet, in showing mercy, as frequently enjoined heretofore we are not to interfere with just and ordained punishments. God's Word does not teach us to demand mercy or commend kindness where sin and evil practices call for punishment, as the world would have us believe when their sins merit rebuke, particularly the vices of those in high places. These transgressors claim that when reprov'd their honor is assailed and occasion is given for contempt of their office and authority, and for rebellion, a thing not to be tolerated. This is not true. The lesson teaches the duty of each individual toward all other individuals, not toward the God-ordained office. Office and person must be clearly distinguished. The officer or ruler in his official capacity is a different man from what he is as John or Frederick. The apostle or preacher differs from the individual Peter or Paul. The preacher has not his office by virtue of his own personality; he represents it in God's stead. Now, if any person be unjustly persecuted, slandered and cursed, I ought to and will say: "Thank God;" for in God I am richly rewarded for it. But if one dishonors my baptism or sacrament, or the Word God has commanded me to speak, and so opposes not me but himself, then it is my duty not to be silent nor merciful and friendly, but to use my God-ordained office to admonish, threaten and rebuke, with all earnestness, both in season and out of season — as Paul says in ~~SOME~~ 2 Timothy 4:2 — those who err in doctrine or faith or who do not amend their lives; and this regardless of who they are or how it pleases them.

19. But the censured may say: “Nevertheless you publicly impugn my honor; you give me a bad reputation.” I answer: Why do you not complain to him who committed the office to me? My honor is likewise dear to me, but the honor of my office must be more sacred still. If I am silent where I ought to rebuke, I sully my own honor, which I should maintain before God in the proper execution of my office; hence I with you deserve to be hanged in mid-day, to the utter extinguishment of my honor and yours. No, the Gospel does not give you authority to say the preacher shall not, by the Word of God, tell you of your sin and shame. What does God care for the honor you seek from the world when you defy his Word with it? To the world you may seem to defend your honor with God and a good conscience, but in reality you have nothing to boast of before God but your shame. This very fact you must confess if you would retain your honor before him; you must place his honor above that of all creatures. The highest distinction you can achieve for yourself is that of honoring God’s Word and suffering rebuke.

20. “Yes, but still you attack the office to which I am appointed.” No, dear brother, our office is not assailed when I and you are reminded of our failure to do right, to conduct the office as we should. But the Word of God rebukes us for dishonoring that divinely ordained appointment and abusing it in violation of his commandment. Therefore you cannot call me to account for reproving you. However, were I not a pastor or preacher, and had I no authority to rebuke you, then it would be my duty and my pleasure to leave your honor and that of every other man unscathed. But if I am to fill a divine office and to represent not my own but God’s dignity, then for your own sake I must not and will not be silent. If you do wrong, and disgrace and dishonor come upon you, blame yourself. “Thy blood shall be upon thine own head,” says Scripture, ^{<1025>}1 Kings 2:37. Certainly when a judge sentences a thief to the gallows, that man’s honor is impugned. Who robs you of your honor but yourself, by your own theft, your contempt of God, disobedience, murder, and so on? God must give you what you deserve. If you consider it a disgrace to be punished, then consider it also no honor to rob, steal, practice usury and do public wrong; you disgrace yourself by dishonoring God’s commandment.

21. This much by way of reminder of the difference between official rebuke and personal anger and revenge. It must constantly be kept before us because of the artfulness of flesh and blood, which ever seeks to disregard that difference. True, God would have all men to be merciful and friendly,

to forgive and not to avenge wrong; but the office, which is ordained for the punishment of the wicked, will not always admit of that course. Few are willing to forgive, and therefore God must enforce his government over the merciless. They must be punished without mercy. This divine principle must not be restricted. Neither must it be applied beyond measure. Every official must be careful not to exceed the demands of his office, exercising his own revenge, his own envy and hatred, in the name and under pretense of that position.

22. Peter continues to expatiate upon this topic — the good works he has been discussing: gentleness, mercy, friendliness — citing beautiful passages of Scripture and using other exhortations — to incite Christians to practice these virtues. He says:

“Not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling; but contrariwise blessing: for hereunto were ye called, that ye should inherit a blessing.”

23. We have now seen whose prerogative it is to avenge, rebuke and punish evil. This passage does not refer to official duty. When the judge declares sentence of execution upon a thief we have truly an instance of vengeance and reproach, and a public and extreme reflection upon honor. But it is God’s judgment and his doing, with which we are not here concerned. The Christian of true faith and innocent life, who confesses his doctrine and belief, and as he is commanded rebukes opposing forces, will provoke the devil and the world, and will be persecuted, oppressed and harassed in the name of office and right, even by individuals whose official duty it is to protect the godly and restrain unjust power. If these cannot do more, they will at least annoy, hinder and oppose that Christian as far as possible. If the Christian be quick-tempered and fail to curb his anger and impatience, he will effect no good. He will only bring upon himself that disquiet of heart which consumes and worries itself with thoughts of revenge and retaliation upon the offender; which when the devil perceives, he rejoices. He so urges and instigates as to cause more mischief on both sides. Thus he doubly injures the Christian — through his enemy and through the anger wherewith the Christian torments himself and spoils his own peace.

OF PATIENCE.

24. What then shall we do, you say, when we must suffer such abuse and without redress? The only resource, Peter says, is to possess your heart in patience and commit the matter to God. This is all that remains when they whose duty it is will not help you, nor restrain and punish the wrong, but even do you violence themselves. If the evil receive not judicial punishment, let it go unpunished until God looks into it. Only see that you keep a quiet conscience and a loving heart, not allowing yourself, on account of the devil and wicked men, to be disturbed and deprived of your good conscience, your peaceful heart and your God-given blessing. But if in your official capacity you are commanded to punish the evil, or if you can obtain protection and justice from rightful authorities, avail yourself of these privileges without anger, hatred or bitterness, ay, with a heart that prompts to give good for evil and blessing for reviling.

25. Such conduct is becoming you as Christians, the apostle says, for you are a people called to inherit a blessing. Oh, wonderful and glorious fact, that God has decreed and appropriated to you this blessing whereby all the riches of his grace and everything good are yours! and that he will abundantly give you his Spirit to remain with you, blessing body and soul, if only you hold fast his grace and do not allow yourselves to be deprived of it. What price would you not gladly pay for this blessing, were it purchasable, instead of being freely given, without your merits, and were you privileged thus to buy the assurance of having a God so gracious, one willing to bless you in time and eternity? Who would not willingly give even body and life, or joyfully undergo all suffering to have the perfect assurance of heart which says: "I know I am a child of God, who has received me into his grace and I live in the sure hope that I will be eternally blessed and saved." Think, Peter says, what a vast difference God makes between you and others because you are Christians. He has appointed you to be heirs of everlasting grace and blessing and of eternal life. But they who are not Christians — what have they but a terrible sentence like a weight about their necks? the sentence pronouncing them children of the curse and of eternal condemnation.

26. If men would take this to heart, it would be easy by teaching and persuasion to win them to friendship and kindness toward their fellow-men; to induce them not to return evil or reviling from motive of revenge, but when their own privileges and protection and the punishment of evil cannot

be obtained, quietly and peaceably to suffer injury rather than lose their eternal comfort and joy. Christians have excellent reason, a powerful motive, for being patient and not revengeful or bitter in the fact that they are so richly blessed of God and given that great glory whereof, as Peter afterwards remarks, they cannot be deprived, nor can they suffer its loss, if only they abide in it. The apostle emphasizes this fact and further persuades Christians by citing the beautiful passage in ~~1342~~ Psalm 34:12-16:

“He that would love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: and let him turn away from evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears unto their supplication: but the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil.”

27. These words the Holy Spirit uttered long ago through the prophet David, for the instruction and admonition of all saints and children of God. David presents to us the matter as he daily saw it in his own life and learned from his own experience, and as he gathered from examples of the dear fathers from the beginning of the world. “Come hither, dear children,” he would say, “if you will be taught and advised, I will give you sound instruction as to how we are to fear God and become his children. Who desires peace and comfort?” “Oh, who would not desire peace and comfort?” cries the world. For these everyone seeks and strives, and all the efforts of the world are directed toward this end.

THE CHRISTIAN’S PEACE.

28. There are two ways to the goal of peace. One is that chosen by the world. The world seeks to obtain peace by preserving its own with violence. It desires the death of all who oppose it and will suffer injury or evil in word or deed from no one. This method, it is true, is appointed to govern mental authority. It is the duty of civil rulers to faithfully employ it to arrest and hinder evil as far as possible. But they can never wholly restrain evil nor punish every offense. Much wickedness will remain, particularly secret evil, which must punish itself, either by repentance here or in hell hereafter. By this procedure Christians will not accomplish for themselves any personal advantage; the world is too wicked and it will not give them support.

29. Therefore, if you desire peace for yourself personally, particularly as a Christian, you must choose another way. The Psalm shows it to you when it says: “Refrain thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile.” This injunction really applies to doctrine, meaning that we are to abide by the true Word of God and not to allow ourselves to be seduced by false teaching. But Peter here extends the application to the outward life and conduct of Christians in the work, the circumstances being such as to call for this admonition in the matter of refraining the tongue. On account of the faith and confession for which men are called Christians, they must suffer much; they are endangered, hated, persecuted, oppressed and harassed by the whole world. Christ foretold (^{<002>}Matthew 10:22): “Ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake.” Easily, then, Christians, might believe they have cause to return evil, and being still flesh and blood mortals, they are inevitably moved to be angry and to curse, or to forsake their confession and doctrine and with unbelievers to join the false church with its idolatrous teaching. Here the Psalm admonishes: Dear Christian, let not all this move you to rave, curse, blaspheme and revile again, but abide in the blessing prepared for you to inherit; for you will not by violence remedy matters or obtain any help. The world will remain as it is, and will continue to hate and persecute the godly and believing. Of what use is it for you to hate, chafe and curse against its attitude? You only disturb your own heart with bitterness, and deprive yourself thereby of the priceless blessing bestowed upon you.

30. We have the same teaching in the fourth verse of Psalm 4, which comforts saints and strengthens them against the temptation and provocation to anger and impatience which they must experience in the world. “Be ye angry,” David says, “and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.” That is, although according to the nature of flesh and blood you fret because you are compelled to witness the prosperity of the world in its ungodly life and wickedness, and how it spites, despises and persecutes you with pride and insolence, nevertheless let not yourselves be easily provoked; let wrong, displeasure, vexation and worry remain outside the inner life; let them affect only the outward life, body and possessions. By no means let them become rooted in your heart. Still your hearts and content yourselves, and regard all this vexation as not worth losing sleep over. If you desire to serve God truly and to render acceptable sacrifice to him, then with faith in his Word place your hope in

him as your dear Father who cares for you, hears you and will wondrously support you.

GUARDING THE LIPS.

31. But the psalmist's additional words, "Refrain your lips that they speak no guile," refer, as I have said, primarily to confession of the doctrine; but there is another thought: When one is prompted to anger and to complaint about injury and wrong, in his impatience and irritation he cannot speak fairly concerning the matter of offense, but invariably exaggerates. So it is with anger and retaliation. One receiving but a pin-point wound will fly into a passion and be ready to break the offender's head. The individual that suffers a single adverse word immediately proceeds to abuse and slander in the extreme his opponent. In short, an angry heart knows no moderation and cannot equally repay, but must make of a splinter, even a mote, a great beam, or must fan a tiny spark into a volcano of flame, by retaliating with reviling and cursing. Yet it will not admit that it does wrong. It would, if possible, actually murder the offender, thus committing a greater wrong than it has suffered.

32. So wicked and unjust is human nature that when offended it stops not with equal measure in retribution; it goes beyond and in its anger and revenge spares neither the neighbor's honor nor his body and life. ~~300~~ James 1:20 says: "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God"; that is, it suffers not a man to abide in his faith and good conscience. But official indignation, which is God's wrath, does not so. It seeks not the destruction of man, but only the punishment of the actual fault. Man's anger and revenge, so wicked and insatiable are they, return ten blows for one, or even double that number, and repay a single abusive word with a hundred.

33. So Peter admonishes you to restrain your tongues, to curb them, lest they suddenly escape your control and sin with wicked words, doing injury double that you have received. Guard your lips that your mouth utter not guile or falsehood through your anger, and that it may not calumniate, abuse and slander your neighbor contrary to truth and justice and in violation of the eighth commandment. Such conduct is, before God and man, unbecoming a Christian and leads to that most disgraceful vice of slander, which God supremely hates. It is the devil's own, whence he has his name of liar or slanderer — diabolus, or devil.

GOOD WORKS.

34. The Psalm says further: “Turn away from evil and do good”; that is, beware lest on account of the wickedness of another you also become wicked, for anger and revenge meditate only harm and wickedness. Therefore be all the more diligent to do good, if you can, that your heart may retain its honor and joy and that you may abide in righteousness, and not fall from God’s grace and from obedience to him into the service of the devil. By anger and revenge the devil tempts you, endeavoring to get you again into his toils and to embitter your heart and conscience until you shall exceed others in sin.

35. “Seek peace and pursue it,” continues the apostle. This is a sublime exhortation, and faithful, divine counsel. You must not think, Peter would say, that peace will run after you, or that the world — much less the devil — will bring it into your house. Rather you will find the very opposite true. From without strife will be carried to you in bales, and within your own heart will be kindled anger and bitterness to fill you with everlasting disquiet. Therefore if you desire peace, wait not until other people help you to obtain it, nor until you create it for yourself by force and revenge. Begin with yourself. Turn from the evil to the good. Even undergo suffering to provide your heart with the peace which endures in spite of all that would rob you of it. Strive ever to keep your heart firm in the resolve: I will not be angry nor seek revenge, but will commit my affairs to God and to those whose duty it is to punish evil and wrongdoing. As for my enemy, may God convert and enlighten him. And however much more of violence and wrong I may suffer, I will not allow my heart to be robbed of its peace.

36. Notice, the way to preserve peace and to see good days even in evil times is to keep a silent tongue and a quiet heart through the comfort of divine grace and blessing. No outward occasion may be given for strife, but always peace is to be sought with good words, works and prayers. We must even pursue peace, follow after it, with genuine and strong suffering. Thus we preserve it by force. In no other way can a Christian see good days and hold fast his blessing. Remember you must make strenuous effort if you would not reject your blessing nor be influenced by another to carelessly lie and otherwise sin with your tongue. Flesh and blood are weak and sluggish in the matter of preserving peace, therefore Peter strengthens his exhortation and further encourages us by the promise of God’s help and protection for the faithful and his punishment of their enemies. He says:

*“For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous,
and his ears unto their supplication.”*

37. Inscribe this verse upon your heart in firm faith and see if it does not bring you peace and blessings. Try to believe that God sits above, sleepless and with his vigilant eye ever upon you. With watchful vision he beholds the righteous as they suffer violence and wrong. Why will you complain and become discouraged by reason of the harm and grief you experience, when the gracious eyes of the true Judge and God are upon you and his intent is to help you? All the wealth of the world would I give, if I might, to purchase that watchful care, or rather to obtain the requisite faith; for surely the lack is not in his regarding, but in our faith.

GOD OVER ALL.

38. More than this, God’s ears, the apostle tells us, are also open to the prayers of the righteous. As he looks upon you with gracious, winning eyes, so also are his ears alert to even the faintest sound. He hears your complaint, your sighing and prayer, and hears, too, willingly and with pleasure; as soon as you open your mouth, your prayer is heard and answered.

39. Again, Peter says: “The face of the Lord is upon them that do evil.” True, God’s eyes are upon the righteous, but nevertheless he sees also the others. In this case he beholds not with a friendly look or gracious countenance, but with a displeased and wrathful face. When a man is angry the forehead frowns, the nostrils dilate and the eyes flash. Such a manifestation of anger are we to understand by the Scripture when it refers here to “the face of the Lord.” On the other hand it illustrates the pleased and gracious aspect of God by “the eyes of the Lord.”

40. Now, why is “the face of the Lord” upon evil-doers and what is its effect? Certainly God’s purpose is not to heed or to help them, to bestow blessing or success upon their evil-doing. His purpose is, according to the succeeding words in the psalm, “to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.” This is a terrible, an appalling sentence, before which a heart may well be prostrated as from a thunderbolt. And ungodly hearts would be thus appalled were they not so hardened as to despise God’s Word.

41. Notwithstanding the indifference of the wicked, the sentence is passed. Verily it is no jest with God. It illustrates how sincerely he cares for the

righteous and how he will avenge them on the wicked, toward whom his countenance bespeaks punishment in due time and the cutting off of their memory from the earth. In contrast, the righteous, because they have feared God and abode in their piety though suffering for it, shall, even here upon earth, live to see blessing and prosperity upon their children's children. Although for a time the company of the wicked conduct themselves with pride upon the earth, and imagine themselves secure beyond the possibility of being unseated, nevertheless when their hour comes they are suddenly hurled down from earth into the abyss of hell and must suffer the righteous to remain in possession of the earth. So testifies Christ in ^{<4185>}Matthew 5:5, and ^{<4950>}Psalm 37 more fully explains the matter.

42. It is proven by all the examples of Scripture and also by the experience of the whole world from the beginning, that God casts down those who seek only to injure. They who have despised God's threats and angry countenance with security and defiance have at last experienced the fulfillment of these warnings and perished thereby. King Saul thought to destroy godly David, to exterminate his root and branch and blot out his name as if he had been a rebellious, accursed man. But God effected the very opposite. Because David in his sufferings and persecution walked in the fear of God and trusted him with simplicity, desiring no harm to his enemy, God's gracious eye was ever upon him and preserved him from that enemy. On the other hand, the angry face of God was bent upon King Saul, and before David was aware of it the king had fallen, and his whole family met ruin with him; they were obliged to surrender crown and kingdom to the persecuted David.

43. Christians should strengthen their faith with the comforting thought that God's gracious countenance is over them and he turns eye and ear toward them; and that on the other hand he looks with angry face upon their enemies and those seeking to injure, and will take a hand in their game, obliging them either to refrain from their evil-doing, or to perish by it. Such retribution is certain. No one can live long without proving by his own experience and that of other men the truth of the proverb, "Right will assert itself." However, we lack in faith and cannot wait God's hour. We think he delays too long and that we suffer too much. But in reality his time will come speedily, and we can well wait and endure if we believe in God, who but grants our enemies a brief opportunity to be converted. But their appointed hour is already at hand and they will not escape if it overtakes them without repentance.

“And who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is good? But even if ye should suffer for righteousness’ sake, blessed are ye.”

44. According to Peter’s words here, you have a very great advantage over all your enemies, whoever they be, in being richly endowed by God with eternal blessing. You know he will protect, support and avenge you, hence you abide in your faith and godliness. Although your adversaries think to trouble and harm you, they can do you no real injury whatever they effect. For wherein can persecution harm if you strive for godliness and abide in it? Not by malice, might and violence can your enemies take from you, or diminish, your piety and God’s grace, his help and blessing. And even from all the bodily and temporal harm they can inflict, you suffer no loss. For the more they seek to injure you, the more they hasten their own punishment and destruction, and the greater is your recompense from God. By the very fact that they slander, disgrace, persecute and trouble you, they multiply your blessing with God and further your cause, for God must the sooner consider your case, supporting you and overthrowing them. They but prepare your reward and benefit by their wicked, venomous hatred, their envy, anger and fury. At the same time they effect for themselves conditions the very reverse. Being condemned by their own evil consciences, they cannot in their hearts enjoy one good day, one peaceful hour; and they heap up for themselves God’s wrath and punishment.

45. Indeed, you are all the more blessed, temporally and eternally, Peter declares, for the very reason that you suffer for righteousness’ sake. You are so to regard the situation and to praise and thank God for your suffering. The apostle looks upon tribulation in this light and exalts it as supreme blessedness and a glorious thing. Christ says in ⁴⁵¹⁵ Matthew 5:11-12: “Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.” Oh, your adversaries should purchase a little of this comfort regardless of cost and boast of suffering a little for the sake of righteousness! Could they understand the promise and be worthy of it, how intensely might they desire to have suffered all and much more than they thought to inflict upon you, if only they might be blessed and prove the comfort of this precious, divine promise!

*“Fear not their fear, neither be troubled;
but sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord.”*

46. Here again Peter resorts to Scripture and cites a verse from the prophet Isaiah (^{238D}Isaiah 8:12-13) where he admonishes God’s people not to be terror-stricken by the wrath and threats of men, but firmly and confidently to trust in God. The prophet speaks similarly in ^{250D}Isaiah 51:7: “Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye dismayed at their revilings.” As if he would say: Why will you permit yourselves to be disturbed by the persecutions of men, however great, mighty and terrible enemies they may be, when you are blessed and happy in God to the extent that all creatures must pronounce you blessed? Moreover, you know the eyes of your God behold you and his ears are open to your cry, and whatever you desire and pray for is heard and granted. More than this, your adversaries are threatened by his angry face. What are all men — tyrants, pope, Turk, Tartars, ay, the devil himself — compared to this Lord, and what can they do against him, when and wheresoever he chooses to show his power? They are but as a straw to a mighty thunderbolt which makes the earth tremble. Therefore, if you are indeed Christians and believe in God you ought in no wise to fear all these adversaries, but rather, joyfully and with scornful courage to despise their defiance, their threatening and rage, as something utterly harmless to you; they are but effecting their own destruction in hurling themselves at the Majesty before which all creatures must tremble.

TRUST IN GOD ENJOINED.

47. But this you are to do: Sanctify God; that is, regard and honor him as holy. This is nothing else than to believe his Word; be confident that in God you have truly one who, if you suffer for righteousness’ sake, neither forgets nor forsakes, but graciously looks upon you and purposes to give his support and to revenge you on your enemies. Such faith and confession honors him as the true God, upon whom man can confidently and joyfully call for help, reposing his whole trust in him upon the authority of his sure Word and promise, which cannot deceive or fail.

48. In contrast, unbelievers cannot sanctify God; they cannot render him due honor, although they may talk much of him and display much divine worship. They do not accept God’s Word as the truth, but always remain in doubt. In the hour of suffering they deem themselves utterly forgotten

and forsaken by the Lord. Therefore they murmur and fret, being very impatient and disobedient toward God. They rashly seek to protect and revenge themselves by their own power. That very conduct betrays them as beings without a God, as blind, miserable, condemned heathen. Such are the great multitude of Turks, Jews, Papists and unbelieving saints today throughout the world.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~ROM~~ ROMANS 6:3-11.

3 Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **4** We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. **5** For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; **6** knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin; **7** for he that hath died is justified from sin. **8** But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; **9** knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him. **10** For the death that he died, he died unto sin once: but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God. **11** Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.

EXHORTATION TO CHRISTIAN LIVING.

1. In this epistle lesson Paul gives Christians instruction concerning the Christian life on earth, and connects with it the hope of the future and eternal life, in view of which they have been baptized and become Christians. He makes of our earthly life a death — a grave — with the understanding, however, that henceforth the risen man and the newness of life should be found in us. And he treats of this doctrine because of an error that always prevails: When we preach that upon us is bestowed grace and the forgiveness of sins, without any merit on our part, people are disposed to regard themselves as free from obligation and will do no works except those to which their own desires prompt them. This was Saint Paul's experience when he so strongly commended the grace of Christ and its consolation (ch. 5:20), declaring that "where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly," and that where there are many and great sins, there also reigns great, abundant and rich grace. The rude crowd cried: Oh,

is it true that great grace follows upon great sin? In that case we will cheerfully load ourselves with sin so that we may receive the greater grace.

GRACE DOES NOT GIVE LICENSE TO SIN.

2. Such argument Paul now confutes. He says: It is not the intention of the Gospel to teach sin or to allow it; it teaches the very opposite — how we may escape from sin and from the awful wrath of God which it incurs. Escape is not effected by any doings of our own, but by the fact that God, out of pure grace, forgives us our sins for his Son's sake; for God finds in us nothing but sin and condemnation. How then can this doctrine give occasion or permission to sin when it is so diametrically opposed to it and teaches how it is to be blotted out and put away P

3. Paul does not teach that grace is acquired through sin, nor that sin brings grace; he says quite the opposite — that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,”

← Romans 1:18. But because the sins of men which are taken away are so grievous and numerous, the grace which drowns and destroys them must be mighty and abundant also. Where there is great thirst, a great draft is needed to quench it. Where there is a mighty conflagration, powerful streams of water are necessary to extinguish it. In cases of severe illness, strong medicine is essential to a cure. But these facts do not give us authority to say: Let us cheerfully drink to satiety that we may become more thirsty for good wine; or, Let us injure ourselves and make ourselves ill that medicine may do us more good. Still less does it follow that we may heap up and multiply sins for the purpose of receiving more abundant grace. Grace is opposed to sin and destroys it; how then should it strengthen or increase it ?

4. Therefore he begins his sermon by inquiring, in this sixth chapter (verses 1-3): “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?” In other words: How is it possible that because grace should destroy sin ye should live unto sin? And then, further to illustrate this, he says:

“Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?”

5. He speaks here in figurative language to clearly and forcibly impress this matter upon us; ordinarily it would have been sufficient for him to ask: “We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?” that is to say, Inasmuch as ye have been saved from sin through grace, it is not possible that grace should command you to continue in sin, for it is the business of grace to destroy sin. Now, in the figurative words above quoted, he wishes to vividly remind us what Christ has bestowed upon us. He would say to us: Do but call to mind why you are Christians — you have been baptized into Christ. Do you know why and whereunto you have been baptized, and what it signifies that you have been baptized with water? The meaning is that not only have you there been washed and cleansed in soul through the forgiveness of sins, but your flesh and blood have been condemned, given over unto death, to be drowned, and your life on earth to be a daily dying unto sin. For your baptism is simply an overwhelming by grace — a gracious overwhelming — whereby sin in you is drowned; so may you remain subjects of grace and not be destroyed by the wrath of God because of your sin. Therefore, if you let yourself be baptized, you give yourself over to gracious drowning and merciful slaying at the hands of your God, and say to him: Drown and overwhelm me, dear Lord, for gladly would I henceforth, with thy Son, be dead to sin, that I may, with him, also live through grace.

THE POWER OF BAPTISM.

6. When he says, “All we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death,” and again, “We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death,” he speaks in his own Pauline style concerning the power of baptism, which derives its efficacy from the death of Christ. By his death he has paid for and taken away our sins; his death has been an actual strangling and putting to death of sin, and it no longer has dominion over him. So we, also, through his death have obtained forgiveness of sins; that sin may not condemn us, we die unto sin through that power which Christ — because we are baptized into him — imparts to and works in us.

7. Yea, he further declares that we are not only baptized into his death, but, by the same baptism, we are buried with him into death; for in his death he took our sins with him into the grave, burying them completely and leaving them there. And it follows that, for those who through baptism are in Christ, sin is and shall remain completely destroyed and buried; but we, through his resurrection — which, by faith, gives us the victory over sin

and death and bestows upon us everlasting righteousness and life — should henceforth walk in newness of life.

8. Having these things through baptism, we dare no longer obey — live unto — the sin which still dwells in our flesh and blood in this life; we must daily strangle it so that it may have no power nor life in us if we desire to be found in the estate and life of Christ. For he died unto sin, destroying it by his death and burying it in his grave; and he acquired life and the victory over sin and death by his resurrection, and bestows them upon us by baptism. The fact that Christ himself had to die for sin is evidence of the severe wrath of God against sin. Sin had to be put to death and laid away in the grave in the body of Christ. Thereby God shows us that he will not countenance sin in us, but has given us Christ and baptism for the purpose of putting to death and burying sin in our bodies.

9. Thus Paul shows us in these words what has been effected by Christ's death and burial, and what is the signification of our being buried with him. In the first place, Christ was buried that he might, through forgiveness, cover up and destroy our sin, both that which we have actually committed and that which is inherent in us; he would not have it inculcate and condemn us. In the second place, he was buried that he might, through the Holy Spirit, mortify this flesh and blood with its inherent sinful lusts; they must no longer have dominion over us, but must be subject to the Spirit until we are utterly freed from them.

10. Thus, we still lie with Christ in the grave according to the flesh. Although it be true that we have the forgiveness of sins, that we are God's children and possess salvation, yet all this is not perceptible to our own senses or to the world. It is hidden in Christ by faith until the judgment day. For we do not yet experience in ourselves such righteousness, such holiness, such life and such salvation as God's Word describes and as faith expects to find. Wherefore Paul says in ^{<SIC>}Colossians 3:3-4 (as we have heard in the Easter sermons), "Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory."

11. On the other hand, we are outwardly oppressed with the cross and sufferings, and with the persecution and torments of the world and the devil, as with the weight of a heavy stone upon us, subduing our old sinful nature and checking us against antagonizing the Spirit and committing other sins.

“For if we have become united [planted together] with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin; for he that hath died is justified from sin.”

12. This is another distinctly apostolic discourse. Being baptized into Christ’s death and buried with him, to which Paul had just referred, he here calls being united, or planted together, with Christ in the likeness of his death. Christ’s death and resurrection and our baptism are intimately united with, and related to, one another. Baptism is not to be regarded a mere empty sign, as Anabaptists erroneously hold. In it is embodied the power of both Christ’s death and resurrection. Hence Paul says, “we are planted together with him,” engrafted into him as a member of his body, so that he is a power in us and his death works in us. Through baptism he dedicates us to himself and imparts to us the power of his death and resurrection, to the end that both death and life may follow in us. Hence our sins are crucified through his death, taken away, that they may finally die in us and no longer live.

13. Being placed under the water in baptism signifies that we die in Christ. Coming forth from the water teaches, and imparts to, us a new life in him, just as Christ remained not in death, but was raised again to life. Such life should not and can not be a life of sin, because sin was crucified before in us and we had to die to it. It must be a new life of righteousness and holiness, Christ through his resurrection finally destroyed sin, because of which he had to die, and instead he brought to himself the true life of righteousness, and imparts it to us. Hence we are said to be planted together with Christ or united with him and become one, so that we both have in us the power of his death and resurrection. The fruits and results of this power will be found in us after we are baptized into him.

14. The apostle speaks consolingly of the death of the Christian as a being planted, to show that the Christian’s death and sufferings on earth are not really death and harm, but a planting unto life; being redeemed, by the resurrection, from death and sin, we shall live eternally. For that which is planted is not planted unto death and destruction, but planted that it may sprout and grow. So Christ was planted, through death, unto life; for not until he was released from this mortal life and from the sin which rested on

him and brought him into death on our account, did he come into his divine glory and power. Since this planting begins in baptism, as said, and we by faith possess life in Christ, it is evident that this life must strike root in us and bear fruit. For that which is planted is not planted without purpose; it is to grow and bear fruit. So must we prove, by our new conversation and by our fruits, that we are planted in Christ unto life.

CHRISTIAN GROWTH.

15. Paul gives the reason for new growth. He says: “Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin.” It does not become us, as baptized Christians, to desire to remain in our old sinful estate. That is already crucified with Christ, the sentence of condemnation upon it has been pronounced and carried out. For that is what being crucified means. Just so, Christ, in suffering crucifixion for our sins, bore the penalty of death and the wrath of God. Christ, innocent and sinless, being crucified for our sins, sin must be crucified in our body; it must be utterly condemned and destroyed, rendered lifeless and powerless. We dare not, then, in any wise serve sin nor consent to it. We must regard it as actually condemned, and with all our power we must resist it; we must subdue and put it to death.

16. Paul here makes a distinction. He says, “Our old man was crucified with him [Christ],” and “that the body of sin might be done away.” He intimates that the “old man” and “the body of sin” are two different things. By the term “old man” he means not only the body — the grossly sinful deeds which the body commits with its five senses — but the whole tree with all its fruits, the whole man as he is descended from Adam. In it are included body and soul, will, reason and understanding. Both inwardly and outwardly, it is still under the sway of unbelief, impiety and disobedience. Man is called old, not because of his years; for it is possible for a man to be young and strong and vigorous and yet to be without faith or a religious spirit, to despise God, to be greedy and vainglorious, or to live in pride or the conceit of wisdom and power. But he is called the old man because he is unconverted, unchanged from his original condition as a sinful descendant of Adam. The child of a day is included as well as the man of eighty years; we all are thus from our mother’s womb. The more sins a man commits, the older and more unfit he is before God. This old man, Paul says, must be crucified — utterly condemned, executed, put out of the

way, even here in this life. For where he still remains in his strength, it is impossible that faith or the spirit should be; and thus man remains in his sins, drowned under the wrath of God, troubled with an evil conscience which condemns him and keeps him out of God's kingdom.

17. The “new man” is one who has turned to God in repentance, one who has a new heart and understanding, who has changed his belief and through the power of the Holy Spirit lives in accordance with the Word and will of God. This new man must be found in all Christians; it begins in baptism or in repentance and conversion. It resists and subdues the old man and its sinful lusts through the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul declares, “They that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts,” ~~<REF>~~ Galatians 5:24.

18. Now, although in those who are new men, the old man is crucified, there yet, Paul says, remains in them in this life “the body of sin.” By this we understand the remaining lusts of the old man, which are still felt to be active in the flesh and blood, and which would fain resist the spirit. But inasmuch as the head and life of sin are destroyed, these lusts cannot harm the Christian. Still the Christian must take care not to become obedient to them, lest the old man come to power again. The new man must keep the upper hand; the remaining sinful lusts must be weakened and subdued. And this body of ours must finally decay and turn to dust, thereby utterly annihilating sin in it.

19. Now, he says, if ye be dead to sin under the reign of the spirit and the new man, and adjudged to death under the reign of the body, ye must no longer permit sin to bring you under its dominion, lest it inculcate and condemn you. But ye must live as those who are wholly released from it, over whom it no longer has any right or power. For we read, “He that hath died is justified from sin.” This is said of all who are dead. He that has died has paid for his sin; he need not die for it again, for he no longer commits sin and evil deeds. If sin be destroyed in man by the Spirit, and the flesh also is dead and gone, man is completely released and freed from sin.

20. Paul comprehends the whole existence of the Christian on earth in the death of Christ, and represents it as dead and buried, in the coffin; that is, the Christian has ceased from the life of sin, and has nothing more to do with it. He speaks of sin as being dead unto the Christian and of the latter as being dead unto sin for the reason that Christians no longer take part in the sinful life of the world. And, too, they are doubly dead. First, spiritually

they are dead unto sin. And this, though painful and bitter to flesh and blood, is a blessed, a comfortable and happy dying, sweet and delightful, for it produces a heavenly life, pure and perfect. Secondly, they are physically dead — the body dies. But this is not really death; rather a gentle, soothing sleep. Therefore ye are, Paul would say, beyond measure happy. In Christ ye have already escaped death by dying unto sin; that death ye need die no more. It — the first death, which ye have inherited from Adam through sin — is already taken away from you. That being the real, the bitter and eternal death, ye are consequently freed from the necessity of dying. At the same time there is a death, or rather only the semblance of one, which ye must suffer because ye are yet on earth and are the descendants of Adam.

SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL RESURRECTION.

21. The first death, inherited from Adam, is done away with: changed into a spiritual dying unto sin, by reason of which the soul no longer consents to sin and the body no longer commits it. Thus, in place of the death which sin has brought upon us, eternal life is already begun in you. Ye are now freed from the dreadful damning death; then accept the sweet, holy and blessed death unto sin, that ye may beware of sin and no longer serve it. Such is to be the result of the death of Christ into which ye are baptized; Christ has died and has commanded you to be baptized in order that sin might be drowned in you.

22. The other, the “little death,” is that outward, physical death. In the Scriptures it is called a sleep. It is imposed upon the flesh, because, so long as we live on earth, the flesh never ceases to resist the spirit and its life. Paul says: “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would.” ^{<REF>}Galatians 5:17. The spirit, or soul, says: I am dead unto sin and will not sin any more. But the flesh says: I am not dead and must make use of my life while I have it. The spirit declares: I believe that God has forgiven my sins and taken them away from me through Christ. But the flesh asks: What do I know of God or his will? The spirit resolves: I must be meek, pure, chaste, humble, patient, and seek the future life. But the flesh in reply makes a loud outcry: Away with your heaven! if only I had enough of bread and money and property here! Thus the flesh does continually, as long as it lives here; it draws and drags sin after itself;

it is rebellious and refuses to die. Therefore God must finally put it to death before it becomes dead unto sin.

23. And after all, it is but a gentle and easy death. It is truly only a sleep. Since soul and spirit are no longer dead, the body shall not remain dead; it shall come forth again, cleansed and purified, on the last day, to be united with the soul. Then shall it be a gentle, pure and obedient body, without sin or evil lust.

24. These words of Paul are an admirable Christian picture of death, representing it not as an awful thing, but as something comforting and pleasant to contemplate. For how could Paul present a more attractive description than when he describes it as stripped of its power and repulsiveness and makes it the medium through which we attain life and joy? What is more desirable than to be freed from sin and the punishment and misery it involves, and to possess a joyful, cheerful heart and conscience? For where there is sin and real death — the sense of sin and God's wrath — there are such terror and dismay that man feels like rushing through iron walls. Christ says, in ^{<22:31>}Luke 23:30, quoting from the prophet Hosea (^{<23:08>}Hosea 10:8), that such a one shall pray that the mountains and the hills may fall on him and cover him.

25. That dreadful death which is called in the Scriptures the second death is taken away from the Christian through Christ, and is swallowed up in his life. In place of it there is left a miniature death, a death in which the bitterness is covered up. In it the Christian dies according to the flesh; that is, he passes from unbelief to faith, from the remaining sin to eternal righteousness, from woes and sadness and tribulation to perfect eternal joy. Such a death is sweeter and better than any life on earth. For not all the life and wealth and delight and joy of the world can make man as happy as he will be when he dies with a conscience at peace with God and with the sure faith and comfort of everlasting life. Therefore truly may this death of the body be said to be only a falling into a sweet and gentle slumber. The body ceases from sin. It no longer hinders or harasses the spirit. It is cleansed and freed from sin and comes forth again in the resurrection clothed with the obedience, joy and life which the spirit imparts.

26. The only trouble is that the stupid flesh cannot understand this. It is terrified by the mask of death, and imagines that it is still suffering the old death; for it does not understand the spiritual dying unto sin. It judges only by outward appearance. It sees that man perishes, decays under the ground

and is consumed. Having only this abominable and hideous mask before its eyes, it is afraid of death. But its fear is only because of its lack of understanding. If it knew, it would by no means be afraid or shudder at death. Our reason is like a little child who has become frightened by a bugbear or a mask, and cannot be lulled to sleep; or like a poor man, bereft of his senses, who imagines when brought to his couch that he is being put into the water and drowned. What we do not understand we cannot intelligently deal with. If, for instance, a man has a penny and imagines it to be a five-dollar gold piece, he is just as proud of it as if it were a real gold piece; if he loses it he is as grieved as if he had lost that more valuable coin. But it does not follow that he has suffered such loss; he has simply deluded himself with a false idea.

27. Thus it is not the reality of death and burial that terrifies; the terror lies in the flesh and blood, which cannot understand that death and the grave mean nothing more than that God lays us — like a little child is laid in a cradle or an easy bed — where we shall sweetly sleep till the judgment day. Flesh and blood shudders in fear at that which gives no reason for it, and finds comfort and joy in that which really gives no comfort or joy. Thus Christians must be harassed by their ignorant and insane flesh, because it will not understand its own good or harm. They must verily fight against it as long as they live, at the cost of much pain and weariness.

28. There is none so perfect that he does not flee from and shudder at death and the grave. Paul complains and confesses of himself, and in his own person of all Christians: “For that which I do I know not: for not what I would, that do I practice.” ^{<61715>}Romans 7:15. In other words: By the spirit, I am well aware that when this body comes to die God simply lays me to rest in sweetest slumber, and I would gladly have my flesh to understand this; but I cannot bring it to it. The spirit indeed is willing and desires bodily death as a gentle sleep. It does not consider it to be death; it knows no such thing as death. It knows that it is freed from sin and that where there is no sin there is no death — life only. But the flesh halts and hesitates, and is in constant dread lest I die and perish in the abyss. It will not allow itself to be tamed and brought into that obedience and into that consoling view of death which the spirit exercises. Even Saint Paul cries out in anxiety of spirit: “Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?” ^{<61724>}Romans 7:24. Now we see what is meant by the statement, “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit.” The flesh must be dragged along and compelled by the spirit to obediently follow, in spite of

its resistance and trembling. It must be forced into submission until it is finally overcome. Just so the mother so deals with the child that is fretful and restless that she constrains it to sleep.

29. Paul says, “Knowing this, that our old man was crucified” — that is, we know that, in soul and spirit, we are already dead unto sin — “that the body of sin might be done away.” The meaning is: Because the body does not willingly and cheerfully follow the spirit, but resists and would fain linger in the old life of sin, it is already sentenced, compelled to follow and to be put to death that sin may be destroyed in it.

30. He does not say that the body is destroyed as soon as a man has been baptized and is become a Christian, but that the body of sin is destroyed. The body which before was obstinate and disobedient to the spirit is now changed; it is no longer a body of sin but of righteousness and newness of life. So he adds, “that we should no longer be in bondage to sin.”

“But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth, no more; death no more hath dominion over him. For the death that he died, he died unto sin once; but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God.”

31. Here he leads us out of the death and grave of sin to the resurrection of spirit and body. When we die — spiritually unto sin, and physically to the world and self — what doth it profit us? Is there nothing else in store for the Christian but to die and be buried.? By all means yes, he says; we are sure by faith that we also shall live, even as Christ rose from death and the grave and lives. For we have died with him, or, as stated above, “we have become united with him in the likeness of his death.” By his death he has destroyed our sin and death; therefore we share in his resurrection and life. There shall be no more sin and death in our spirit or body, just as there is no more death in him. Christ, having once died and been raised again, dieth no more. There is nothing to die for. He has accomplished everything. He has destroyed the sin for which he died, and has swallowed up death in victory. And that he now lives means that he lives in everlasting righteousness, life and majesty. So, when ye have once passed through both deaths, the spiritual death unto sin and the gentle death of the body, death can no more touch you, no more reign over you.

32. This, then, is our comfort for the timidity of the poor, weak flesh which still shudders at death. If thou art a Christian, then know that thy Lord Jesus Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. Therefore, death hath no more dominion over thee, who art baptized into him. Satan is defied and dared to try all his powers and terrors on Christ; for we are assured, “Death no more hath dominion over him.” Death may awaken anger, malice, melancholy, fear and terror in our poor, weak flesh, but it hath no more dominion over Christ. On the contrary, death must submit to the dominion of Christ, in his own person and in us. We have died unto sin; that is, we have been redeemed from the sting and power, the control, of death. Christ has fully accomplished the work by which he obtained power over death, and has bestowed that power upon us, that in him we should reign over death. So Paul says in conclusion:

“Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.” 33. “Reckon ye also yourselves,” he says. Ye, as Christians, should be conscious of these things, and should conduct yourselves in all your walk and conversation as those who are dead to sin and who give evidence of it to the world. Ye shall not serve sin, shall not follow after it, as if it had dominion over you. Ye shall live in newness of life, which means that ye shall lead a godly life, inwardly, by faith and outwardly in your conduct; ye shall have power over sin until the flesh — the body — shall at last fall asleep, and thus both deaths be accomplished in you. Then there will remain nothing but life — no terror or fear of death and no more of its dominion.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~ROM~~ **ROMANS 6:19-23.**

19 *I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye presented your members as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now present your members as servants to righteousness unto sanctification. 20* *For when ye were servants of sin, ye were free in regard of righteousness. 21* *What fruit then had ye at that time in the things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. 22* *But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life. 23* *For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

EXHORTATION TO RESIST SIN.

1. The text properly should include several verses preceding. Paul has not yet concluded the subject of the epistle for last Sunday. There he urges that since we are baptized into Christ and believe, we should henceforth walk in a new life; that we are now dead to sin because we are in Christ, who by his death and resurrection has conquered and destroyed sin. He illustrates the power of Christ's death and resurrection by saying: "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace." That is, being in Christ and possessed of the power of his resurrection — in other words, having God's grace and the forgiveness of sins — you can now readily resist sin. Although you may not perfectly fulfill the letter of the Law in its demands, yet it cannot condemn you as a sinner nor subject you to God's wrath.

GOOD WORKS NOT FORBIDDEN'.

2. Then Paul presents again the question raised by the obstinate world when it encounters this doctrine. "What then?" he asks, "shall we sin

because we are not under the law but under grace ?” It is the perversity of the world that, when we preach about forgiveness of sins by pure grace and without merit of man, it should either say we forbid good works, or else try to draw the conclusion that man may continue to live in sin and follow his own pleasure; when the fact is, we should particularly strive to live a life the very reverse of sinful, that our doctrine may draw people to good works, unto the praise and honor and glory of God. Our doctrine, rightly apprehended, does not influence to pride and vice, but to humility and obedience.

3. In affairs of temporal government, whether domestic or civil, judge or ruler, it is understood that he who asks for pardon confesses himself guilty, acknowledges his error and promises to reform — to transgress no more. For instance, when the judge extends mercy and pardon to the thief deserving of the gallows, the law is canceled by grace. Suppose now the thief continues in wrong-doing and boasts, “Now that I am under grace I may do as I please, I have no law to fear”; who would tolerate him? For though the law is indeed canceled for him and he receives not merited punishment, though grace delivers him from the rope and the sword, life is not granted him that he may continue to steal, to murder; rather he is supposed to become honest and virtuous. If he does not, the law will again overtake him and punish him as he deserves. In short, where grace fulfills the law, no one is for that reason given license to continue in wrong-doing; on the contrary, he is under increased obligation to avoid occasions of falling under condemnation of the law.

4. Everyone can readily comprehend this principle in temporal things; no one is stupid enough to tolerate the idea of grace being granted to extend opportunity to do wrong. It is only the Gospel doctrine concerning God’s grace and the forgiveness of sin that must suffer the slanderous misrepresentation that makes it abolish good works or give occasion for sin. We are told how God, in his unfathomable grace, has canceled the sentence of eternal death and hell fire which, according to the Law and divine judgment, we deserved, and has given us instead the freedom of life eternal; thus our life is purely of grace. Yet certainly we are not pardoned that we may live as before when, under condemnation and wrath, we incurred death. Rather, forgiveness is bestowed that we in appreciation of the sublimity and sanctity of God’s unspeakably great blessing which delivers us from death unto life, should henceforth take heed that we lose it not; that we fall not from grace to pass again under judgment and the

sentence of eternal death. We are to conduct ourselves as men made alive and saved.

5. So Paul says in verse 16, “Know ye not, that to whom ye present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” Meaning, Since you now have, under grace, obtained forgiveness of sin and are become righteous, you owe it to God to live in obedience to his will. Necessarily your life must be obedient to some master. Either you obey sin, to continue in the service of which brings death and God’s wrath, or you obey God, in grace, unto a new manner of life. So, then, you are no more to obey sin, having been freed from its dominion and power. Paul continues the topic in this Sunday’s epistle text, saying: GOOD AND EVIL “AFTER THE MANNER OF MEN.”

“I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye presented your members as members to uncleanness,” etc.

6. Heretofore he had been speaking, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in language unusual and unintelligible to the world. To the gentiles it was a strange and incomprehensible thing he said about dying with Christ unto sin, being buried and planted into his death, and so on. But now, since his former words are obscure to the natural understanding, he will, he says, speak according to human reason — “after the manner of men.”

7. Even reason and the laws of all the gentiles, he goes on to say, teach we are not to do evil; rather to avoid it and do good. All sovereigns establish laws to restrain evil and preserve order.

How could we introduce through the Gospel a doctrine countenancing evil? Though the wisdom of the Gospel is a higher gift than human reason, it does not alter or nullify the God-implanted intelligence of the latter. Hence it is a perversion of our doctrine to say it does not teach us to love good works and practice them. “Now, if you cannot understand this truth from my explanation,” Paul would say — “that through faith you have, by baptism, died to the sinful life, even been buried — then learn it through your accustomed exercise of reason. You know for yourselves that pardon for former transgression and release from lawful punishment gives no one license to do evil — to commit theft or murder.”

8. It is a commonly recognized fact among men that pardon does not mean license. God's Word confirms the same. Yet the disadvantage is that although reason teaches, through the Law, good works and forbids evil, it is unable to comprehend why its teachings are not fulfilled. It perceives from the results which follow dishonoring of the Law, that to honor is best, that it is right and praiseworthy not to steal and commit crime. But it fails to understand why, given the teachings at first, they are not naturally fulfilled. Nor, again, does it know how existing conditions may be removed or bettered. It resorts to this expedient and that to restrain evil, but it cannot attain the art of uprooting and destroying it. With the sword, rack and gallows the judge may restrain public crime, but he cannot punish more than what is known and witnessed to before the court. Whatever is done secretly and never comes before him, he cannot punish or restrain. The Word of God, however, takes hold of the difficulty in a different manner. It teaches how to crush the head of the serpent and to slay the evil. Then the judge and the executioner are no longer necessary. But where we may not control the cause of the wrong, we should, nevertheless, restrain so far as possible its manifest workings.

Now, the utmost reason can teach is that we are not to do evil even in thought or desire, and the extent of its punishment relates only to outward works; it cannot punish the thought and inclination to do evil.

9. "But we preach another doctrine," Paul means to say, "a doctrine having power to control the heart and restrain the will. We say you believers in Christ, who are baptized into his death and buried with him, are not only to be reckoned dead, but are truly dead unto sin." A Christian has certain knowledge that through the grace of Christ his sins are forgiven — blotted out and deprived of condemning power. Because he has obtained and believes in such grace, he receives a heart abhorrent of sin. Although feeling within himself, perhaps, the presence of evil thoughts and lusts, yet his faith and the Holy Spirit are with him to remind him of his baptism. "Notwithstanding time and opportunity permit me to do evil," he says to himself, "and though I run no risk of being detected and punished, yet I will not do it. I will obey God and honor Christ my Lord, for I am baptized into Christ and as a Christian am dead unto sin, nor will I come again under its power."

So acted godly Joseph, who, when tempted by his master's wife, "left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out" (⁽⁻⁰³¹²⁾Genesis 39:12);

whereas another might have been glad of the invitation. He was but flesh and blood and naturally not insensible to her inducement, to the time and opportunity, the friendship of the woman and the offered enjoyment; but he restrained himself, not yielding even in thought to the temptation. Such obedience to God destroys indeed the source of evil — sin. Reason and human wisdom know nothing of it. It is not to be effected by laws, by punishment, by prison and sword. It can be attained only by faith and a knowledge of Christ's grace, through which we die to sin and the world, and restrain the will from evil even when detection and punishment are impossible.

10. Now, such doctrine is not to be learned from human reason; it is spiritual and taught of the Scriptures. It reveals the source of evil and how to restrain it. Since, then, we teach restraint of evil and show withal a way higher and more effectual than reason can find, the accusation that we prohibit good works and license sin is sufficiently answered and disproved. But Paul would say to the Romans, "If you cannot comprehend our superior doctrine as to the questions raised, then answer them according to the teachings of your own reason, for even that will tell you — and no man will dispute it — we are to do no wrong. The Word of God confirms this doctrine."

11. The apostle says he will speak of the point they raise, after the manner of men. That does not mean according to corrupt flesh and blood, which are not capable of speaking anything good, but according to natural reason as God created it, where some good still remains, for there are to be found many upright individuals who make just laws. I speak thus "because of the infirmity of your flesh," Paul declares. As if he would say, "I have not yet said as much as reason, the teachers of the Law and the jurists would demand, but I will go no further because you are yet too weak spiritually, and too unaccustomed to my manner of speech, for all of you to understand it. I must come down to your apprehension and speak according to your capacity. Now, I want to say, ask your own statutes, your own laws, whether they authorize the prohibition of good works; if they license evil, though they may not be able to prevent it. Thus I convince you that such a pretense regarding our doctrine is not to be tolerated.

THE TEACHINGS OF REASON.

“Even reason teaches that your lives must conform to your business; each is in duty bound to obey him whom he serves. As Christians you are obliged to render another service than that you gave when under the dominion of sin, and obedient to it; when you were unable to escape its power and to do any work good before God. You have now come out of bondage and are relieved from obedience to sin, through grace, having devoted yourselves to the service of God, to obeying him. Therefore, assuredly you must change your manner of life.”

12. Truly, Paul here argues reasonably and within the scope of man’s natural understanding. We preach the same truths, but, presenting them in the form of Christian doctrine, we necessarily employ different language and a loftier tone, lest it be offensive to the world. We may say that theft, murder, envy, hate and other crimes and vices are transgressions, yet we cannot remedy the evils by the mere prohibitions of the law. The remedy must be effected through God’s grace, and is accomplished in the believer, not by our power, but by the Holy Spirit. But when we so explain, the stupid world immediately blurts out, “Oh, if it be true that our works do not remedy evils, let us enjoy ourselves and not bother about good works!”

13. That their implication is false and a wanton perversion of the true doctrine is manifest from the fact that we exalt and endorse the command of God, and also the doctrine of reason, that teach us to do good and avoid evil. Indeed, we assist reason, which is powerless to remedy evil. If reason were itself sufficient, men would not permit themselves to be deceived by their own visionary ideas and false doctrines about worthless and vain works, as are followers of the papacy and of all false worship. No doubt such error has its rise in the principle that we are to do good and avoid evil. The principle fundamentally is true, and accepted by all men; but when it comes to the theories we build upon it, the speculations as to how it is to be put into practice, there is disagreement. Only the Word of God can show how to accomplish it.

Reason is easily blinded on this point and deceived by false appearances, being led by anything merely called good. Even when it has performed all it believes to be right, it is still uncertain of acceptance. Indeed, it perceives no fruits, no benefit, to result from its teaching; for at best its achievements extend no farther than outward works — the object being to make the doer

appear righteous and respectable before men while inward sinfulness is unrestrained and the soul remains captive to its former life, obedient to the lusts of sin. And the motive of such a one is not sincere; he would conduct himself quite otherwise were he not restrained by fear of shame and punishment.

GOSPEL HIGHER THAN REASON.

14. We present a higher doctrine — the Gospel. The Gospel teaches first how sin in ourselves is, through Christ, slain and buried. Thus we obtain a good conscience, a conscience hating and opposing sin, and become obedient to another power. Being delivered from sin we would serve God and exert ourselves to do his pleasure, even though no fear, punishment, judge or executioner existed.

With this point accepted — with the settlement of this minor subject of controversy as to how we are delivered from sin and attain to truly good works, we unite once more on the fundamental principle that good is to be done and evil avoided. Therefore, we immediately conclude: Since we are free from sin and converted to God, we must in obedience to him do good and live no more in sin.

15. Thus does Paul make use of the Law, and of human reason so far as it is able to interpret the Law, to resist them who speak falsely and pervert the right doctrine. Evidently, then, the doctrine of the Gospel does not oppose the doctrine of good works, but transcends it. For it reveals the source and inspiration of good works — not human reason, not human ability, but the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. Now Paul deduces the point:

“For as ye presented [yielded] your members as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now present [yield] your members as servants to righteousness unto sanctification [holiness].”

BODY NOT TO SERVE SIN.

16. Even reason teaches that, being no more subject to sin and unrighteousness, you are no longer to serve them with your body and members — your whole physical life. And further, having yielded yourselves to obey God and righteousness, you are in duty bound to serve

them with body and life. To put it concisely and clearly, Let him who formerly was evil and lived contrary to his own conscience and to God's will, now become godly and serve the Lord with a good conscience. Or, as Paul says, "Let him that stole steal no more." ~~4008~~ Ephesians 4:28.

17. Formerly, he tells them, their members — eyes, ears, mouth, hands, feet — even the whole body, served uncleanness. For "vice" he uses this term "uncleanness," readily intelligible to reason and inclusive of all forms of sin. "You permitted your members to serve unrighteousness," he would say, "and devoted them to every sort of unholy life, every wicked work, committing one iniquity after another and exercising all manner of villainy that can be named, Now reverse the order. Reasoning according to your own logic: while before you willingly witnessed, heard and uttered things shameful and unchaste, and sought lewdness, lending your bodies to it, let impurity now be distressing to your sight and hearing; let the body flee from it; be pure in words and works. All the members of the body, all its functions, are to be devoted to righteousness.

Thus your members, your whole bodies, are to become holy — to be God's own — and given over solely to his service. The longer and the more ardently they serve, the more cheerfully will they honor and obey God, being devoted to all that is divine, praiseworthy, honorable and virtuous. The instructions God has written upon your own heart would teach you this principle, even were there no Word of God. It is useless for you to protest: "Yes, but you have taught that good works do not save," for that doctrine is not inconsistent, but beyond your understanding. Indeed, it is the true light whereby you may fulfill the teachings of reason.

*"For when ye were servants of sin, ye were free
in regard of [free from] righteousness."*

18. All these expressions Paul uses "after the manner of men," adapting them from the laws and customs of the times concerning slavery, service and freedom. Then servants were bondmen, purchased by their masters, with whom they must abide until set at liberty by those owners, or otherwise freed. His allusion to a former service of unrighteousness and a present service of righteousness implies two conditions of servitude and consequently two conditions of freedom. He who serves sin, the apostle teaches, is free from righteousness; that is, he is captive under sin, unable to attain to righteousness and to do righteous works. Even reason can comprehend the principle that he is free who does not serve — who is not

servant. Again, servants of righteousness means service and obedience to righteousness, and freedom from sin.

FRUITS OF TWO KINDS OF SERVICE.

Paul now puts the matter a little differently, contrasting the experience of the Romans in the two forms of service. He leaves it with them to determine which has been productive of benefit and which of injury, and to choose accordingly as to future service and obedience.

“What fruit then had ye at that time in the things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification [holiness], and the end eternal life.”

19. Rather recall your manner of life when you were free from righteousness and obeyed only the urgings and enticements of sin. What pleasure or gain had you in it? None, except that for which you are now ashamed. Further, had you remained in it you would at last have found death. Only these two grand results — shame and death. Nothing better have you earned in its service. Munificent reward indeed for him who, choosing freedom from righteousness, lives to his own pleasure. He is deceived into thinking he has chosen a highly desirable life, for it gratifies the fleshly desires, and he thinks to go unpunished.

But gratification is succeeded by two severe punishments: First, shame — confession of disgrace before God and the world. Thus Adam and Eve in Paradise, when they chose to violate God’s command and, enticed by the devil, followed their desire for a forbidden thing, were made to feel the disgrace of their sin; they were in their hearts ashamed to appear in the presence of God. The other and added punishment is eternal death and the fires of hell, into which also fell our first parents.

20. Is it not better, then, to be free from the service of sin and to serve righteousness? So doing, you would never suffer shame nor injury but would receive a double blessing: First, a clear conscience before God and all creatures, proof in itself that you live a holy life and belong to God; second and chief, the rich and incorruptible reward of eternal life.

21. In all these observations Paul is still speaking after the manner of men; in a way comprehended and accepted by reason, even without knowledge of Christ. It is universally true in the world that evil-doers — thieves,

murderers and the like — -are punished in addition to the public disgrace they feel. Similarly, they who do good receive, in addition to the honor of men, all manner of happy reward.

*“For the wages of sin is death;
but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

22. It seems a strange saying, that evil-doers are to receive wages, seemingly implying right and deserving action on their part. Ordinarily the term “wages” signifies a good reward, given to those who acquit themselves righteously and bravely. Paul uses the word to discomfit them who pervert his teaching. For they say, “Ah, Paul preaches of grace alone, yet he promises wages to sin.” “Yes,” Paul would respond, “boast as you will, you will receive a reward — -death and hell-fire. You must confidently expect it if you interpret the Gospel to teach that God shall reward you who serve sin.” With the convincing words of the text, Paul would undeceive those who advocate, or suffer themselves to believe, that man can serve God in sin and can receive a happy reward. He chooses words familiar to them. “Yes, if, as you maintain, wages must be the reward of every service, you will of course receive yours — death and hell. These any may have who desire them and regard them precious.”

23. Paul says further, “The free gift of God is eternal life.” Observe his choice of words. He does not here use the term “wages,” because he has previously taught that eternal life is not the reward of our works, but is given of pure grace, through faith and for Christ’s sake. So he speaks of it as a “free gift of God, through Christ Jesus our Lord.” The soul possessing eternal life is furnished with power to crush the serpent’s head, and none can deprive him of his priceless blessing. He has also power to avoid sin and to constantly crucify his flesh. These are things not to be effected by any law, any human ability; faith is requisite. Through faith we are incorporated into Christ and planted with him in the death of sin, unto eternal life and truly good works.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~ROM~~ ROMANS 8:12-17.

12 *So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh: 13 for if ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16 The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: 17 and 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.*

LIVING IN THE SPIRIT AS GOD'S CHILDREN.

1. This text, like the preceding one, is an exhortation to Christian life and works. The language employed, however, is of different construction. The hateful machinations of the devil, by which he produces so much disaster in the world, make it necessary to urge this exhortation in many different forms upon those who have become Christians. For when God out of grace, without any merit on our part, bestows upon us the forgiveness of sins which we ourselves are unable to buy or acquire, the devil instigates men at once to conclude and exclaim: Oh, in that case we need no longer do good! Whenever, therefore, the apostle speaks of the doctrine of faith, he is obliged continually to maintain that grace implies nothing of that kind. For our sins are not forgiven with the design that we should continue to commit sin, but that we should cease from it. Otherwise it would more justly be called, not forgiveness of sin but permission to sin.

2. It is a shameful perversion of the salutary doctrine of the Gospel and great and damnable ingratitude for the unfathomable grace and salvation received, to be unwilling to do good. For we ought in fact to be impelled by this very grace to do, with all diligence and to the utmost of our

knowledge and ability, everything that is good and well-pleasing to God, to the praise and glory of his name.

3. Of this Paul reminds and admonishes us here, in plain and simple but earnest and important words, in which he points out to us how much we owe to God for that which we have received from him, and what injury we shall suffer if we do not value it as we should, and act accordingly. He says:

“We are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.”

4. Because we have been redeemed from the condemnation we deserved by our sins, and now have eternal life through the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us (he speaks of this in the preceding verses), therefore we are debtors to live after the Spirit and obey God. This Paul declares also in the text for last Sunday: “Now being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification.” ^{<R162>}Romans 6:22. Therefore, he says, ye are debtors; your new calling, station, and nature require of you that, since ye have become Christians and have the Holy Spirit, ye should live as the Holy Spirit directs and teaches. It is not left to your own caprice to do or to leave undone. If ye desire to glory in the possession of grace and the Holy Spirit, ye must confess yourselves debtors to live, not after the flesh, the only desire of which is to continue in sin, but after the Spirit; the Spirit shows you that, having been baptized and redeemed from sin, ye must turn from sin to the new life of righteousness and not from that new life to sin.

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye must die.”

5. Here judgment is plainly and tersely pronounced on the pretensions of those foolish people who seek to make the freedom of grace a pretext for giving license to the flesh. The apostle speaks these words that he may deter them from presumption, lest in place of the life and grace in which they pride themselves, they bring upon themselves again eternal wrath and death. It would be utterly inconsistent in you who are now saved and freed from eternal death to desire henceforth to live after the flesh. For if ye do that, ye need not imagine that ye shall retain eternal life; ye will be subject to death and condemned to hell. For ye know that it was solely because of your sins that ye lay under the wrath of God and had incurred death, and that it was because ye lived after the flesh that ye deserved condemnation. Most assuredly Christ has not died for those who are determined to remain

in their sins; he has died that he might rescue from their sins those who would gladly be released but cannot liberate themselves.

6. Therefore, let him that is a Christian take care not to be guilty of such nonsense as to say: I am free from the Law, therefore I may do as I please. Rather let him say and do the contrary. Let him, because he is a Christian, fear and shun sin, lest he fall from his freedom into his former state of bondage to sin under the Law and God's wrath; or lest the life, begun in God, lapse again into death. For here stands the express declaration, "If ye live after the flesh, ye must die ;" as if the apostle meant: It will not avail you that ye have heard the Gospel, that ye boast of Christ, that ye receive the sacraments, so long as ye do not, through the faith and Holy Spirit received, subdue your sinful lusts, your ungodliness and impiety, your avarice, malice, pride, hatred, envy and the like.

7. For the meaning of "living after the flesh" has been repeatedly stated and is readily understood. It includes not only the gross, sensual lust of fornication or other uncleanness, but everything man has inherited by his natural birth; not only the physical body, but also the soul and all the faculties of our nature, both mental and corporal — our reason, will and senses — which are by nature without the Spirit and are not regulated by God's Word. It includes particularly those things which the reason is not inclined to regard as sin; for instance, living in unbelief, idolatry, contempt of God's Word, presumption and dependence on our own wisdom and strength, our own honor, and the like. Everything of this nature must be shunned by Christians (who have the Holy Spirit and are hence able to judge what is carnal) as a fatal poison which produces death and damnation.

PUTTING TO DEATH SIN.

"But if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

8. Here the apostle confesses that even in the Christian there is a remnant of the flesh, that must be put to death — all manner of temptation and lusts in opposition to God's commandments. These are active in the flesh and prompt to sin. They are here called the "deeds of the body." Of this nature are thoughts of unbelief and distrust, carnal security and presumption instead of the fear of God, coldness and indolence with respect to God's Word and prayer, impatience and murmurings under suffering, anger and vindictiveness or envy and hatred against our neighbor, avarice, unchastity

and the like. Such inclinations as these dwell in flesh and blood and cease not to move and tempt man. Yea, because of human infirmity they at times overtake him when he is not careful enough about transgression. They will certainly overpower him unless he resolutely opposes them and, as here stated, “puts to death the deeds of the body.” To do this means a severe struggle, a battle, which never abates nor ceases so long as we live. The Christian dare never become slothful or negligent in this matter. He must arouse himself through the Spirit so as not to give place to the flesh. He must constantly put to death the flesh lest he himself be put to death by it. The apostle declares, “If ye live after the flesh, ye must die,” and again comforts us, “If by the Spirit ye put to death [mortify] the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” For the Christian receives the gift of the Holy Spirit that he may become willing and able to mortify these sinful lusts.

9. This mortifying of sin through the Spirit is accomplished on this wise: Man recognizes his sin and infirmity, at once repents, remembers God’s Word, and, through faith in the forgiveness of sins, strengthens himself against sin, and so resists it that he does not consent to it nor permit it to come to deeds.

10. This constitutes the difference between those who are Christians and sanctified and those who are without faith and the Holy Spirit or who grieve and lose the Spirit. For although believers, as well as unbelievers, are not wholly free from the sinful lusts of the flesh, they yet remain in repentance and the fear of God; they hold fast to the belief that their sins are forgiven, for Christ’s sake, because they do not yield to them but resist them. Therefore they continue under forgiveness, and their remaining infirmity is not fatal nor damning to them as it is to those who, without repentance and faith, go on in carnal security and purposely follow their evil lusts against their own conscience; who thus cast away from themselves both faith and the Holy Spirit.

11. So Paul admonishes the Christians to remember what they have received, and whereunto they are called. Having received the forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit, they are to be careful not to lose these again; they must use them in contending against the sinful lusts of the flesh. They are to comfort themselves with the fact that they have the Holy Spirit, that is, have help and strength by means of which they can resist and mortify sin. These things are impossible to those who have not faith. Therefore Paul declares further:

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.”

12. Like ourselves, Paul had to deal with two classes of people, the true and the false Christians. There is not so much danger from the adversaries of the doctrine; for instance, from popery: their opposition is so open that we can readily beware of them. But since the devil sows even among us his seed — they are called Christians and boast of the Gospel — it behooves us to take heed, not to the mouth, but to the works, of those who claim to be Christians. Not what they say, but what they do, is the question. It is easy enough to boast of God and of Christ and of the Spirit. But whether such boasting has any foundation or not, depends on whether or not the Spirit so works and rules in one as to subdue and mortify sin. For where the Spirit is, there assuredly the Spirit is not idle nor powerless. He proves his presence by ruling and directing man and prevailing on man to obey and follow his promptings. Such a man has the comfort that he is a child of God, and that God so reigns and works in him that he is not subject to death; he has life.

MEANING OF “LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD.”

13. To be “led by the Spirit of God” means, then, to be given a heart which gladly hears God’s Word and believes that in Christ it has grace and the forgiveness of sins; a heart which confesses and proves its faith before the world; a heart which seeks, above all things, the glory of God, and endeavors to live without giving offense, to serve others and to be obedient, patient, pure and chaste, mild and gentle; a heart which, though at times overtaken in a fault and it stumble, soon rises again by repentance, and ceases to sin. All these things the Holy Spirit teaches one if he hears and receives the Word, and does not willfully resist the Spirit.

14. On the other hand, the devil, who also is a spirit, persuades the hearts of the worldlings. But it soon becomes evident that his work is not that of a good spirit or a divine spirit. For he only leads men to do the reverse of that which the Spirit of God leads them to do; then they find no pleasure in hearing and obeying God’s Word, but despise God, and become proud and haughty, avaricious, unmerciful.

15. Let every one therefore take heed that he do not deceive himself. For there are many who claim to be Christians and yet are not. We perceive this from the fact that not all are led by the Spirit of God. Some spirit there must be by which men are led. If it is not the Spirit of God leading them to

oppose the flesh, then it must be the other and evil spirit leading them to give way to the flesh and its lusts and to oppose the Spirit of God. They must, therefore, either be God's own, his dear children, his sons and his daughters, called to eternal life and glory; or they must be rejected and abandoned, children of the devil; and with him heirs of eternal fire.

16. Paul takes occasion to speak more at length on the words "sons of God," and proceeds in beautiful and comforting words to describe the nature and glory of this sonship. He only begins the subject, however, in today's text. He says:

"For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

17. This is a noble and comforting text, worthy of being written in letters of gold. Because ye now through faith, he means to say, have the Holy Spirit and are led by him, ye are no longer in bondage as ye were when under the Law; ye need no longer be afraid of its terrors and its demands, as if God would condemn and reject you on account of your unworthiness and the remaining infirmity of your flesh. On the contrary, ye have the consolation that, through faith, ye have the assurance of God's grace, and may consider God your Father and call upon him as his children.

TWO KINDS OF PREACHING AND OF WORKS.

18. Thus he contrasts the two kinds of works which spring from the two kinds of preaching and doctrine — of the Law and of the Gospel — and which constitute the difference between the Christians and those still without faith and the knowledge of Christ. They who have nothing and know nothing but the Law, can never attain to true, heartfelt trust and confidence in God, though they do ever so much and exercise themselves ever so earnestly in the Law. For when the Law shines upon them in real clearness and they see what it demands of them and how far they come short of its fulfillment, when it thus discloses to them God's wrath, it produces in them only a terror, a fear and dread, of God under which they must at last perish if they be not rescued by the Gospel. This is what Paul here terms "the spirit of bondage," one that produces only fear and dread of God. But, on the other hand, if the heart grasps the preaching of the Gospel, which declares that, without any merit or worthiness on our part, God forgives us our sins, for Christ's sake, if we believe in him — then it finds in God's grace comfort against the terrors of the Law; then the Holy

Spirit enables it to abide in that confidence, to hold fast to that comfort, and to call upon God sincerely in that faith, even though it feels and confesses to be still weak and sinful. This is what is meant by receiving “the spirit of adoption.”

19. Paul speaks of the “spirit of bondage” and the “spirit of adoption” according to the customs of his times. In those days men-servants and maid-servants were the property of the master of the house in the same sense that a cow was his property. He bought them with his money; he did with them as he pleased, just as with his cattle. They were afraid of their master and had to expect stripes, imprisonment and punishment even unto death. They could not say, So much of my master’s property belongs to me, and he must give it to me. But they had always to reflect: Here I serve for my bread only; I have nothing to expect but stripes, and must be content to have my master cast me out or sell me to someone else whenever he chooses. They could never have a well-grounded hope of release from such fear and bondage and coercion.

20. Such a slavish spirit, such a captive, fearful and uncertain spirit, ye do not have, says the apostle. Ye are not compelled to live continually in fear of wrath and condemnation as are the followers of Moses and all who are under the Law. On the contrary, ye have a delightful, free spirit, one confident and contented, such as a child entertains toward its father, and ye need not fear that God is angry with you or will cast you off and condemn you. For ye have the Spirit of his Son (as he says above and in ~~ROM~~ Galatians 4:6) in your heart and know that ye shall remain in his house and receive the inheritance, and that ye may comfort yourselves with it and boast of it as being your own.

CHILDREN OF GOD.

21. On this “spirit of adoption,” that is on what the apostle means when he says “whereby we cry, Abba, Father,” I have spoken at some length in my sermon on the text ~~ROM~~ Galatians 4:6, where the same words are used. In short, Paul describes here the power of the kingdom of Christ, the real work and the true exalted worship the Holy Spirit effects in believers: the comfort by which the heart is freed from the terror and fear of sin and given peace, and the heartfelt supplication which in faith expects of God an answer and his help. These blessings cannot be secured through the Law or our own holiness. By such means man could never obtain the comfort of

God's grace and love to him; he would always remain in fear and dread of wrath and condemnation, and, because of such doubt, would flee from God, not daring to call upon him. But where there is faith in Christ, there the Holy Spirit brings the comfort spoken of, and a childlike trust which does not doubt that God is gracious and will answer prayer, because he has promised all these — grace and help, comfort, and answer to prayer — not for the sake of our worthiness, but for the sake of the name and merit of Christ, his Son.

22. Of these two works of the Holy Spirit, comfort and supplication, the prophet ³⁸²⁰Zechariah 12:10 said that God would establish a new dispensation in the kingdom of Christ when he should pour out “the spirit of grace and of supplication.” The spirit he speaks of is the same who assures us that we are God's children, and desires us to cry to him with heartfelt supplications.

23. The Hebrew word “Abba” — which, as the apostle himself interprets it, means “Father” — is the word which the tiny heir lisps in childlike confidence to its father, calling him “Ab, Ab”; for it is the easiest word the child can learn to speak: or, as the old German language has it, almost easier still, “Etha, Etha.” Such simple, childlike words faith uses toward God through the Holy Spirit, but they proceed out of the depth of the heart and, as afterwards stated, “with groanings which cannot be uttered.” Rom 8:26. Especially is this the case when the doubtings of the flesh and the terrors and torments of the devil bring conflict and distress. Man must defend himself against these and cries out: O dear Father! Thou art, indeed, my Father, for thou hast given thine only and beloved Son for me. Thou wilt not be angry with me or disown me. Or: Thou seest my distress and my weakness; do thou help and save me.

*“The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit,
that we are children of God.”*

24. That we are children of God and may confidently regard ourselves as such, we do not learn from ourselves nor from the Law. We learn it from the witness of the Spirit, who, in spite of the Law and of our unworthiness, testifies to it in our weakness and assures us of it. This witness is the experience within ourselves of the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Word, and the knowledge that our experience accords with the Word and the preaching of the Gospel. For thou art surely aware whether or no, when thou art in fear and distress, thou dost obtain comfort from the

Gospel, and art able to overcome thy doubts and terror; to so overcome that thy heart is assured of God's graciousness, and thou no longer fleest from him, but canst cheerfully call upon him in faith, expecting help. Where such a faith exists, consciousness of help must follow. So Saint Paul says, ~~EBR~~ Romans 5:4-5: "Steadfastness worketh approvedness; and approvedness, hope: and hope putteth not to shame."

25. This is the true inward witness by which thou mayest perceive that the Holy Spirit is at work in thee. In addition to this, thou hast also external witnesses and signs: for instance, it is a witness of the Holy Spirit in thee that he gives thee special gifts, acute spiritual understanding, grace and success in thy calling; that thou hast pleasure and delight in God's Word, confessing it before the world at the peril of life and limb; that thou hatest and resistest ungodliness and sin. Those who have not the Holy Spirit are neither willing nor able to do these things. It is true, that even in the Christian, these things are accomplished in great weakness; but the Holy Spirit governs them in their weakness, and strengthens in them this witness, as Paul says again: "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity." ~~EBR~~ Romans 8:26.

HEIRS OF GOD.

"And 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."

26. Here, then, thou hast the high boast, the honor and the glory of the Christian. Leave to the world its splendor, its pride and its honors, which mean nothing else — when it comes to the point — than that they are the children of the devil. But do thou consider the marvel of this, that a poor, miserable sinner should obtain such honor with God as to be called, not a slave nor a servant of God, but a son and an heir of God! Any man, yea the whole world, might well consider it privilege enough to be called one of God's lowest creatures, only so that they might have the honor of being God's property. For who would not wish to belong to such a Lord and Creator? But the apostle declares here that we who believe in Christ shall be not his servants, but his own sons and daughters, his heirs. Who can sufficiently magnify or utter God's grace? It is beyond the power of our expression or comprehension.

27. Yet here our great human weakness discovers itself. If we fully and confidently believed this, then of what should we be afraid or who could do

us harm? He who from the heart can say to God, Thou art my Father and I am thy child — he who can say this can surely bid defiance to all the devils in hell, and joyfully despise the threatenings and ragings of the whole world. For he possesses, in his Father, a Lord before whom all creatures must tremble and without whose will they can do nothing; and he possesses a heritage which no creature can harm, a dominion which none can reduce.

28. But the apostle adds here the words, “if so be that we suffer with him,” to teach us that while we are on earth we must so live as to approve ourselves good, obedient children, who do not obey the flesh, but who, for the sake of this dominion, endure whatever befalls them or causes pain to the flesh. If we do this, then we may well comfort ourselves and with reason rejoice and glory in the fact the apostle declares, that “as many as are led by the Spirit of God,” and do not obey the promptings of the flesh, “these are the sons of God.”

29. O how noble it is in a man not to obey his lusts, but to resist them with a strong faith, even though he suffer for it! To be the child of a mighty and renowned king or emperor means to possess nobility, honor and glory on earth. How much more glorious it would be, could a man truthfully boast that he is the son of one of the highest of the angels! Yet what would be all that compared with one who is named and chosen by God himself, and called his son, the heir of exalted divine majesty? Such sonship and heritage must assuredly imply great and unspeakable glory and riches, and power and honor, above all else that is in heaven or in earth. This very honor, even though we had nothing but the name and fame of it, ought to move us to become the enemies of this sinful life on earth and to strive against it with all our powers, notwithstanding we should have to surrender all for its sake and suffer all things possible for a human being to suffer. But the human heart cannot grasp the greatness of the honor and glory to which we shall be exalted with Christ. It is altogether above our comprehension or imagination. This Paul declares in what follows, in verse 18, where he says: “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward,” as we have heard in the text for the fifth Sunday after Trinity.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~606~~ **1 CORINTHIANS 10:6-13.**

6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. 7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. 8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. 9 Neither let us make trial of the Lord, as some of them made trial, and perished by the serpents. 10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them murmured, and perished by the destroyer. 11 Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. 12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. 13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it.

CARNAL SECURITY AND ITS VICES.

1. Here is a very earnest admonition, a message as severe as Paul ever indited, although he is writing to baptized Christians, who always compose the true Church of Christ. He confronts them with several awful examples selected from the very Church, from Israel the chosen people of God.

2. Paul's occasion and meaning in writing this epistle was the security of the Corinthians. Conscious of their privileged enjoyment of Christ, of baptism and the Sacrament, they thought they lacked nothing and fell to creating sects and schisms among themselves. Forgetting charity, they despised one another. So far from reforming in life, and retrieving their works of iniquity, they became more and more secure, and followed their own inclinations, even allowing a man to have his father's wife. At the

same time they desired to be regarded Christians, and boastfully prided themselves on having received the Gospel from the great apostles. So Paul was impelled to write them a stern letter, dealing them severity such as he nowhere else employs. In fact, it seems almost as if it were going too far to so address Christians; the rebuke might easily have struck weak and tender consciences with intolerable harshness. But, as in the second epistle, seeing how his sternness has startled the Corinthians, he modifies it to some extent, and deals tenderly with the repentant.

3. However, in the striking Scripture examples of the text here, he sufficiently shows the need for such admonition to them who would, after having received grace, become carnally secure and abandon the repentant life.

4. The text should properly include the beginning of this tenth chapter, which is read in the passage for Third Sunday before Lent. He begins with: "I would not, brethren, have you ignorant, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual food; and did all drink the same spiritual drink Howbeit with most of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness." Then follows our text here — "Now these things were our examples."

5. As we said, the admonition is to those already Christians. Paul would have them know that although they are baptized unto Christ, and have received and still enjoy his blessing through grace alone, without their own merit, yet they are under obligation ever to obey him; they are not to be proud and boastful, nor to misuse his grace. Christ desires obedience on our part, though obedience does not justify us in his sight nor merit his grace. For instance, a bride's fidelity to her husband cannot be the merit that purchased his favor when he chose her. She is the bridegroom's own because it pleased him to make her so, even had she been a harlot. But now that he has honored her, he would have her maintain that honor henceforth by her purity; if she fails therein, the bridegroom has the right and power to put her away.

Again, a poor, wretched orphan, a bastard, a foundling, may be adopted as a son by some godly man and made his heir, though not meriting the honor. Now, if in return for such kindness the child becomes disobedient and refractory, he justly may be cut off from the inheritance. Not by the merit of their devotion, as Moses often hinted, did the Jews become the people

of God; they were ever stiff-necked and continually rebelled against him. God, having chosen them and led them out of Egypt, urgently commanded them to serve him and obey his Word. But when they failed to fulfil the commandments; they had to feel the terrific force of his punishment.

ISRAEL'S CARNAL SECURITY A WARNING TO US.

6. Their example Paul here, with great earnestness, holds up to the world as a warning against carnally and confidently presuming upon the grace and goodness of God because we have already received of them. In unmistakable colors the apostle portrays the teaching of this striking and important, this weighty and specific, example. Rightly viewed, there certainly is no greater, more wonderful, story from the creation of the world down to the present time, nothing more marvelous to be found in any book — except that supremely wonderful work, the death and resurrection of the Son of God — than this history of a people led by God's power out of Egypt, through the wilderness and into the promised land. It is filled with the remarkably wonderful works of God, with striking examples of his anger and of his great kindness.

7. Referring to these examples, Paul goes on to imply:

“As Christians and baptized, you should be familiar with them. If you are not, I would not fail to bring them before you for reflection on what befell other people of God, according to the Scripture record. They were our fathers, a noble, intelligent and great company and congregation of men, numbering over six hundred thousands, not counting wives and children.”

They, Paul tells us, were termed, and rightly, the holy people of God. God designed their welfare; and through Moses, their bishop and pope, they had the Word of God, the promise and the Sacrament. Under Moses they were all baptized, when he led them through the sea, and by the cloud, under the shadow of which, sheltered from the heat, they daily pursued their journey. At night a beautiful pillar of fire, an intense lightning-like brilliance, protected them. In addition, their bread came daily from heaven and they drank water from the rock. These providences were their Sacrament, and their sign that God was with them to protect. They believed on the promised Christ, the Son of God, their guide in the wilderness. Thus they were a noble, highly-favored and holy people.

8. But with the great mass of the people, how long did faith last? No longer than until they came into the wilderness. There they began to despise God's Word, to murmur against Moses and against God and to fall into idolatry. Whereupon God vindicated himself among them; of all that great nation which came out from Egypt, of all the illustrious ones who assisted Moses in leading and governing, only two individuals passed from the wilderness into Canaan. Plainly, then, God had no pleasure in the great mass of that host. It did not avail them to be called the people of God, a holy people, a company to whom God had shown marvelous kindness and great wonders; because they refused to believe and obey the Word of God.

The prospect was good when they were so wonderfully and gloriously delivered from their enemies, and had at Mount Sinai received from God the Law and a noble order of worship — their prospect was good for them to enter into the land; they were already at the gate. But even in that auspicious moment they provoked God until he turned them back to wander forty years in the wilderness, where they perished.

9. Their punishment was wholly the result of their odious arrogance in boasting in the face of God's Word, of their privileges as the people of God, upon whom he daily bestowed great kindness. "Do you not recognize," they bragged, "the holiness of this entire congregation, among whom God dwells, daily performing his marvelous wonders?" In their pride and defiance they became stiff-necked and obstinate enough to continually complain against Moses and to oppose him whatever course he took with them. Thus they day by day awakened God's wrath against themselves, forcing him to visit them with many terrible plagues. These failing to humble, he was compelled to remove the entire nation. Many times God would have destroyed them all at once had not Moses prostrated himself before him in their behalf and with earnest entreaty and strong supplication turned aside his wrath. Because of their perversity, Moses was a most wretched and harassed man. "The man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth." ^{NUMB}Numbers 12:3. For he was daily vexed with the defiance, disobedience and opposition of this great company of people; and further, he had to witness and endure for the entire forty years the numerous and awful plagues sent upon his people, his heart being filled with anguish for them. Then, too, it was his continually to withstand God's wrath.

10. Terrible indeed is the thing we learn of this famously great people — God’s own nation, unto whom he reveals himself, to whom God and Christ himself are revealed; a nation God governs and leads by his angels; a people he honors by wonders marvelous beyond anything ever heard on earth of any nation. As Moses says in ~~(BOLD)~~ Deuteronomy 4:7: “What great nation is there, that hath a god so nigh unto them, as Jehovah our God is whensoever we call upon him?” Yet all who came out of Egypt and had witnessed the mighty wonders God wrought among themselves and among their enemies, fell and glaringly sinned; not according to the measure of the mere weakness and imperfection of human nature, but they sinned disobediently and in willful contempt of God. Hardened in unbelief unto insensibility, they brought upon themselves overwhelming punishment.

11. Paul mentions several instances of the sin whereby they merited the wrath of God, to illustrate how they fell from faith and disregarded God’s Word. First, he makes the general assertion that with many of them God was not well pleased. He means to include the great mass of the people; particularly the officials and leaders, the eminent of their number, individuals looked up to as the worthiest and holiest of the congregation, and who actually had wrought great things. Many of these fell into hypocrisy through boasting of the divine name, the divine office and spirit; Korah, for instance, with his faction, including two hundred and fifty princes of the congregation. ~~(BOLD)~~ Numbers 16:1-2. He and his leaders claimed right to the priesthood and government equal with Moses and Aaron, and so ostentatiously and boastfully that only God could say whether they were right. Necessarily God had to make it manifest that he had no pleasure in them; for they boasted until the earth swallowed them up alive, and many who adhered to and upheld them were consumed by fire.

ISRAEL’S VICES IN THE WILDERNESS PUNISHED.

12. Proceeding, Paul recounts the vices which occasioned God’s punishment and overthrow of the people in the wilderness. First, he says, they lusted after evil things. In the second year from the departure, when they actually had come into Canaan, they forgot God’s kindness and wonderful works in their behalf and, becoming dissatisfied, longed to be back in Egypt to sit by the flesh-pots. They murmured against God and Moses until God was forced summarily to stop them with fire from heaven. Many of the people were consumed and a multitude more were smitten

with a great plague while yet they ate of the flesh they craved; therefore the place of the camp was named the “Graves of Lust.” Numbers 11. Such was the reward of their concupiscence, which Paul here aptly explains as “lusting after evil things.”

13. Truly it is but lusting after the wrath and punishment of God when, in forgetfulness of and ingratitude for his grace and goodness we seek something new. The world is coming to be filled with the spirit of concupiscence, for the multitude is weary of the Gospel. Particularly are they dissatisfied with it because it profits not the flesh; contributes not to power, wealth and luxury. Men desire again the old and formal things of popery, notwithstanding they suffered therein extreme oppression and were burdened not less than were the people of Israel in Egypt. But they will eventually have to pay a grievous penalty for their concupiscence.

14. In the third place, the apostle mentions the great sin — idolatry. “Neither be ye idolaters,” he counsels, “as were some of them.” Not simply the lower class of people were guilty in this respect, but the leaders and examples. As they led, the multitude followed. Even Aaron, the brother of Moses, himself high-priest, swayed by the influential ones, yielded and set up the golden calf (⁽¹²³⁴⁾Exodus 32:4) while Moses tarried in the mount. We are astounded that those eminently worthy individuals, having heard God’s Word and seen his wonders liberally displayed, should so soon fall unrestrainedly into the false worship of idolatry, as if they were heathen and possessed not the Word. Much less need we wonder that the blind world always is entangled with idol-worship.

15. Where the Word of God is lacking or disregarded, human wisdom makes-for itself a worship. It will find its pleasure in the thing of its own construction and regard it something to be prized, though it may be imperatively forbidden in God’s Word, perhaps even an abomination before him. Human reason thinks it may handle divine matters according to its own judgment; that God must be pleased with what suits its pleasure. Accordingly, to sanction idolatry, it appropriates the name of the Word of God. The Word must be forced into harmony with the false worship to give the latter an admirable appearance, notwithstanding the worship is essentially the reverse of what it is made to appear. Similarly popery set off its abominations of the mass, of monkery and the worship of saints; and the world in turn seeks to set off that idolatry to make it stand before God’s Word.

Such is the conduct of the eminent Aaron when he makes for the people the golden calf (⁴²³⁶Exodus 32:5-6), an image or sign of their offerings and worship. He builds an altar to it and causes to be proclaimed a feast to the Lord who has led them out of the land of Egypt. They must imitate the worship of the true God, a worship of sincere devotion and honest intention, with their offering, the calf, in the attempt to introduce a refined and ennobling worship.

16. Thereupon follows what is recorded in ⁴²³⁶Exodus 32:6, to which Paul here refers: “And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.” That is, they rejoiced and were well pleased with themselves, content to have performed such worship, and deemed they had done well. Next they proceed to their own pleasure, as if having provided against God’s anger. Thenceforth they would live according to their inclinations, wholly unrestrained and unreprieved by the Word of God; for, as they said, Aaron made the people free.

17. Such is the usual course of idolatry. Refusing to be considered a sin, it presumes to merit grace and boasts of the liberty of the people of God. It continues unrepentant and self-assured, even in the practice of open vice, imagining every offense to be forgiven before God for the sake of its holy worship. Thus have the priestly rabble of popery been doing hitherto; and they still adorn — yes, strengthen and defend — their shameful adultery, unchastity and all vices, with the name of the Church, the holy worship, the mass, and so on.

ISRAEL’S TRIAL OF GOD.

18. In the fourth admonition, the apostle says, “Neither let us make trial of the Lord, as some of them made trial, and perished by the serpents.” This, too, is a heinous sin, as is proven by the terrible punishment. In Numbers 21 we read that after the people had journeyed for forty years in the wilderness and God had brought them through all their difficulties and given them victory over their enemies, as they drew near to the promised land, they became dissatisfied and impatient. They were setting out to go around the land of the Edomites, who refused them a passage through their country, when they began to murmur against God and Moses for leading them out of Egypt. Thereupon God sent among them fiery serpents and they were bitten, a multitude of the people perishing.

Complaining against God is here called tempting him. Men set themselves against the Word of God and blaspheme as if God and his Word were utterly insignificant, because his disposing is not as they desire. Properly speaking, it is tempting God when we not only disbelieve him but oppose him, refusing to accept what he says as true and desiring that our own wisdom rule. That is boasting ourselves against him. Paul says in ^{<402>}1 Corinthians 10:22: “Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?”

19. Such was the conduct of the Jews. Notwithstanding God’s promise to be their God, to remain with them and to preserve them in trouble, if only they would believe in him and trust him; and notwithstanding he proved his care by daily providences expressed as special blessings and strange wonders, yet all these things availed not to save them from murmuring. When the ordering of events accorded not exactly with their wisdom or desire, or when, perhaps, disaster or failure threatened, immediately they began to make outcry against Moses; in other words, against his God-given office and message. “Why have you led us out of Egypt?” they would complain, meaning: “If you bore, as you say you do, the word and command of God and if he truly designed to work such marvels with us, he would not permit us to suffer want like this.” In fact, they could not believe God’s dealings with them were in accord with his promise and design. They insisted that he should, through Moses, perform what they dictated; otherwise he should not be their God.

At the outset, when they entered the wilderness, after having come out of Egypt and having experienced God’s wonderful preservation of them in the Red Sea and his deliverance from their enemy, and having received from him bread and flesh, they immediately began to murmur against Moses and Aaron and to chide them for leading into the wilderness where no water was. “Is Jehovah among us, or not?” they burst forth. ^{<407>}Exodus 17:7. This was, indeed, as our text says, tempting God; for abundantly as his word and his wonders had been revealed to them, they refused to believe unless he should fulfill their desires.

20. And they persisted in so opposing and tempting God as long as they were in the wilderness, unto the fortieth year; to which God testifies when he says to Moses: “Because all those men that have seen my glory, and my signs, which I wrought in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have tempted me these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice,” etc.,

~~01122~~Numbers 14:22. It was in the second year after the departure from Egypt that the Jews murmured about the water, and now in the fortieth year, when they should have been humbled after so long experience, and when they whose lives covered that period ought to have been conscious of the wonderful deliverances they had experienced in not being destroyed with others of their number, but being brought safely to the promised land — now they begin anew to complain with great impatience and bitterness: “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?” Or, in other words: “You often remind us you represent God’s command, and you have promised us great things. This is a fine way you take to lead us into the land when here we have yet farther to journey and are all going to die in the wilderness !”

21. Notice, Paul in speaking of how they tempted God says, “They tempted Christ,” pointing to the fact that the eternal Son of God was from the beginning with his Church and with the people who received from the ancient fathers the promise of his coming in the form of man. They believed as we do that Christ — to use Paul’s words in the beginning — was the rock that followed them.

Therefore the apostle gives us to understand, the point of the Israelites’ insult was directed against faith in Christ, against the promise concerning him. Moses was compelled to hear them protest after this manner: “Yes, you boast about a Messiah who is one with God, and who is with us to lead us; one revealed to the fathers and promised to be born unto us of our flesh and blood, to redeem us and bring relief to all men; a Messiah who for that reason adopts us for his own people, to bring us into the land; but where is he? This is a fine way he relieves us! Is our God one to permit us to wander for forty years in the wilderness until we all perish?”

22. That such sin and blasphemy was the real meaning of their murmurings is indicated by the fact that Moses afterward, in the terrible punishment of the fiery serpents by which the people were bitten and died, erected at God’s command a brazen serpent and whoever looked upon it lived. It was to them a sign of Christ who was to be offered for the salvation of sinners. It taught the people they had blasphemed against God, incurred his wrath and deserved punishment, and therefore in order to be saved from wrath and condemnation, they had no possible alternative but to believe again in Christ.

MURMURING AGAINST GOD OPEN REVOLT.

23. This last point is akin to the one preceding. Paul defines murmuring against God as an open revolt actuated by unbelief in the Word, a manifestation of anger and impatience, an unwillingness to obey when events are not ordered according to the pleasure of flesh and blood, and a readiness instantly to see God as hating and unwilling to help. Just so the Jews persistently behaved, despite Moses' efforts to reconcile. Being also continually punished for their perversity, they ought prudently to have abandoned their murmurings; but they only murmured the more.

24. The apostle's intent in the narration is to warn all who profess to be Christians, or people of God, as we shall hear later. He holds that the example of the Israelites ought deeply to impress us, teaching us to continue in the fear of God and to be conscious of it, and to guard against self-confidence. For God by the punishments mentioned shows forcibly enough to the world that he will not trifle with, nor excuse, our sin — as the world and our own flesh fondly imagine — if we, under cover of his high and sacred name, dare despise and pervert his Word; if we, actuated by presumptuous confidence in our own wisdom, our own holiness and the gifts of God, follow our private opinions, our own judgment and inclinations, and vainly satisfy ourselves with the delusion: "God is not angry with me, one so meritorious, so superior, in his sight."

25. You learn here that God spared none of the great throng from Egypt, among whom were many worthy and eminent individuals, even the progenitors of Christ in the tribe of Judah. He visited terrible punishment upon the distinguished princes and the leaders among the priesthood and other classes, and that in the sight of the entire people among whom he had performed so many marvelous wonders. Having by Moses delivered them from temporal bondage in Egypt, and through his office spiritually baptized and sanctified them; having given Christ, to speak with, lead, defend and help them; having dealt kindly with them as would a father with his children: yet he visits terrible destruction upon these Jews because they have abused his grace and brought forth no fruits of faith, and have become proud, boasting themselves the people of God, children of Abraham and circumcised, sole possessors of the promise of a Messiah, and consequently sure of participating in the kingdom of God and enjoying his grace.

26. Now, as Paul teaches, if terrible judgment and awful punishment came upon these illustrious and good people, let us not be proud and

presumptuous. We are far inferior to them and cannot hope, in these last ages of the world, to know gifts and wonders as great and glorious as they knew. Let us see ourselves mirrored in them and profit by their example, being mindful that while we are privileged to glory in Christ, in the forgiveness of sins and the grace of God, we must be faithfully careful not to lose what we have received and fall into the same condemnation and punishment before God which was the fate of this people. For we have not yet completed our pilgrimage; we have not arrived at the place toward which we journey. We are still on the way and must constantly go forward in the undertaking, in spite of dangers and hindrances that may assail. The work of salvation is indeed begun in us, but as yet is incomplete. We have come out of Egypt and have passed through the Red Sea; that is, have been led out of the devil's dominion into the kingdom of God, through Christian baptism. But we are not yet through the wilderness and in the promised land. There is a possibility of our still wandering from the way, into defeat, and missing salvation.

27. Nothing is lacking on God's part; he has given us his Word and the Sacraments, has bestowed the Spirit, given grace and the necessary gifts, and is willing to help us even further. It rests with ourselves not to fall from grace, not to thrust it from us through unbelief, ingratitude, disobedience and contempt of God's Word. For salvation is not to him who only begins well, but, as Christ says (⁴⁴¹³Matthew 24:13), "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." But the apostle continues:

"Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come."

ISRAEL'S CAREER AN ADMONITION TO INDIVIDUALS.

28. When you read or hear this historical example, the terrible punishment the Jewish people suffered in the wilderness, think not it is an obsolete record and without present significance. The narrative is certainly not written for the dead, but for us who live. It is intended to restrain us, to be a permanent example to the whole Church. For God's dealings with his own flock are always the same, from the beginning of time to the end. Likewise must the people of God, or the Church, be always the same. This history is a portrait of the Church in every age, representing largely its actual life — the vital part; for it shows on what the success of the Church

on earth always depends and how it acts. The record teaches that the Church is at all times wonderfully governed and preserved by God, without human agency, in the midst of manifold temptations, trials, suffering and defeat; that it does not exist as an established government regulated according to human wisdom, with harmony of parts and logical action, but is continually agitated, impaired and weakened in itself by much confusion and numerous penalties; that the great and best part, who bear the name of the Church, fall and bring about a state of things so deplorable God can no longer spare, but is compelled to send punishments in the nature of mutinies and similar disorders, the terrible character of which leaves but a small proportion of the people upright.

29. Now, if such disaster befell the nation selected of God, chosen from the first as his people, among whom he performed works marvelous and manifest beyond anything ever known since, what better thing may we expect for ourselves? Indeed, how much greater the danger threatening us; how much reason we have to take heed that the same fate, or worse, overtake not ourselves !

With reference to the things chronicled in our text, Paul tells us: "They were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come." That is, we are now in the last and most evil of days, a time bringing many awful dangers and severe punishments. It is foretold in the Scriptures, predicted by Christ and the apostles, that awful and distressing times will come, when there shall be wide wanderings from the true faith and sad desolations of the Church. And, alas, we see the prophecies only too painfully fulfilled in past heresy, and later in Mohammedanism and the papacy.

30. The era constituting the "last time" began with the apostles. The Christians living since Christ's ascension constitute the people of the latter times, the little company left for heaven; and we gentiles, amidst the innumerable multitude of the ungodly generation in the wide world, must experience worse calamities than befell the Jews, who lived under the law of Moses and the Word of God, under an admirable external discipline and a well-regulated government. Yet even in this final age so near the end of time, when we should be occupied with proclaiming the Gospel everywhere, the great multitude are chiefly employed with boasting their Christian name. We see how extravagantly the Pope extols his church,

teaching that outside its pale no Christians are to be found on earth, and that the entire world must regard him as the head of the Church.

31. True, his subjects were baptized unto Christ, called to the kingdom of God and granted the Sacrament and the name of Christ. But how do they conduct themselves? Under that superior name and honor, they suppress Christ's Word and his kingdom. For more than a thousand years now they have desolated the Church, and to this hour most deplorably persecute it. On the other hand, great countries, vast kingdoms, claiming to be Christian but disregarding the true doctrine of faith, are punished by the Turk's desolating hand, and instead of the incense of Christianity, with them is the revolting odor of Mohammed's faith.

32. Great and terrible was the punishment of the Jewish people. Seemingly no disaster could befall man more awful than overtook them in the wilderness. Yet it was physical punishment, and although many, through unbelief and contempt of God, fell and incurred everlasting condemnation, still the Word of God remained with a remnant — Moses and the true Church. But the punishment of this last age is infinitely more awful, for God permits the pure doctrine to be lost, and sends strong delusions, that they who receive not the truth nor love it shall believe falsehood and be eternally lost. ^{<3120>}2 Thessalonians 2:10. Such has been our reward; we have only too terribly suffered punishment. And if we are not more thankful for the grace God extends in his Word — a last gleam of light, on the point of extinction — we shall meet with retribution even more appalling.

“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

33. Here is summed up the teaching of the above examples. The sermon is directed against the self-confident. Some there were among the Christian Corinthians who boasted they were disciples of the great apostles, and who had even received the Holy Spirit, but who stirred up sects and desired to be commended in all their acts. To these Paul would say: “No, dear brother, be not too secure, not too sure where you stand. When you think you stand most firmly you are perhaps nearest to falling, and you may fall too far to rise again. They of the wilderness were worthy people and began well, doing great deeds, yet they fell deplorably and were destroyed. Therefore, be cautious and suffer not the devil to deceive you. You will need to be vigilant, for you are in the flesh, which always strives against the spirit; and you have the devil for enemy, and dangers and difficulties beset you on all sides. Be careful lest you lose what you have received. You have

only made a beginning; the end is yet to be attained.” So we must be wary and steadfast, that we may, as Paul has it, work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. ^{<31812>}Philippians 2:12.

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear [such as is common to man]: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.”

34. Paul’s meaning is: “I must not terrify you too much. I would in a measure comfort you. So far you have had no temptations greater than flesh and blood offer. They have risen among yourselves — one holding another in contempt, one doing another injustice; allowing adulteries and other evils to creep in, which things are indeed not right nor decent. You must resolve to reform in these things lest worse error befall you. For should Satan get hold of you in earnest with his false doctrine and spiritual delusions, his strong temptations of the soul — contempt of God, for instance — such as assailed Peter and many others of the saints, you could not stand. You are yet weak; you are new and untried Christians. Then thank God who gives you strength to bear your present temptations; who, to retain you, presents what is best for you, admonishing you, through his Word, to be on your guard against falling yet deeper into temptation.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~4021~~ **1 CORINTHIANS 12:1-11.**

1. Now, concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. 2 Ye know that when ye were Gentiles ye were led away unto those dumb idols, howsoever ye might be led. 3 Wherefore I make known unto you, that no man speaking in the Spirit of God saith, Jesus is anathema [accursed], and no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit. 4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal. 8 For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit: 9 to another faith, in the same Spirit; and to another gifts of healings, in the one Spirit; 10 and to another workings of miracles; and to another prophecy; and to another discernings of spirits: to another divers kinds of tongues; and to another the interpretation of tongues: 11 but all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as he will.

SPIRITUAL COUNSEL FOR CHURCH OFFICERS.

1. This epistle selection treats of spiritual things, things which chiefly pertain to the office of the ministry and concern the Church authorities. Paul instructs how those in office should employ their gifts for the benefit of one another and thus further the unity and advancement of the Churches. Inharmony is a deplorable offense in the case of Christians, putting them in the worst possible light, and making it impossible for them to steer clear of factions. Divisions are an offense to the world's wisest and best, who cry out, "If the Christians' doctrine were true, they would preserve unity among themselves, but as it is they envy and slander and

devour one another.” For, though the world carries its own great beam in its eye, it cannot refrain from judging us for our mote, and thus exalting itself as if it were pure and beautiful.

PERFECT HARMONY NOT TO BE EXPECTED.

2. Well, we cannot altogether prevent inharmony in the Church. Paul says (~~4:118~~ 1 Corinthians 11:19), “For there must be also factions among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest among you.” Wherever the Word of God has a foothold, there the devil will be. By the agency of his factions he will always build his taverns and kitchens beside God’s house. So he did at first, in Paradise. In the family of Adam he entrenched himself, establishing there his church. And such has been his practice ever since, and doubtless will ever be. He who takes offense at differences in the Church, who when he sees any inharmony at once concludes there is no Church there, will in the end miss both the Church and Christ. You will never find any congregation of such purity that all its members are unanimous on every point of belief and teaching and all live in perfect harmony.

3. Paul had experience in this matter in the case of the beautiful and famed Church at Corinth in Achaia, which he himself planted and where he taught two years. Soon after his departure they began to disagree about their preachers and to attach themselves to certain ones — some to Paul, some to Peter, some to Apollos. Though these had all taught correctly, though they had been unanimous in their doctrine, yet men would cleave to a certain one because he was more or differently gifted than the others, could speak better, or was more attractive in personal appearance. And among the ministers of the Church, if one had a special gift or office, he thought he ought to be a little better and a little greater than the others. Necessarily, from such division and inharmony, grew hatred, strife and jealousy, resulting in great injury and disorder to the Church.

4. We must, then, so far as possible, guard against this fatal evil, though we cannot altogether keep it out of the Church. Were we to offer no resistance at all, the devil would seize all authority and bring every element into discord. But when we resist Satan, God will continue to extend his grace and favor, and some fruit and improvement will follow. Even were it not possible for us to accomplish anything, yet as faithful ministers we must

not keep silent if we would not be regarded indolent hirelings who flee when the wolf comes. See ~~<BOLD>~~John 10:12.

5. Such is the tenor of this text from Paul. He begins by preaching on spiritual gifts and admonishing the Corinthians how to conduct themselves in respect to them. In proportion to the greatness and excellence of the gifts are flesh and blood inclined to discord and to coveting personal honor. Let one have a good understanding of the Scriptures and be able to explain them, or let him have the power to work miracles, and he will soon begin to have an extravagantly good opinion of himself, deeming himself worthy the honor of all men, desiring the multitude to follow only him, and positively refusing to regard anyone his equal. He will seek to create something new in doctrine, to change the old order, as if he could introduce something better than others, who must be infinitely below him or at least his inferiors.

6. The same thing has taken place in our day — and will continue to take place — with respect to the Gospel. But through the grace of God that Gospel is brought to light again, and rightly instructs and harmonizes the people. The devil, unable to rest, had to rouse his factious rabble, his selfish souls, who desired the name of being superior and inspired people, a people who could preach, write and explain the Scriptures better than others; for they had learned a little from us. They conceded that the Gospel had indeed made a beginning, had somewhat purified ecclesiastical doctrine, but claimed it had not gone far enough; it was necessary that greater improvement be made — Church doctrine must be brought to far greater perfection. But as Paul says (~~<KRII>~~1 Corinthians 3:11), they could, with their doctrine, lay no other foundation, could preach no other Christ, than the Christ of the Gospel. Nevertheless, they pretended to teach something better and higher. They hindered and perverted the true doctrine. Their work could not be called building up the faith, but was rather breaking up and destroying its foundation and leading the people back into error and blindness. So Paul begins his admonition in these words:

“Ye know that when ye were Gentiles ye were led away unto those dumb idols, howsoever ye might be led.”

7. Paul reminds the Corinthians of their manner of life before they became Christians, for he would have them pause to think that their gifts, past and present, are not of their own procuring, nor are any gifts bestowed upon

them because of merit on their part. It is his intent to restrain them from pride in their gifts and from disputations concerning them; to keep them from divisions and from pretending to teach and introduce into the Church something new and better. But at the same time he deals a blow to those who take offense at inharmony among Christians.

8. “Recall, all of you,” Paul would say, “your manner of life before you came to Christ. What were you? Mere darkened heathen, having no knowledge of God but suffering yourselves blindly to be led by anyone who should say aught to you of God. All your devotion was but a discordant worship. Each one — even the child in the cradle, the infant at the mother’s breast — must find his own idol wherever he might turn.” St. Augustine tells us that the city of Rome alone had more than four hundred gods, and that it erected a church for all the gods in the world, which building still stands — the Pantheon.

“These superstitions,” Paul’s word imply, “you followed as you were led; you flocked after them, praying and sacrificing, hanging your hearts upon dumb idols which could not teach and advise you, could not comfort, relieve or help you. In return for your devotion you obtained only the privilege of being a blind, wretched, divided, miserable people, unable to fortify yourselves against any error, and allowing yourselves to be distracted by the advocate of any doctrine. You were like a flock of helpless sheep scattered by wolves.

9. “But now you have been turned from that manifold idolatry to the one true worship and have been enlightened by God’s Word. More than that, in Christ have been bestowed upon you great and glorious gifts — discerning of the Scriptures, diversities of tongues, power to work miracles — things impossible to the world. It is unmistakably evident that you embrace the true God, who does not, like dumb idols, leave you to wander in the error of your own speculations, uncounseled by the Word; a living God, who speaks to you that you may know what to expect from him, and works among you publicly and visibly.

“Therefore, it is not for you to make divisions among yourselves after the manner of the heathen as you see in the great Babel confusion and divisions of the world, where no one agrees with another, where one runs to this his idol and another to that, each claiming superiority for his own. Knowing that you all embrace the

one true God and his Word, you are to hold together in one faith and one mind, not disagreeing among yourselves as if you had a variety of gods, of faiths, of baptisms, spirits and salvations.”

CAVILERS THEMSELVES LED ASTRAY.

10. Paul speaks with particular plainness to the faultfinding and insolent cavilers against Christians and to other factious leaders when he says, “Ye were led away unto those dumb idols, howsoever ye might be led.” This class peremptorily judge and criticise the life and doctrine of the Church because they see therein a measure of defects, and even some divisions and disagreements; notwithstanding the fact is plainly evident to them that the Church possesses the Word of God in purity, a knowledge of Christ, an illumined understanding of God’s will and his grace, and true comfort for all distress of conscience, and that, in addition to all these, the Holy Spirit manifestly operates with them. At the same time, these same uncalled-for and self-constituted critics would never have been able to say anything about the Christian religion had they not witnessed that religion in the little company of Christians who have the Word of God and the Spirit’s gifts.

11. These fault-finders were individuals who, undoubtedly to a greater extent than others, suffered themselves to be blindly led in whatever way was pointed out, and who gave credence to what was taught and preached to them concerning the way to serve God, yet who all the time were but worshipers of dumb idols, possessing not the Word of God and having no witness to the truth of their faith and their works. Each believed and followed the devices of his own imagination or the popular choice. No man was able to teach anything certain and steadfast, anything to give the heart satisfaction and perfect security. They continually changed from one thing to another, accepting every new thing presented as real worship and true doctrine.

12. And the world, ever from the beginning, has had naught but dumb idols in the countless forms of worship offered to the numerous gods — gods which never existed, but of which images were made and to which divine honors were shown. Worship has been rendered to the mere names of misfortune, disaster and disease, of all sorts; yes, to insects, and to garlic and onions even. Yet, in the practice of all this idolatry, supposed to be evidence of great holiness, each one sacrificing to the idol of his choice — in it all no one could have the assurance of being heard and answered by

his god. Men had no word or sign of the divine will or work; they possessed naught but a vain dream and delusion of the human imagination; man devised and made his own idols.

13. And what did we under the papacy but walk blindly? We suffered ourselves to be led just as we were directed by the names of God and the saints. I was myself a pious monk and priest, holding mass daily, wherein I worshipped St. Barbara, St. Anna, St. Christopher and others — more saints than the calendar mentions, some of whom no one knew anything about. I had no knowledge of Christ, I knew not why I should find comfort in him nor what I should expect of him. I was as much afraid of him as of the devil himself, regarding him more a stern Judge than a Savior. How many shameful pilgrimages were made to dead idols of wood and stone, images of Mary and of the saints! How many were the pilgrimages to the graves of the dead, and to bones called “holy relics”! These relics were mere open deception, devised by shameless impostors; yet such worship was established by popes and bishops, and indulgences granted therefor.

14. How many new saints, new brotherhoods, new psalms to Mary, and new rosaries and crowns did the monks daily invent! In fact, everything each individual monk might dream of had to be a special form of worship, and no one inquired whether or not it was at all authorized by God’s Word. When we had done all, we were uncertain that we had pleased God. What was this sort of worship but a worship of dumb idols in the place of the living God — idols which could not talk with us and could not give any definite information or comfort, but left the people fettered and ruined with eternal doubts?

FAITH IN THE ONE CHRIST PRODUCTIVE OF UNITY.

15. But Christians, as Paul says, have not a dead and dumb god, for which the Lord be praised! Nor will we countenance such idols. We have a living, speaking God, who gives us his infallible Word. We know how he is disposed toward us and what we may expect from him; namely: through faith in Christ we have forgiveness of sins and are his beloved children; and as evidence of acceptance with God, we have baptism and the Holy Supper, the office and gifts of the Holy Spirit, by which he works in our hearts. We know that in the faith of Christ our works and lives are pleasing to God, and that he will hear and help when in our distress and weakness we cry unto him.

16. Where this confidence obtains, where hearts enjoy such faith, there will be unity in the Church; for verily no one then will allow himself to be led into the manifold doctrines of insensible idols. But dissensions, sects and divisions are sure signs that the true doctrine is either ignored or misunderstood, men thus being left in a condition to be “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine,” as Paul says (Eph 4, 14); which is indisputably the case with these same schismatics who condemn the Church and her doctrines because of some discordant ones.

The schismatics show by their very instability that they do not embrace the true, uniform and established doctrine, nor can exhibit any substitute for it. They refuse to see that in cases where the Christian doctrine does not obtain, there is only blindness, distraction and confusion, and warring factions and sects, none agreeing with another, each claiming to be better than the other. Numerous have been the sects of monks, and of saints of the Pope and his god the devil, no two of which agreed. Each class regarded its own whims and speculations, and claimed to be holier than the others. The Pope, however, gave validity to them all, granting great indulgence to these factious fraternities. And I am not saying anything of other discords in the papacy — among the monasteries and in the parishes, and between these and the cloisters everywhere, perpetual quarreling, rioting and bitter contention. Such is inevitably the case when righteousness and divine worship are made to consist in external self-devised works and forms, for then each individual, pleased with his own ideas, thinks his way right; under such circumstances, there can never be unanimity of opinion as to what is right and the best.

17. “From these numerous sources of disunion and idolatry,” Paul would say to the Corinthians, “you are now delivered. You know you embrace the real Word of God, the true faith. You worship one God, one Lord, and enjoy the same grace, the same Spirit, the same salvation. You need not seek other forms and ceremonies as essential to salvation — wearing a white or a gray cowl, refraining from this or that food, forbearing to touch certain things. No diversity of external service, of persons, offices and conditions, destroys the unity in Christ.

“But take heed to continue in unity, to hold fast to it.

Unquestionably, you should be made wiser by the experience you have had with error; in the future you ought to be prudent, and watchful against being allured from the unity of this settled mind

and true faith into your former blindness again. But so it will certainly befall you if you forget such grace and seek your own honor and praise more than the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and his gifts, and come to despise one another and to conduct yourselves as if you had many and not the same God, the same Christ, the same Spirit. God's gifts cannot be different from, but must be one with his nature, and hence he cannot give to one a better Gospel or a different baptism from that given another."

In short, Paul teaches there must be unity in Christ, otherwise we have no Christ, no God and Holy Spirit, no grace nor salvation; as the next verse emphasizes.

"Wherefore I make known unto you that no man speaking in the Spirit of God saith, Jesus is anathema [callesh Jesus accursed]; and no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit."

18. "Why make divisions and differences," Paul inquires, "in the doctrine and faith of the Church, which rests wholly upon the one Christ? In him you are to be one if you are Christians at all; you must harmoniously praise him, according to your individual gifts. No one can possibly possess the Holy Spirit if he does not regard Christ as the Lord, much less if he call him accursed. Destroy the foundation and you destroy all; there will be no God, no Spirit, and all your claims, teaching and works are naught. You must recognize and be governed by the fact that either Christ must be received and believed in as the one true Lord, and praised and glorified as such, or else he will be cursed; between these alternatives is no medium."

THE SPIRIT, THE TEST OF THE TRUE TEACHER.

It is easy, then, to judge the doctrine of every official teacher of the Christian Church. No one need resort to faction, no one need gaze hither and thither in uncertainty and hesitate as to which gift or which person is most to be regarded. We are to make the doctrine of this verse the standard and authority as to what and how we preach concerning Christ. He who speaks by inspiration of the Holy Spirit certainly will not curse Christ; he will glorify and praise him. So doing, he surely will not teach error, or give occasion for divisions. If his teaching is not to the glory of God, you may safely conclude that he is not true, not inspired by the Holy Spirit.

19. Thus Paul rejects the glorying and boasting of the sects over their offices and gifts — they who pretend to be filled with the Spirit and to teach the people correctly, and who make out that Paul and other teachers are of no consequence. Themselves the chief of apostles, the people must hear them and accept their baptism. More than that, they demand a higher attainment in the Spirit for Gospel ministers, deeming faith, the Sacrament and the outward office not sufficient.

But Paul says: “Boast as you will about the great measure of the Spirit you possess, it is certain that the Spirit-inspired teacher will not curse Christ.” In other words, such boasting of the Spirit will not answer the purpose. What you believe and teach concerning Christ must receive attention. You are either reproaching and cursing Jesus, or praising him and owning him your Lord. If your preaching and teaching fail to point to Christ, something else being offered, and you nevertheless boast of the Spirit, you are already judged: the spirit you boast is not the Holy Spirit, not the true Spirit, but a false one. To it we are not to listen. Rather we are to condemn it to the abyss of hell, as Paul declares (~~8008~~ Galatians 1:8), saying: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any Gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema.”

20. When Paul here speaks of calling Jesus accursed, he does not only have reference to openly blaspheming or cursing Christ’s name or person after the manner of heathen and of ungodly Jews; with them Paul has nothing to do here, nor are the Corinthians supposed to be of that character. Paul refers rather to the Christian who, though boasting of the Holy Spirit, does not preach Christ as the ground of our salvation as he should, but, neglecting this truth, points the soul away to something else, pretending that this substitute is of the Holy Spirit and is something better and more essential than the common doctrine of the Gospel.

All such teachers are in reality simply guilty of condemning, reproaching and cursing Christ, though themselves bearing and boasting that name. To slight Christ’s Word and ministry, and exalt in their stead other things as mediums for obtaining the Holy Spirit and eternal life, or at least as being equally efficacious and essential — what is this but scorning Christ and making him of no consequence? Indeed, according to ~~8006~~ Hebrews 6:6 and 10:29, it is crucifying the Son of God afresh, and treading under foot his blood.

21. Christ himself explains the office and ministry of the Holy Spirit — what he is to teach in the Church — saying (~~John~~ John 15:26), “He shall bear witness of me.” Again (~~John~~ John 16:14): “He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you.” The tongue of a minister of Christ — the language he employs — must be of that simplicity which preaches naught but Christ. If he is to testify of the Savior and glorify him, he cannot present other things whereby Christ would be ignored and robbed of his glory. He who does so, certainly is not inspired by the Holy Spirit, even though he possess great gifts and be called a teacher, a bishop, a pope, a council, an apostle even — yes, an angel from heaven. There were among the Corinthians some who thus neglected to preach only Christ, and presented instead the apostles, making choice of them — one Cephas, another Apollos and a third Paul.

And just so our monks have done. They have in a way highly extolled Jesus, have in words honored and worshiped his name and used it to clothe all their lying nonsense and idolatry. For instance, they exalt Mary as the mother of Jesus and Anna as his grandmother. But they have thus torn men’s hearts away from Christ, turning over to Mary and the saints the honor due him alone, and teaching the people to invoke these as mediators and intercessors having power to protect us in the hour of death. This is substituting dumb idols for Christ. No saint has ever taught such things; still less does the Word of God enjoin them. Thus the monks really curse and insult Christ.

22. The Pope, throughout his whole administration, has been guilty of such insult to Christ, notwithstanding his boast that his kingdom represents the Christian Church, that he truly possesses the Holy Spirit and that his decrees and ordinances must be respected. Nothing can dissuade the Papists from their practice. They ever boast of being led by the Spirit, yet their vaunting is mere malediction, not only of Christ in person, but of his Word and his sacraments. For they openly condemn, and denounce as heresy, the doctrine of the Gospel, which Gospel assures us that to Christ alone we owe the unmerited forgiveness of our sins; they condemn also the use of the sacraments according to Christ’s command and institution. And they destroy the people who thus offend them.

The fact is, the Pope has in our doctrine nothing to curse but Jesus Christ, its foundation and principle, expressed by his Word and sacraments. The same is true of other factions — the Anabaptists and similar sects. What

else do they but slander baptism and the Lord's Supper when they pretend that the external Word and outward sacraments do not benefit the soul, that the Spirit alone can do that? But in these matters you have Paul's sure word of judgment to strengthen your faith. You may be assured that the factions of the Pope and other sects are not, as they boast, the Church of Christ, but accursed schisms of the devil. The true Church, the righteous bride of Christ, certainly will not curse him nor persecute his Word. Let no one be moved by hearing men loudly boast about Christ after the manner of the false apostles who called themselves disciples of the true apostles of Jesus, and claimed that certain of their number had even seen Christ in person. The Savior himself warns us against this class when he says (⁽⁴²⁵⁾Matthew 25:5, 24), "Many shall come in my name.. and shall show wonders"; and (⁽⁴⁰²⁾Matthew 7:21), "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

HOLY SPIRIT ALONE GIVES ASSURANCE.

23. Paul has the same thought here when he says, "No man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit." To call Jesus "Lord" is to confess one's self his servant and to seek his honor alone; to act as his messenger or the bearer of his Word and command. Paul's reference here is chiefly to the office representative of Christ and bearing his Word. Where the office answers these conditions and points to Christ as the Lord, it is truly the message of the Holy Spirit, even though the occupant of the office does not in his own person possess the Spirit; the office itself is essentially the Holy Spirit. Hypocrisy and invention have no place here. One must proceed in sincerity if he would be certain he is Christ's minister, or apostle, and really handles his Word. Only the inspiration of the Holy Spirit can give one this assurance.

24. All Christians — each in his own work or sphere — equally may call Christ "Lord." One may be assured he serves Christ if he can call him "Lord," for only by the Holy Spirit is he enabled to do that. Let him try for a single day — from morning until evening — whether or no he can truly say at all times that he is the servant of God and of Christ in what he does. When delivering a sermon or listening to one, when baptizing a child or bringing a child to baptism, when pursuing your daily home duties, ask yourself if the act is attended by such faith that you can, without misgiving and not hypocritically nor mechanically, boast — and if necessary die by your word — that you serve and please Christ therein. This is calling Christ

“Lord.” Unquestionably you will often feel your heart doubting and trembling over the matter.

25. In the papacy we were altogether hindered from feeling thus confident — yes, frightened from it by accursed scepticism. No one could — no one dared — say, “I know I am a servant, a bondsman, of Christ, and that my conduct pleases him.” Flesh and blood are too weak to obtain this glorious confidence; the Holy Spirit is essential. Reason and our own hearts cry out in protest: “Alas, I am far too evil and unworthy! How could I be proud and presumptuous enough to boast myself the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ? I might if I were as holy as St. Peter, St. Paul and others.”

26. I used often to wonder that St. Ambrose was so bold as, in his letters, to call himself a servant of Jesus Christ. I supposed we all ought to be terrified at thoughts of this kind, and that none but the apostles might boast of such honor. But the fact is, we must all say to Christ: “Thou art my Lord and I am thy servant; for I believe on thee and aspire to be with thee and all the faithful and to possess thy Word and Sacrament.” Otherwise Christ will not acknowledge us.

CHRISTIANS TO GIVE ALL GLORY TO GOD.

It is written (⁴⁰⁴⁰Matthew 4:10) — indeed, it is the first commandment — “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” There Christ requires of us, under the penalty of forfeiting eternal life, to honor him as our Lord and so to regulate our lives that we shall know we serve him. Peter also teaches (⁴⁰⁴¹1 Peter 4:11) that all the Christian’s words and deeds should be regarded not as his own, but as God’s. The word and the act are to be of the ability which God gives, that in it all God may be glorified. Of necessity this condition can obtain only through the Holy Spirit.

27. In this point — the glorification of Christ — do the true Christians distinguish themselves from false Christians, hypocrites and factious spirits, who likewise triumphantly boast of the Spirit and of their divine office. But the vanity of their boasting is evident from the fact that they do not hold to the doctrine that glorifies Christ, but preach that which leads to other evils and deceives; yes, which condemns and persecutes the right doctrine and the true faith of Christ. Further evidence of the emptiness of their boasting is apparent in the fact that they have no conscious testimony that they serve Christ, nor can their followers give assurance on the same point. You have

here the clear sentence of Paul declaring this class devoid of the Holy Spirit and thus separated from the true Church and from Christians. He exhorts us to be on our guard against them, and would bring Christians together in one faith and under one Lord and Spirit. Now he teaches how to employ rightly the manifold gifts of a united Church for the general benefit of its members.

“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.”

28. “In former time, when you were heathen, you followed many kinds of idolatrous worship, many doctrines and spirits; but it was only a divided religion, and representative of blindness and error. Now, however, you possess various beautiful divine gifts and offices. These are mutually related and all emanate, not from man’s reason or faculties, but from the one true God. They are his work — the expression of his power. Notwithstanding the dissimilarity of gifts, offices and works, of a certain order in one and otherwise in another, many and few, great and small, weak and strong — notwithstanding all, we are not to divide the Spirit, God and faith; we are not to create factions, exalting this individual or that one solely because of his gifts, and despising others. All gifts are direct from one God, one Lord, one Spirit, and to serve the same purpose — to bring men to the knowledge of the one God and to build up the Church in the unity of faith. Therefore, you are united in the one doctrine, your object being to serve God and the Church in a harmonious way.” This verse is briefly the substance of all that follows in the text.

THE TRINITY.

29. Paul presents three different points: “Diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit ;” “diversities of administrations, and the same Lord;” “diversities of workings, but the same God.” Unquestionably, Paul touches the article of faith concerning the Trinity, or three persons in the Divine Essence, and shows that both Christ and the Holy Spirit are true God and yet different in person from the Father and from each other. He teaches the same elsewhere (~~CHR~~1 Corinthians 8:5-6), saying: “For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or on earth; as there are gods many, and lords many; yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him.”

30. In the text before us, the apostle likewise distinguishes the three — one God, one Lord, one Spirit. He assigns to each the particular operation whereby he manifests himself. One is God the Father, and from him as the origin and first person emanates all power. Another is the Lord, Christ the Son of God, who as the head of the Church appoints all offices. The third is the Spirit, who produces and dispenses all gifts in the Church. Yet all three are of one divine, almighty and eternal essence. They are of the same name, and are truly one since God must be an indivisible essence.

To each individual is attributed only the characteristics of the Divine Majesty. As he who is the source of all operative power in the Church and in the entire creation is true God; so also must the Lord who appoints all offices, and the Spirit who confers all gifts, be true God. No creature is able to impart spiritual offices and gifts; that is impossible to any but God. These three — God, Lord and Spirit — are not Gods of unlike nature, but one in divine essence. The Lord is no other God than God the Father; and the Spirit is none other than God and the Lord. But more on this topic elsewhere.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS SPECIFIED.

31. The names and nature of the spiritual gifts, the apostle here specifies. He names wisdom, knowledge, prophecy, power to discern spirits, capacity to speak with tongues and to interpret, extraordinary gifts of faith, and power to work miracles. “The word of wisdom” is the doctrine which teaches a knowledge of God, revealing his will, counsel and design. It embraces every article of belief and justification. The world knows nothing of this loftiest, most exalted gift of the Spirit.

THE WORD OF KNOWLEDGE.

The “word of knowledge” also teaches of the outward life and interests of the Christian: how we are to conduct ourselves toward all others, making a profitable use of the Gospel doctrine according as necessity of time and person demands; it teaches us the wisest course toward the weak and the strong, the timid and the obstinate.

THE GIFT OF PROPHECY.

The gift of prophecy is the ability to rightly interpret and explain the Scriptures, and powerfully to reveal therefrom the doctrine of faith and the

overthrow of false doctrine. The gift of prophecy includes, further, the ability to employ the Scriptures for admonition and reproof, for imparting strength and comfort, by pointing out, on the one hand, the certainty of future indignation, vengeance and punishment for the unbelieving and disobedient, and on the other hand presenting divine aid and reward to godly believers. Thus did the prophets with the Word of God, both the Law and the promises.

THE GIFT OF FAITH.

32. Paul is making mention of gifts not common to all. Only to certain ones are they given, and the gifts in themselves are unlike. “To another faith,” he says, “to another workings of miracles, and to another prophecy.” In “faith” here the reference is not to ordinary faith in Christ which brings justification before God and forgiveness of sin; such faith is essentially the property of every Christian, even if they do not possess the particular gifts here enumerated. Paul is speaking of a particular virtue or power of the Spirit operating in the Church, whereby certain ones can effect great and glorious things by reason of their remarkable and confident courage; as instanced in Paul’s words later on (~~413D~~ 1 Corinthians 13:2), “If I have all faith, so as to remove mountains.”

To work such wonders, a very strong and sure faith is certainly necessary. An unwavering, vigorous, courageous faith may accomplish a special work in the name and power of Christ although the worker may not himself be truly repentant nor possess the right kind of faith to secure forgiveness of sins and grace in Christ. He may be a hypocrite, a false saint. Christ says (~~4172~~ Matthew 7:22), “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works?” It is true that such gifts are exercised, such works performed, in the name of Christ, and that the gifts are granted to none but individuals in the Church of Christ, and yet the possessor may not be altogether righteous, may even be a false Christian. For the effects wrought do not emanate from the individual but from the office he represents, being the operation of the Spirit given in behalf of the Church. Thus, as occupants of the office and by virtue of the Church, these persons perform many and great works, benefiting not themselves but others.

33. Paul says of all these, “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit,” by way of admonishing us against creating sects. The Spirit is

equally effective through him whose gifts are few and less significant and through him of remarkable gifts. And as with gifts, so it is with workings and ministrations.

MEANING OF “WORKINGS.”

34. The term “workings,” or operations, has reference to remarkable works of God wrought through certain individuals in an exceptional way. For instance, he grants to Paul a ministerial office of unusual influence: Paul is permitted to convert more souls than other apostles, to perform more wonders and accomplish more. He says himself (~~4650~~ 1 Corinthians 15:10) that by the grace of God he labored more abundantly than all.

MEANING OF “ADMINISTRATIONS.”

35. The meaning of “administrations” is easily apparent. Office is an ordained and essential feature of every government. It represents various duties imposed and commanded by sovereign authority. It may have reference to the duties enjoined upon a society collectively, in the service of others. There are various offices in the Church; for instance, one individual is an apostle, another an evangelist, another a teacher, as Paul mentions in ~~4041~~ Ephesians 4:11. And as he says in ~~4648~~ 1 Corinthians 14:26 and also hints in this text, the office of one is to read the Scriptures in different languages, of another to interpret and explain. So it was ordained in the Church at that time, and similarly today are ordained certain offices — of pastors, preachers, deacons or priests, their duties being to hear confessions, to administer the Sacrament, and so on.

36. Not every Christian is obliged, nor is able, to execute such duties; only upon certain ones are they enjoined. “Administrations” differ from what Paul terms “workings” and gifts. There have ever been many Christians who, though possessing the Holy Spirit, were not “administrators;” for instance, virgins and wives — Agnes Anastasia and others — and martyrs, many of whom wrought miracles and had other gifts. True, both gifts and workings are imparted chiefly for the execution of Christian duties. It is essential here, especially in the superior office of preaching, that the occupant be peculiarly qualified for the place. The preacher must be able to understand and explain the Scriptures and be familiar with the languages. It is necessary to the effectiveness of his labors that he be accompanied by God’s operative power. Thus the three — gifts, workings, administrations

are harmonious features of one divine government in the Church; Christ is the Lord, who regulates and maintains the offices, while God works and the Holy Spirit bestows his gifts.

DIVERSITY OF GIFTS NO REASON FOR SECTS.

37. As we said, offices are many and varied, even as one gift is greater than another, an apostle, for instance, is superior to a teacher or expounder, while the office of a baptizer is inferior to that of a preacher. Yet notwithstanding, we are to remember, Paul says, that all are ordained of the same Lord, and the occupant of a superior office is not to consider himself any better by reason of his position and to despise others. He must bear in mind that all serve the same Lord, the least as well as the greatest, and consequently the holder of the inferior office is not necessarily inferior with his Lord, nor the executor of the higher office greater with him. Christ is ever Lord of all; one belongs as much to his realm as another. Therefore he will have no divisions and sects over this point; rather he wills that such diversity of gifts and offices be promotive of unity.

38. When I preach and you listen, we are not exercising the same gift and office, yet you as truly serve Christ by listening as I by preaching. If you preach, explain the Scriptures, baptize, comfort or aught else, through you works the same Christ who works through another. All is wrought in obedience to the order of him who commands me to hear his Word as well as to preach to you, and to exercise the same faith and Spirit with you. Thus all alike praise the one Lord. You say, "The Word I hear is the true Word of God," and I as a preacher prove and declare the very same thing. When I baptize, administer the Sacrament or absolve, and you accept my administrations, we are both engaged in the service of the same Lord and harmoniously execute his command. You and I, however, so far as office and gifts are considered, may be of different capacities.

39. A peculiarity of the Christian profession, and the chief point of distinction between Christians and the heathen, is their recognition of the fact that workings, offices and gifts are of God, Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. The world does not perceive this truth, though it, too, enjoys the gifts of God. For God remembers all his creatures, though, like swine that enter the trough on all fours with no thought but of eating and rooting therein, not even lifting their eyes, they cannot raise their thoughts to the source of all their good and have not a thought as to whom they should

thank for it. He who is not a Christian comes before God in an insensible and beastly attitude. The world is but a pen of animals indifferent to the kingdom of God and with no idea of gratitude for his rich beneficence, his gifts for body and soul. The worldly seek only their husks and their troughs. To these they cleave like fattening swine intended for slaughter. Jeremiah (^{2412B}Jeremiah 12:3) says concerning the ungodly, who with great satisfaction persecute the righteous: “Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter.”

40. God gives the ungodly mighty kingdoms, riches, lands and houses, making them to enjoy greatness and abundance. But when the swine are fed and fat, the question of bacon and sausage introduces a struggle. A slaughterer — a sausage-maker — appears, perchance, to slaughter the swine in their sty; one comes desolating the country, overthrowing the kingdom, destroying people and all; for, desiring to be but swine, the people must be destroyed like swine. Even though the world have personal knowledge of such punishment, it continues its course so long as possible — until the slaughterer comes. Swine remain swine; they are capable of standing ever unmoved by their trough, one perfectly indifferent if another be struck dead before its eyes. Christians Recognize the Divine Source of Their Gifts.

41. Christians, however, though obliged to live among swine and to be at times trampled under foot and rooted about, have nevertheless surpassing glory; for they can look up and intelligently behold their Lord and his gifts. They are not of the pen of swine intended only for slaughter; they know themselves children of God, adorned by him with gifts and graces not merely temporal. They are conscious that, having given them body and life — for these they realize are not of their own obtaining — he will also supply their further needs, providing for them forever.

42. Christians are able to recognize even God’s least blessing as most precious, as truly excellent; not only because it comes from him, but because of its inherent value. No one who recognizes even temporal blessings would give an eye, or a less important member of the body, to redeem the riches of the entire world. How much loftier and more precious to the Christian are the spiritual gifts concerning which Paul here speaks — gifts bestowed as means unto salvation! The baptizing of a child or the absolution of a penitent makes no great show, but were the office viewed in the true light, the bestowed treasure rightly appreciated, all the officers,

authority and riches of kings and emperors would be nothing at all in comparison.

43. Regarding the baptizer — who may be a woman even — and the baptized, we certainly can see nothing wonderful. The humanity in the case does not effect any great work; the work is wrought by him who is God, Lord and Spirit. It is he who gives to the office power and greatness above that of all emperors, kings and lords, however inferior the instrumentality — the occupants of the sacred offices. By these ministrations souls are won from the devil, snatched out of hell and transformed into saints blessed forever. Person and office may be apparently inferior, but the office is of God and God is no inferior being. His greatness cannot be equaled by a hundred thousand worlds. He accomplishes things incomprehensible to the world and impossible to angels. The combined efforts of all creation could not produce baptism. Were the world to unite in baptizing an infant, the infant would receive no good therefrom unless God the Lord commanded the deed. Let the Sultan be many thousands of times more powerful than at present and he could not, with all his riches, his dominion and peoples, free himself or any other from the power of the least sin. He could not effectively pronounce the absolution, “God has forgiven you your sins.” For the Sultan has neither gift, office nor work; indeed, he knows nothing about them. They belong to God alone, though human mouths and hands are instrumental therein.

44. Note why Paul boasts of the fact that God bestows such great blessings. It is that Christians may discern them and thank him; and that such discernment may lead them to serve one another in humility, with mutual faith and love, each one learning to praise God fervently wherever he beholds God’s gifts and offices operative in the Church, and to esteem them as he would esteem God himself. For, unquestionably, none would possess office and gifts had not God ordained and bestowed them.

45. How we have exalted our own nonsense — pilgrimages, cloisters, cords, cowls, running to the dead in the wilderness and so on! But to what purpose? What benefit have we derived therefrom, notwithstanding we walked until our feet were bleeding, and watched and fasted and tormented ourselves to death? Such a life, it is true, may be called holy, divine, yet it is not at all the gift, the work, the office, of God. No God, no Lord, no Spirit, is in that practice. God has nowhere commanded such a life. We

have devised it and may reward and help ourselves for so doing. We cannot boast his authority for it nor find divine comfort therein.

But the discerning Christian can with satisfaction boast on this wise: “My baptism or my absolution is not of my own devising or ordaining, nor of another man’s. It is of Christ my Lord. For here is his command ordaining the office: ‘Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.’

~~4189~~ Matthew 28:19. Upon authority of the office, work and gift here presented, I can boast and be strong in faith against the devil and all the gates of hell; otherwise I cannot withstand Satan for one moment. He would not be afraid of me and my works though I should be able to boast of having lived seventy years as a member of a holy order, serving God every day and hour, praying, fasting, and so on.”

46. The devil hurls both person and work, as he finds them, into the abyss of hell. If he ask you where God has commanded such works as yours, you have no answer. But let him hear you boast in the confident faith God’s command inspires: “I have received from Christ my Lord baptism and absolution; of this I am certain, and what I do is done at his command and by his power” — let him hear that and he is forced immediately to leave you. He must flee, not from your person or works, but from Christ’s office and gifts found with you.

47. Paul presents these thoughts to teach us what we Christians have from God in the three forms, blessings superior to those enjoyed by all others in the world. The apostle would have us be grateful for these things and make use of them in a spirit of Christian love. He desires that the possessor of gifts devote them to the service of others. He teaches we are to honor God in the gifts another possesses; that we are highly to esteem them, remembering they are not of man’s production, not wrought of man’s ability or skill, but are the offices, gifts and works of God. They are not the inferior and trivial things they seem to the world because making no show and noise. God does not give unredeemable coin or empty shells and mere husks. His gifts and works in his Church must effect inexpressible results, taking souls from the jaws of the devil and translating them into eternal life and glory.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~GENE~~ **1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-10.**

1 Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, 2 by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures; 5 and that he appeared to Cephas; then to the twelve; 6 then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep; 7 then he appeared to James; then to all the apostles; 8 and last of all, as to the child untimely born, he appeared to me also. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not found vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

PAUL'S WITNESS TO CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

This text is fully explained in the sermons on the entire chapter, which have been published separately. He who desires may read them there. It speaks almost exclusively of the resurrection of the dead, and therefore ought properly to be read and preached at the Easter season. The reason of its selection for this Sunday seems to be that the latter part of it corresponds with the Gospel for this Sunday.

For Saint Paul, though he was an exalted apostle, and had labored in that office more than all the others together, boasts not of his own deeds, as did the proud Pharisee. Like the poor publican he confessed his sin and unworthiness, and ascribed all that he is to the grace of God alone, which made a Christian and an apostle of him who had been a persecutor.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~ROM~~ 2 CORINTHIANS 3:4-11.

4 And such confidence have we through Christ to God-ward: 5 not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God; 6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. 7 But if the ministration of death, written, and engraven on stones, came with glory, so that the children of Israel could not look steadfastly upon the face of Moses for the glory of his face; which glory was passing away: 8 how shall not rather the ministration of the spirit be with glory? 9 For if the ministration of condemnation hath glory, much rather doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. 10 For verily that which hath been made glorious hath not been made glorious in this respect, by reason of the glory that surpasseth. 11 For if that which passeth away was with glory, much more that which remaineth is in glory.

GOSPEL TRANSCENDS LAW.

1. This epistle lesson sounds altogether strange and wonderful to individuals unaccustomed to Scripture language, particularly to that of Paul. To the inexperienced ear and heart it is not intelligible. In popedom thus far it has remained quite unapprehended, although reading of the words has been practiced.
2. That we may understand it, we must first get an idea of Paul's theme. Briefly, he would oppose the vain boasting of false apostles and preachers concerning their possession of the spirit and their peculiar skill and gifts, by praising and glorifying the office of a preacher of the Gospel with which he is intrusted. For he found that, especially in the Church at Corinth, which he had converted by the words of his own lips and brought to faith in Christ, soon after his departure the devil introduced his heresies whereby the people were turned from the truth and betrayed into other ways. Since

it became his duty to make an attack upon such heresies, he devoted both his epistles to the purpose of keeping the Corinthians in the right way, so that they might retain the pure doctrine received from him, and beware of false spirits. The main thing which moved him to write this second epistle was his desire to emphasize to them his apostolic office of a preacher of the Gospel, in order to put to shame the glory of those other teachers — the glory they boasted with many words and great pretense.

3. He starts in on this theme just before he reaches our text. And this is how it is he comes to speak in high terms of praise of the ministration of the Gospel and to contrast and compare the twofold ministration or message which may be proclaimed in the Church, provided, of course, that God's Word is to be preached and not the nonsense of human falsehood and the doctrine of the devil. One is that of the Old Testament, the other of the New; in other words, the office of Moses, or the Law, and the office of the Gospel of Christ. He contrasts the glory and power of the latter with those of the former, which, it is true, is also the Word of God. In this manner he endeavors to defeat the teachings and pretensions of those seductive spirits who, as he but lately foretold, pervert God's Word, in that they greatly extol the Law of God, yet at best do not teach its right use, but, instead of making it tributary to faith in Christ, misuse it to teach work-righteousness.

4. Since the words before us are in reality a continuation of those with which the chapter opens, the latter must be considered in this connection. We read:

“Are we beginning again to commend ourselves? or need we, as do some, epistles of commendation to you or from you? Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh.” “We, my fellow-apostles and co-laborers and I,” he says, “do not ask for letters and seals from others commending us to you, or from you commending us to others, in order to seduce people after gaining their good will in your church and in others as well. Such is the practice of the false apostles, and many even now present letters and certificates from honest preachers and Churches, and make them the means whereby their unrighteous plotting may be received

in good faith. Such letters, thank God, we stand not in need of, and you need not fear we shall use such means of deception. For you are yourselves the letter we have written and wherein we may pride ourselves and which we present everywhere. For it is a matter of common knowledge that you have been taught by us, and brought to Christ through our ministry.”

PAUL’S CONVERTS LIVING EPISTLES.

- 5.** Inasmuch as his activity among them is his testimonial, and they themselves are aware that through his ministerial office he has constituted them a church, he calls them an epistle written by himself; not with ink and in paragraphs, not on paper or wood, nor engraved upon hard rock as the Ten Commandments written upon tables of stone, which Moses placed before the people, but written by the Holy Spirit upon fleshly tables — hearts of tender flesh. The Spirit is the ink or the inscription, yes, even the writer himself; but the pencil or pen and the hand of the writer is the ministry of Paul.
- 6.** This figure of a written epistle is, however, in accord with Scripture usage. Moses commands (⁴¹⁰⁶Deuteronomy 6:6-9; 11, 18) that the Israelites write the Ten Commandments in all places where they walked or stood — upon the posts of their houses, and upon their gates, and ever have them before their eyes and in their hearts. Again (²¹⁰⁰Proverbs 7:2-3), Solomon says: “Keep my commandments and . . . my law as the apple of thine eye. Bind them upon thy fingers; write them upon the tablet of thy heart.” He speaks as a father to his child when giving the child an earnest charge to remember a certain thing — “Dear child, remember this; forget it not; keep it in thy heart.” Likewise, God says in the book of Jeremiah the prophet (²⁶¹³Jeremiah 31:33), “I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it.” Here man’s heart is represented as a sheet, or slate, or page, whereon is written the preached Word; for the heart is to receive and securely keep the Word. In this sense Paul says: “We have, by our ministry, written a booklet or letter upon your heart, which witnesses that you believe in God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost and have the assurance that through Christ you are redeemed and saved. This testimony is what is written on your heart. The letters are not characters traced with ink or crayon, but the living thoughts, the fire and force of the heart.

7. Note further, that it is his ministry to which Paul ascribes the preparation of their heart thereon and the inscription which constitutes them “living epistles of Christ.” He contrasts his ministry with the blind fancies of those fanatics who seek to receive, and dream of having, the Holy Spirit without the oral word; who, perchance, creep into a corner and grasp the Spirit through dreams, directing the people away from the preached Word and visible ministry. But Paul says that the Spirit, through his preaching, has wrought in the hearts of his Corinthians, to the end that Christ lives and is mighty in them. After such statement he bursts into praise of the ministerial office, comparing the message, or preaching, of Moses with that of himself and the apostles. He says:

“Such confidence have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God.”

TRUE PREACHERS COMMISSIONED BY GOD.

8. These words are blows and thrusts for the false apostles and preachers. Paul is mortal enemy to the blockheads who make great boast, pretending to what they do not possess and to what they cannot do; who boast of having the Spirit in great measure; who are ready to counsel and aid the whole world; who pride themselves on the ability to invent something new. It is to be a surpassingly precious and heavenly thing they are to spin out of their heads, as the dreams of pope and monks have been in time past.

“We do not so,” says Paul. “We rely not upon ourselves or our wisdom and ability. We preach not what we have ourselves invented. But this is our boast and trust in Christ before God, that we have made of you a divine epistle; have written upon your hearts, not our thoughts, but the Word of God. We are not, however, glorifying our own power, but the works and the power of him who has called and equipped us for such an office; from whom proceeds all you have heard and believed.

9. It is a glory which every preacher may claim, to be able to say with full confidence of heart: “This trust have I toward God in Christ, that what I teach and preach is truly the Word of God.” Likewise, when he performs other official duties in the Church — baptizes a child, absolves and comforts a sinner — it must be done in the same firm conviction that such is the command of Christ.

10. He who would teach and exercise authority in the Church without this glory, “it is profitable for him,” as Christ says (~~4086~~ Matthew 18:6), “that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depths of the sea.” For the devil’s lies he preaches, and death is what he effects. Our Papists, in time past, after much and long-continued teaching, after many inventions and works whereby they hoped to be saved, nevertheless always doubted in heart and mind whether or no they had pleased God. The teaching and works of all heretics and seditious spirits certainly do not bespeak for them trust in Christ; their own glory is the object of their teaching, and the homage and praise of the people is the goal of their desire.

*“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves,
to account anything as from ourselves.”*

11. As said before, this is spoken in denunciation of the false spirits who believe that by reason of eminent equipment of special creation and election, they are called to come to the rescue of the people, expecting wonders from whatever they say and do.

HUMAN DOCTRINE NO PLACE IN THE CHURCH.

12. Now, we know ourselves to be of the same clay whereof they are made; indeed, we perhaps have the greater call from God: yet we cannot boast of being capable of ourselves to advise or aid men. We cannot even originate an idea calculated to give help. And when it comes to the knowledge of how one may stand before God and attain to eternal life, that is truly not to be achieved by our work or power, nor to originate in our brain. In other things, those pertaining to this temporal life, you may glory in what you know, you may advance the teachings of reason, you may invent ideas of your own; for example: how to make shoes or clothes, how to govern a household, how to manage a herd. In such things exercise your mind to the best of your ability. Cloth or leather of this sort will permit itself to be stretched and cut according to the good pleasure of the tailor or shoemaker. But in spiritual matters, human reasoning certainly is not in order; other intelligence, other skill and power, are requisite here — something to be granted by God himself and revealed through his Word.

13. What mortal has ever discovered or fathomed the truth that the three persons in the eternal divine essence are one God; that the second person, the Son of God, was obliged to become man, born of a virgin; and that no

way of life could be opened for us, save through his crucifixion? Such truth never would have been heard nor preached, would never in all eternity have been published, learned and believed, had not God himself revealed it.

14. For this season they are blind fools of first magnitude and dangerous characters who would boast of their grand performances, and think that the people are served when they preach their own fancies and inventions. It has been the practice in the Church for anyone to introduce any teaching he saw fit; for example, the monks and priests have daily produced new saints, pilgrimages, special prayers, works and sacrifices in the effort to blot out sin, redeem souls from purgatory, and so on. They who make up things of this kind are not such as put their trust in God through Christ, but rather such as defy God and Christ. Into the hearts of men, where Christ alone should be, they shove the filth and write the lies of the devil. Yet they think themselves, and themselves only, qualified for all essential teaching and work, self-grown doctors that they are, saints all-powerful without the help of God and Christ.

“But our sufficiency is from God.”

15. Of ourselves — in our own wisdom and strength — we cannot effect, discover nor teach any counsel or help for man, whether for ourselves or others. Any good work we perform among you, any doctrine we write upon your heart — that is God’s own work. He puts into our heart and mouth what we should say, and impresses it upon your heart through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we cannot ascribe to ourselves any honor therein, cannot seek our own glory as the self-instructed and proud spirits do; we must give to God alone the honor, and must glory in the fact that by his grace and power he works in you unto salvation, through the office committed unto us.

16. Now, Paul’s thought here is that nothing should be taught and practiced in the Church but what is unquestionably God’s Word. It will not do to introduce or perform anything whatever upon the strength of man’s judgment. Man’s achievements, man’s reasoning and power, are of no avail save in so far as they come from God. As Peter says in his first epistle ([1 Peter 4:11](#)): “If any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God; if any man ministereth, ministering as of the strength which God supplieth.” In short, let him who would be wise, who would boast of great skill, talents and power, confine himself to things other than spiritual; with respect to spiritual matters, let him keep his place and refrain from boasting

and pretense. For it is of no moment that men observe your greatness and ability; the important thing is that poor souls may rest assured of being presented with God's Word and works, whereby they may be saved.

“Who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”

THE NEW COVENANT.

17. Paul here proceeds to exalt the office and power of the Gospel over the glorying of the false apostles, and to elevate the power of the Word above that of all other doctrine, even of the Law of God. Truly we are not sufficient of ourselves and have nothing to boast of so far as human activity is considered. For that is without merit or power, however strenuous the effort may be to fulfill God's Law. We have, however, something infinitely better to boast of, something not grounded in our own activity: by God we have been made sufficient for a noble ministry, termed the ministry “of a New Covenant.” This ministry is not only exalted far above any teaching to be evolved by human wisdom, skill and power, but is more glorious than the ministry termed the “Old Covenant,” which in time past was delivered to the Jews through Moses. While this ministry clings, in common with other doctrine, to the Word given by revelation, it is the agency whereby the Holy Spirit works in the heart. Therefore, Paul says it is not a ministration of the letter, but “of the spirit.”

“SPIRIT” AND “LETTER.”

18. This passage relative to spirit and letter has in the past been wholly strange language to us. Indeed, to such extent has man's nonsensical interpretation perverted and weakened it that I, through a learned doctor of the holy Scriptures, failed to understand it altogether, and I could find no one to teach me. And to this day it is unintelligible to all popedom. In fact, even the old teachers — Origen, Jerome and others — have not caught Paul's thought. And no wonder, truly! For it is essentially a doctrine far beyond the power of man's intelligence to comprehend. When human reason meddles with it, it becomes perplexed. The doctrine is wholly unintelligible to it, for human thought goes no farther than the Law and the Ten Commandments. Laying hold upon these it confines itself to them. It does not attempt to do more, being governed by the principle that unto him

who fulfils the demands of the Law, or commandments, God is gracious. Reason knows nothing about the wretchedness of depraved nature. It does not recognize the fact that no man is able to keep God's commandments; that all are under sin and condemnation; and that the only way whereby help could be received was for God to give his Son for the world, ordaining another ministration, one through which grace and reconciliation might be proclaimed to us. Now, he who does not understand the sublime subject of which Paul speaks cannot but miss the true meaning of his words. How much more did we invite this fate when we threw the Scriptures and Saint Paul's epistles under the bench, and, like swine in husks, wallowed in man's nonsense! Therefore, we must submit to correction and learn to understand the apostle's utterance aright.

19. "Letter" and "spirit" have been understood to mean, according to Origen and Jerome, the obvious sense of the written word. St. Augustine, it must be admitted, has gotten an inkling of the truth. Now, the position of the former teachers would perhaps not be quite incorrect did they correctly explain the words. By "literary sense" they signify the meaning of a Scripture narrative according to the ordinary interpretation of the words. By "spiritual sense" they signify the secondary, hidden, sense found in the words.

For instance: The Scripture narrative in Genesis third records how the serpent persuaded the woman to eat of the forbidden fruit and to give to her husband, who also ate. This narrative in its simplest meaning represents what they understand by "letter." "Spirit," however, they understand to mean the spiritual interpretation, which is thus: The serpent signifies the evil temptation which lures to sin. The woman represents the sensual state, or the sphere in which such enticements and temptations make themselves felt. Adam, the man, stands for reason, which is called man's highest endowment. Now, when reason does not yield to the allurements of external sense, all is well; but when it permits itself to waver and consent, the fall has taken place.

20. Origen was the first to trifle thus with the holy Scriptures, and many others followed, until now it is thought to be the sign of great cleverness for the Church to be filled with such quibblings. The aim is to imitate Paul, who (⁴⁰²Galatians 4:22-24) figuratively interprets the story of Abraham's two sons, the one by the free woman, or the mistress of the house, and the other by the hand-maid. The two women, Paul says, represent the two

covenants: one covenant makes only bondservants, which is just what he in our text terms the ministration of the letter; the other leads to liberty, or, as he says here, the ministration of the spirit, which gives life. And the two sons are the two peoples, one of which does not go farther than the Law, while the other accepts in faith the Gospel. True, this is an interpretation not directly suggested by the narrative and the text. Paul himself calls it an allegory; that is, a mystic narrative, or a story with a hidden meaning. But he does not say that the literal text is necessarily the letter that killeth, and the allegory, or hidden meaning, the spirit. But the false teachers assert of all Scripture that the text, or record itself, is but a dead “letter,” its interpretation being “the spirit.” Yet they have not pushed interpretation farther than the teaching of the Law; and it is precisely the Law which Paul means when he speaks of “the letter.”*

21. Paul employs the word “letter” in such contemptuous sense in reference to the Law — though the Law is, nevertheless, the Word of God — when he compares it with the ministry of the Gospel. The letter is to him the doctrine of the Ten Commandments, which teach how we should obey God, honor parents, love our neighbor, and so on — the very best doctrine to be found in all books, sermons and schools.

The word “letter” is to the apostle Paul everything which may take the form of doctrine of literary arrangement, of record, so long as it remains something spoken or written. Also thoughts which may be pictured or expressed by word or writing, but it is not that which is written in the heart, to become its life. “Letter” is the whole Law of Moses, or the Ten Commandments, though the supreme authority of such teaching is not denied. It matters not whether you hear them, read them, or reproduce them mentally. For instance, when I sit down to meditate upon the first commandment: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me,” or the second, or the third, and so forth, I have something which I can read, write, discuss, and aim to fulfill with all my might. The process is quite similar when the emperor or prince gives a command and says: “This you shall do, that you shall eschew.” This is what the apostle calls “the letter,” or, as we have called it on another occasion, the written sense.

22. Now, as opposed to “the letter,” there is another doctrine or message, which he terms the “ministration of a New Covenant” and “of the Spirit.” This doctrine does not teach what works are required of man, for that man has already heard; but it makes known to him what God would do for him

and bestow upon him, indeed what he has already done: he has given his Son Christ for us; because, for our disobedience to the Law, which no man fulfils, we were under God's wrath and condemnation. Christ made satisfaction for our sins, effected a reconciliation with God and gave to us his own righteousness. Nothing is said in this ministration of man's deeds; it tells rather of the works of Christ, who is unique in that he was born of a virgin, died for sin and rose from the dead, something no other man has been able to do. This doctrine is revealed through none but the Holy Spirit, and none other confers the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works in the hearts of them who hear and accept the doctrine. Therefore, this ministration is termed a ministration "of the Spirit."

23. The apostle employs the words "letter" and "spirit," to contrast the two doctrines; to emphasize his office and show its advantage over all others, however eminent the teachers whom they boast, and however great the spiritual unction which they vaunt. It is of design that he does not term the two dispensations "Law" and "Gospel," but names them according to the respective effects produced. He honors the Gospel with a superior term — "ministration of the spirit." Of the Law, on the contrary, he speaks almost contemptuously, as if he would not honor it with the title of God's commandment, which in reality it is, according to his own admission later on that its deliverance to Moses and its injunction upon the children of Israel was an occasion of surpassing glory.

24. Why does Paul choose this method? Is it right for one to despise or dishonor God's Law? Is not a chaste and honorable life a matter of beauty and godliness? Such facts, it may be contended, are implanted by God in reason itself, and all books teach them; they are the governing force in the world. I reply: Paul's chief concern is to defeat the vainglory and pretensions of false preachers, and to teach them the right conception and appreciation of the Gospel which he proclaimed. What Paul means is this: When the Jews vaunt their Law of Moses, which was received as Law from God and recorded upon two tables of stone; when they vaunt their learned and saintly preachers of the Law and its exponents, and hold their deeds and manner of life up to admiration, what is all that compared to the Gospel message? The claim may be well made: a fine sermon, a splendid exposition; but, after all, nothing more comes of it than precepts, expositions, written comments. The precept, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself," remains a mere array of words. When much time and effort have been spent in conforming one's

life to it, nothing has been accomplished. You have pods without peas, husks without kernels.

25. For it is impossible to keep the Law without Christ, though man may, for the sake of honor or property, or from fear of punishment, feign outward holiness. The heart which does not discern God's grace in Christ cannot turn to God nor trust in him; it cannot love his commandments and delight in them, but rather resists them. For nature rebels at compulsion. No man likes to be a captive in chains. One does not voluntarily bow to the rod of punishment or submit to the executioner's sword; rather, because of these things, his anger against the Law is but increased, and he ever thinks: "Would that I might unhindered steal, rob, hoard, gratify my lust, and so on!" And when restrained by force, he would there were no Law and no God. And this is the case where conduct shows some effects of discipline, in that the outer man has been subjected to the teaching of the Law.

26. But in a far more appalling degree does inward rebellion ensue when the heart feels the full force of the Law; when, standing before God's judgment, it feels the sentence of condemnation; as we shall presently hear, for the apostle says "the letter killeth." Then the truly hard knots appear. Human nature fumes and rages against the Law; offenses appear in the heart, the fruit of hate and enmity against the Law; and presently human nature flees before God and is incensed at God's judgment. It begins to question the equity of his dealings, to ask if he is a just God. Influenced by such thoughts, it falls ever deeper into doubt, it murmurs and chafes, until finally, unless the Gospel comes to the rescue, it utterly despairs, as did Judas, and Saul, and perhaps pass out of this life with God and creation. This is what Paul means when he says (~~808~~ Romans 7:8-9) that the Law works sin in the heart of man, and sin works death, or kills.

27. You see, then, why the Law is called "the letter": though noble doctrine, it remains on the surface; it does not enter the heart as a vital force which begets obedience. Such is the baseness of human nature, it will not and cannot conform to the Law; and so corrupt is mankind, there is no individual who does not violate all God's commandments inspite of daily hearing the preached Word and having held up to view God's wrath and eternal condemnation. Indeed, the harder pressed man is, the more furiously he storms against the Law.

28. The substance of the matter is this: When all the commandments have been put together, when their message receives every particle of praise to

which it is entitled, it is still a mere letter. That is, teaching not put into practice. By “letter” is signified all manner of law, doctrine and message, which goes no farther than the oral or written word, which consists only of the powerless letter. To illustrate: A law promulgated by a prince or the authorities of a city, if not enforced, remains merely an open letter, which makes a demand indeed, but ineffectually. Similarly, God’s Law, although a teaching of supreme authority and the eternal will of God, must suffer itself to become a mere empty letter or husk. Without a quickening heart, and devoid of fruit, the Law is powerless to effect life and salvation. It may well be called a veritable table of omissions (Lass-tafel); that is, it is a written enumeration, not of duties performed but of duties cast aside. In the languages of the world, it is a royal edict which remains unobserved and unperformed. In this light St. Augustine understood the Law. He says, commenting on Psalm 17, “What is Law without grace but a letter without spirit?” Human nature, without the aid of Christ and his grace, cannot keep it.

29. Again, Paul in terming the Gospel a “ministration of the spirit” would call attention to its power to produce in the hearts of men an effect wholly different from that of the Law: it is accompanied by the Holy Spirit and it creates a new heart. Man, driven into fear and anxiety by the preaching of the Law, hears this Gospel message, which, instead of reminding him of God’s demands, tells him what God has done for him. It points not to man’s works, but to the works of Christ, and bids him confidently believe that for the sake of his Son God will forgive his sins and accept him as his child. And this message, when received in faith, immediately cheers and comforts the heart. The heart will no longer flee from God; rather it turns to him. Finding grace with God and experiencing his mercy, the heart feels drawn to him. It commences to call upon him and to treat and revere him as its beloved God. In proportion as such faith and solace grow, also love for the commandments will grow and obedience to them will be man’s delight. Therefore, God would have his Gospel message urged unceasingly as the means of awakening man’s heart to discern his state and recall the great grace and lovingkindness of God, with the result that the power of the Holy Spirit is increased constantly. Note, no influence of the Law, no work of man is present here. The force is a new and heavenly one — the power of the Holy Spirit. He impresses upon the heart Christ and his works, making of it a true book which does not consist in the tracery of mere letters and words, but in true life and action.

30. God promised of old, in ~~<3028>~~ Joel 2:28 and other passages, to give the Spirit through the new message, the Gospel. And he has verified his promise by public manifestations in connection with the preaching of that Gospel, as on the day of Pentecost and again later. When the apostles, Peter and others, began to preach, the Holy Spirit descended visibly from heaven upon their hearts. ~~<4087>~~ Acts 8:17; ~~<4104>~~ Acts 10:44. Up to that time, throughout the period the Law was preached, no one had heard or seen such manifestation. The fact could not but be grasped that this was a vastly different message from that of the Law when such mighty results followed in its train. And yet its substance was no more than what Paul declared (Acts 13, 38-39): “Through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins: and by him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”

31. In this teaching you see no more the empty letters, the valueless husks or shells, of the Law, which unceasingly enjoins, “This thou shalt do and observe,” and ever in vain. You see instead the true kernel and power which confers Christ and the fullness of His Spirit. In consequence, men heartily believe the message of the Gospel and enjoy its riches. They are accounted as having fulfilled the Ten Commandments. John says (~~<3016>~~ John 1:16-17): “Of his fullness we all received, and grace for grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” John’s thought is: The Law has indeed been given by Moses, but what avails that fact? To be sure, it is a noble doctrine and portrays a beautiful and instructive picture of man’s duty to God and all mankind; it is really excellent as to the letter. Yet it remains empty; it does not enter into the heart. Therefore it is called “law,” nor can it become aught else, so long as nothing more is given.

CHRIST SUPERSEDES MOSES.

Before there can be fulfillment, another than Moses must come, bringing another doctrine. Instead of a law enjoined, there must be grace and truth revealed. For to enjoin a command and to embody the truth* are two different things; just as teaching and doing differ. Moses, it is true, teaches the doctrine of the Law, so far as exposition is concerned, but he can neither fulfill it himself nor give others the ability to do so. That it might be fulfilled, God’s Son had to come with his fullness; he has fulfilled the Law for himself and it is he who communicates to our empty heart the power to attain to the same fullness.

This becomes possible when we receive grace for grace, that is, when we come to the enjoyment of Christ, and for the sake of him who enjoys with God fullness of grace, although our own obedience to the Law is still imperfect. Being possessed of solace and grace, we receive by his power the Holy Spirit also, so that, instead of harboring mere empty letters within us, we come to the truth and begin to fulfill God's Law, in such a way, however, that we draw from his fullness and drink from that as a fountain.

CHRIST THE SOURCE OF LIFE GREATER THAN ADAM THE SOURCE OF DEATH.

32. Paul gives us the same thought in Romans 5, 17-18, where he compares Adam and Christ. Adam, he says, by his disobedience in Paradise, became the source of sin and death in the world; by the sin of this one man, condemnation passed upon all men. But on the other hand, Christ, by his obedience and righteousness, has become for us the abundant source wherefrom all may obtain righteousness and the power of obedience. And with respect to the latter source, it is far richer and more abundant than the former. While by the single sin of one man, sin and death passed upon all men, to wax still more powerful with the advent of the Law, of such surpassing strength and greatness, on the other hand, is the grace and bounty which we have in Christ that it not only washes away the particular sin of the one man Adam, which, until Christ came, overwhelmed all men in death, but overwhelms and blots out all sin whatever. Thus they who receive his fullness of grace and bounty unto righteousness are, according to Paul, lords of life through Jesus Christ alone.

THE LAW INEFFECTUAL.

33. You see now how the two messages differ, and why Paul exalts the one, the preaching of the Gospel, and calls it a "ministration of the spirit," but terms the other, the Law, a mere empty "letter." His object is to humble the pride of the false apostles and preachers which they felt in their Judaism and the law of Moses, telling the people with bold pretensions: "Beloved, let Paul preach what he will, he cannot overthrow Moses, who on Mount Sinai received the Law, God's irrevocable command, obedience to which is ever the only way to salvation."

34. Similarly today, Papists, Anabaptists and other sects make outcry: “What mean you by preaching so much about faith and Christ? Are the people thereby made better? Surely works are essential.” Arguments of this character have indeed a semblance of merit, but, when examined by the light of truth, are mere empty, worthless twaddle. For if deeds, or works, are to be considered, there are the Ten Commandments; we teach and practice these as well as they. The Commandments would answer the purpose indeed — if one could preach them so effectively as to compel their fulfilment.

But the question is, whether what is preached is also practiced. Is there something more than were words — or letters, as Paul says? do the words result in life and spirit? This message we have in common; unquestionably, one must teach the Ten Commandments, and, what is more, live them. But we charge that they are not observed. Therefore something else is requisite in order to render obedience to them possible. When Moses and the Law are made to say: “You should do thus; God demands this of you,” what does it profit? Ay, beloved Moses, I hear that plainly, and it is certainly a righteous command; but pray tell me whence shall I obtain ability to do what, alas, I never have done nor can do? It is not easy to spend money from an empty pocket, or to drink from an empty can. If I am to pay my debt, or to quench my thirst, tell me how first to fill pocket or can. But upon this point such prattlers are silent; they but continue to drive and plague with the Law, let the people stick to their sins, and make merry of them to their own hurt.

35. In this light Paul here portrays the false apostles and like pernicious schismatics, who make great boasts of having a clearer understanding and of knowing much better what to teach than is the case with true preachers of the Gospel. And when they do their very best, when they pretend great things, and do wonders with their preaching, there is naught but the mere empty “letter.” Indeed, their message falls far short of Moses. Moses was a noble preacher, truly, and wrought greater things than any of them may do. Nevertheless, the doctrine of the Law could do no more than remain a letter, an Old Testament, and God had to ordain a different doctrine, a New Testament, which should impart the “spirit.”

“It is the letter,” says Paul, “which we preach. If any glorying is to be done, we can glory in better things and make the defiant plea that they are not the only teachers of what ought to be done,

incapable as they are of carrying out their own precepts. We give direction and power as to performing and living those precepts. For this reason our message is not called the Old Testament, or the message of the dead letter, but that of the New Testament and of the living Spirit.”

36. No seditious spirit, it is certain, ever carries out its own precepts, nor will he ever be capable of doing so, though he may loudly boast the Spirit alone as his guide. Of this fact you may rest assured. For such individuals know nothing more than the doctrine of works — nor can they rise higher and point you to anything else. They may indeed speak of Christ, but it is only to hold him up as an example of patience in suffering. In short, there can be no New Testament preached if the doctrine of faith in Christ be left out; the spirit cannot enter into the heart, but all teaching, endeavor, reflection, works and power remain mere “letters,” devoid of grace, truth, and life. Without Christ the heart remains unchanged and unrenewed. It has no more power to fulfill the Law than the book in which the Ten Commandments are written, or the stones upon which engraved.

“For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”

37. Here is yet stronger condemnation of the glory of the doctrine of the Law; yet higher exaltation of the Gospel ministry. Is the apostle overbold in that he dares thus to assail the Law and say: “The Law is not only a lifeless letter, but qualified merely to kill”? Surely that is not calling the Law a good and profitable message, but one altogether harmful. Who, unless he would be a cursed heretic in the eyes of the world and invite execution as a blasphemer, would dare to speak thus, except Paul himself? Even Paul must praise the Law, which is God’s command, declaring it good and not to be despised nor in any way modified, but to be confirmed and fulfilled so completely, as Christ says (~~4158~~ Matthew 5:18), that not a tittle of it shall pass away. How, then, does Paul come to speak so disparagingly, even abusively, of the Law, actually presenting it as veritable death and poison? Well, his is a sublime doctrine, one that reason does not understand. The world, particularly they who would be called holy and godly, cannot tolerate it at all; for it amounts to nothing short of pronouncing all our works, however precious, mere death and poison.

38. Paul’s purpose is to bring about the complete overthrow of the boast of the false teachers and hypocrites, and to reveal the weakness of their doctrine, showing how little it effects even at its best, since it offers only

the Law, Christ remaining unproclaimed and unknown. They say in terms of vainglorious eloquence that if a man diligently keep the commandments and do many good works, he shall be saved. But theirs are only vain words, a pernicious doctrine. This fact is eventually learned by him who, having heard no other doctrine, trusts in their false one. He finds out that it holds neither comfort nor power of life, but only doubt and anxiety, followed by death and destruction.

TERRORS OF THE LAW.

39. When man, conscious of his failure to keep God's command, is constantly urged by the Law to make payment of his debt and confronted with nothing but the terrible wrath of God and eternal condemnation, he cannot but sink into despair over his sins. Such is the inevitable consequence where the Law alone is taught with a view to attaining heaven thereby. The vanity of such trust in works is illustrated in the case of the noted hermit mentioned in *Vitae Patrum* (Lives of the Fathers). For over seventy years this hermit had led a life of utmost austerity, and had many followers. When the hour of death came he began to tremble, and for three days was in a state of agony. His disciples came to comfort him, exhorting him to die in peace since he had led so holy a life. But he replied: "Alas, I truly have all my life served Christ and lived austere; but God's judgment greatly differs from that of men."

40. Note, this worthy man, despite the holiness of his life, has no acquaintance with any article but that of the divine judgment according to the Law. He knows not the comfort of Christ's Gospel. After a long life spent in the attempt to keep God's commandments and secure salvation, the Law now slays him through his own works. He is compelled to exclaim: "Alas, who knows how God will look upon my efforts? Who may stand before him?" That means, to forfeit heaven through the verdict of his own conscience. The work he has wrought and his holiness of life avail nothing. They merely push him deeper into death, since he is without the solace of the Gospel, while others, such as the thief on the cross and the publican, grasp the comfort of the Gospel, the forgiveness of sins in Christ. Thus sin is conquered; they escape the sentence of the Law, and pass through death into life eternal.

EFFICACY OF THE GOSPEL.

41. Now the meaning of the contrasting clause, “the spirit giveth life,” becomes clear. The reference is to naught else but the holy Gospel, a message of healing and salvation; a precious, comforting word. It comforts and refreshes the sad heart. It wrests it out of the jaws of death and hell, as it were, and transports it to the certain hope of eternal life, through faith in Christ. When the last hour comes to the believer, and death and God’s judgment appear before his eyes, he does not base his comfort upon his works. Even though he may have lived the holiest life possible, he says with Paul (~~400~~ 1 Corinthians 4:4): “I know nothing against myself, yet am I not hereby justified.”

42. These words imply being ill pleased with self, with the whole life; indeed, even the putting to death of self. Though the heart says, “By my works I am neither made righteous nor saved,” which is practically admitting oneself to be worthy of death and condemnation, the Spirit extricates from despair, through the Gospel faith, which confesses, as did St. Bernard in the hour of death: “Dear Lord Jesus, I am aware that my life at its best has been but worthy of condemnation, but I trust in the fact that thou hast died for me and hast sprinkled me with blood from thy holy wounds. For I have been baptized in thy name and have given heed to thy Word whereby thou hast called me, awarded me grace and life, and bidden me believe. In this assurance will I pass out of life; not in uncertainty and anxiety, thinking, Who knows what sentence God in heaven will pass upon me?”

The Christian must not utter such a question. The sentence against his life and works has long since been passed by the Law. Therefore, he must confess himself guilty and condemned. But he lives by the gracious judgment of God declared from heaven, whereby the sentence of the Law is overruled and reversed. It is this: “He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life.” ~~406~~ John 3:36.

43. When the consolation of the Gospel has once been received and it has wrested the heart from death and the terrors of hell, the Spirit’s influence is felt. By its power God’s Law begins to live in man’s heart; he loves it, delights in it and enters upon its fulfillment. Thus eternal life begins here, being continued forever and perfected in the life to come.

44. Now you see how much more glorious, how much better, is the doctrine of the apostles — the New Testament — than the doctrine of those who preach merely great works and holiness without Christ. We should see in this fact an incentive to hear the Gospel with gladness. We ought joyfully to thank God for it when we learn how it has power to bring to men life and eternal salvation, and when it gives us assurance that the Holy Spirit accompanies it and is imparted to believers.

“But if the ministration of death, written, and engraven on stones, came with glory, so that the children of Israel could not look steadfastly upon the face of Moses for the glory of his face; which glory was passing away: how shall not rather the ministration of the Spirit be with glory? For if the ministration of condemnation hath glory, much rather doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.”

GLORY OF THE GOSPEL.

45. Paul is in an ecstasy of delight, and his heart overflows in words of praise for the Gospel. Again he handles the Law severely, calling it a ministration, or doctrine, of death and condemnation. What term significant of greater abomination could he apply to God’s Law than to call it a doctrine of death and hell? And again (^{<427>}Galatians 2:17), he calls it a “minister (or preacher) of sin ;” and (^{<430>}Galatians 3:10) the message which proclaims a curse, saying, “As many as are of the works of the law are under a curse.” Absolute, then, is the conclusion that Law and works are powerless to justify before God; for how can a doctrine proclaiming only sin, death and condemnation justify and save?

46. Paul is compelled to speak thus, as we said above because of the infamous presumption of both teachers and pupils, in that they permit flesh and blood to coquet with the Law, and make their own works which they bring before God their boast. Yet, nothing is effected but self-deception and destruction. For, when the Law is viewed in its true light, when its “glory,” as Paul has it, is revealed, it is found to do nothing more than to kill man and sink him into condemnation.

47. Therefore, the Christian will do well to learn this text of Paul and have an armor against the boasting of false teachers, and the torments and trials of the devil when he urges the Law and induces men to seek righteousness in their own works, tormenting their heart with the thought that salvation is

dependent upon the achievements of the individual. The Christian will do well to learn this text, I say, so that in such conflicts he may take the devil's own sword, saying: "Why dost thou annoy me with talk of the Law and my works? What is the Law after all, however much you may preach it to me, but that which makes me feel the weight of sin, death and condemnation? Why should I seek therein righteousness before God?"

48. When Paul speaks of the "glory of the Law," of which the Jewish teachers of work-righteousness boast, he has reference to the things narrated in the twentieth and thirty-fourth chapters of Exodus — how, when the Law was given, God descended in majesty and glory from heaven, and there were thunderings and lightnings, and the mountain was encircled with fire; and how when Moses returned from the mountain, bringing the Law, his face shone with a glory so dazzling that the people could not look upon his face and he was obliged to veil it.

49. Turning their glory against them, Paul says: "Truly, we do not deny the glory; splendor and majesty were there: but what does such glory do but compel souls to flee before God, and drive into death and hell? We believers, however, boast another glory, — that of our ministration. The Gospel record tells us (^{NOTE} Matthew 17:2-4) that Christ clearly revealed such glory to his disciples when his face shone as the sun, and Moses and Elijah were present. Before the manifestation of such glory, the disciples did not flee; they beheld with amazed joy and said: "Lord, it is good for us to be here. We will make here tabernacles for thee and for Moses," etc.

50. Compare the two scenes and you will understand plainly the import of Paul's words here. As before said, this is the substance of his meaning: "The Law produces naught but terror and death when it dazzles the heart with its glory and stands revealed in its true nature. On the other hand, the Gospel yields comfort and joy." But to explain in detail the signification of the veiled face of Moses, and of his shining uncovered face, would take too long to enter upon here.

51. There is also especial comfort to be derived from Paul's assertion that the "ministration," or doctrine, of the Law "passeth away"; for otherwise there would be naught but eternal condemnation. The doctrine of the Law "passes away" when the preaching of the Gospel of Christ finds place. To Christ, Moses shall yield, that he alone may hold sway. Moses shall not terrify the conscience of the believer. When, perceiving the glory of Moses, the conscience trembles and despairs before God's wrath, then it is time for

Christ's glory to shine with its gracious, comforting light into the heart. Then can the heart endure Moses and Elijah. For the glory of the Law, or the unveiled face of Moses, shall shine only until man is humbled and driven to desire the blessed countenance of Christ. If you come to Christ, you shall no longer hear Moses to your fright and terror; you shall hear him as one who remains servant to the Lord Christ, leaving the solace and the joy of his countenance unobscured. In conclusion:

“For verily that which hath been made glorious hath not been made glorious in this respect, by reason of the glory that surpasseth.”

52. The meaning here is; When the glory and holiness of Christ, revealed through the preaching of the Gospel, is rightly perceived then the glory of the Law — which is but a feeble and transitory glory — is seen to be not really glorious. It is mere dark clouds in contrast to the light of Christ shining to lead us out of sin, death and hell unto God and eternal life.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~GEN~~ GALATIANS 3:15-22.

15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it hath been confirmed, no one maketh it void, or addeth thereto. **16** Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. **17** Now this I say: A covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul, so as to make the promise of none effect. **18** For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise: but God hath granted it to Abraham by promise. **19** What then is the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise hath been made; and it was ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator. **20** Now a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one. **21** Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law. **22** But the scripture shut up all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

GOD'S TESTAMENT AND PROMISE IN CHRIST.

1. This is a keen, severe epistle, one that is unintelligible to the ordinary man. Because the doctrine it contains has not hitherto been employed and enforced, it has not been understood. It is also too long and rich to be treated briefly. But it is fully explained in the complete commentary on this epistle to the Galatians, where those who will may read it. The substance of it is, that here, as in the whole epistle, Paul would earnestly constrain the Christian to distinguish between the righteousness of faith and the righteousness of works or of the Law. In order that we may note to some extent the main points Paul makes in this text, we remark that he

emphasizes two things. He treats first of the doctrine that we are justified by faith alone, and he maintains this, after giving many reasons and proofs, by saying in effect:

2. In this connection you should note that no one, whether Jew or gentile, is justified by works or by the Law. For the Law was given four hundred and thirty years after the promise of a Savior had been made to Abraham (who was to be the father of all the people of God) and the assurance that all nations should be blessed in him. It was given after it had been testified of Abraham that his faith was imputed to him for righteousness. And as he was justified and received the blessing by reason of his faith, so also his children and descendants were justified and received the blessing through the same faith in that seed for whose sake the blessing had been promised to all the world. For in his dealings with the Jews and with the whole world, God always promised his grace and the forgiveness of sins (and that means to be blessed of God) even when there was as yet no Law by which they might pretend to become righteous, and before Moses was born.

3. Therefore the Law, being given to this people only after the lapse of so long a period, could not have been given to them for justification; otherwise it would have been given earlier. Or if it had been necessary for righteousness, then Abraham and his children up to that date could not have been justified at all. Indeed God designed that the Law should be given so long after Abraham. Undoubtedly he would have been able to give it to the fathers much earlier if he had seen fit to do so. Apparently he desired thereby to teach that the Law was not given to the end that God's grace and blessing should be acquired through it, but that these come from the pure mercy of God which was promised and bestowed so long before upon Abraham and those who believed.

4. Therefore Paul concludes: How could the Law produce righteousness for those who lived before Moses, since Moses was the first through whom the Law was given; and since even before his time there were holy people and people who were saved? Whence did they derive their righteousness? Certainly not from the fact that they had offered sacrifice at Jerusalem, but from the fact that they believed the Word in which God promised to bless them through the coming seed, Christ. Hence, those also who lived afterwards could not have been justified by the Law; for they did not receive the grace of God in a different way from that in which those who went before had received it. God did not annul or revoke by the Law the

promise of blessing which he had made and freely bestowed without the Law.

5. Here some might desire to show their wisdom and say to Paul: Although the fathers did not have the Law of Moses, they had the same Word of God which teaches the ten commandments and which was implanted in the human heart from the beginning of the world, whence also it is called the law of nature or the natural law; and the same law was afterwards given publicly to the Jewish people and comprehended in the ten commandments. It might also be said that Moses borrowed the ten commandments from the fathers, to which Christ testifies in ^{<4072>}John 7:22. For it is certain that the fathers from the beginning taught them and urged them upon their children and descendants. With what consistency, then, does Paul conclude that the fathers were not justified by the Law because it was not given until four hundred years after Abraham's time; as if the fathers before that time had no Law?

6. To answer this question we must observe the meaning and purpose of Paul's words; for he so speaks because of the boasting of the Jews, who placed their dependence on the Law and claimed that it was given to them that they might be God's people. They considered their attempts at keeping his Law, sufficient to procure justification. Why else did God give the Law, they said, and distinguish us from all heathen peoples, if we were not thereby to be preeminent before God and more pleasing to him than they who have it not? They made so much of this boasting that they paid no respect at all to the promise of blessing in the coming seed, given to the fathers, nor thought that faith therein was necessary to their justification. Thus they practically considered it as annulled and made void, excepting for a temporal interpretation which they put upon it — that the Messiah would come and, because of their Law and piety, give to them the dominion of the world and other great rewards.

THE JEWS GOD'S PEOPLE BY PROMISE.

7. To rout such vain delusions and boasts, and to show that the Jews were not justified through the Law and did not become God's children thereby, Paul cites the fact that the holy patriarchs, their fathers, were justified neither by the Law of which they boast, because it was not yet given, nor by their own deeds, whether of the natural law or the ten commandments. God had based no promise of blessing or salvation on their works. He had

promised out of pure grace to give them the blessing freely (that is, to give them grace or righteousness and all eternal blessing), through the coming seed, which had been promised also to our first parents without their merit, when by their transgression they had fallen under God's wrath and condemnation. Therefore, although the fathers had a knowledge of the Law, or God's commandments, these did not help them to become righteous before God. They had to hear and apprehend by faith the promise of God, which was based not on works but only on the coming seed. For if they had been able by means of the Law or of good works to become righteous, it would have been wholly unnecessary to give the promise of blessing in Christ.

8. Now, if Abraham and the fathers could not be justified by works, and in fact were not justified by them, no more were their children and descendants justified by the Law or by works. They were justified in no other way than by faith in the promise given to Abraham and to his seed, a promise by which not only the Jews but all the heathen (through the same faith) were blessed.

9. This truth Paul now further enforces and establishes on the basis of these two particulars — God's promise, and his free grace or gift — in opposition to the boasting of the Law and our own merit. First, he makes a declaration concerning the value and weight which every testament or promise of the last will possesses. Likewise in the fourth commandment is implied an ordinance that the last will of parents should be honored by their children and heirs.

10. In regard to this subject he asserts that the rule is, if a man's testament be confirmed (and it is confirmed by his death) no man dare alter it nor add to it nor take away from it. So the jurists declare it to be a divine law that no one should break a man's last will. How much more then should God's testament be honored intact? Now, God has made a testament, which is to be his final last will; namely, that he will bless all nations through the seed which at first he promised to the fathers. This he determined upon, and assured to Abraham, and in him to all the world — to us all. And he has confirmed it by the death of this seed, his only Son, who had to become man and die (as was typified by the sacrifice of Isaac on the part of Abraham) in order that the inheritance of the blessing and eternal life might be bestowed upon us. This is God's last will. He does not desire to make any other. Therefore, no man can or dare change it or add anything to it.

Now, it is adding to it, it is breaking or revoking it — since this testament has been opened and the blessing proclaimed to all the world — if anyone claims that we must first earn that blessing through the Law, proceeding as if, without the Law, this testament, by mere virtue of its promise and will, had no force at all.

11. In short, this testament, Paul concludes, is a simple promise of blessing and sonship with God. Accordingly, there is no law which we must keep in order to merit it. Here nothing avails but the will which promises saying, I will not regard your deeds, but promise the blessing — that is, grace and eternal life — to you who are found in sin and death. This I will confirm by the death of my Son, who shall merit and obtain this inheritance for you.

Now, God made this testament in the first place without the Law, and has thus confirmed it; therefore, the Law, published and confirmed long afterwards, cannot take aught from it, much less annul or revoke it. And he who declares or teaches that we are to be justified by the Law — are to obtain God's blessing by it — does nothing else but interfere with God's testament and destroy and annul his last will. This is one argument of Paul, based on the word "promise," or "testament," and is readily understood; for no one is so stupid that he cannot distinguish between these two — law or commandment, and promise.

12. The second argument of Paul is based on the words, "God gave it to Abraham by promise." Here also it is easy for one who is possessed of common sense to perceive there is a marked difference between receiving something as a gift and earning it. What is earned is given because of obligation and debt, as wages, and he who receives it may boast of it, rather than he who gives it, and may insist upon his right. But when something is given for nothing and, as Paul here says, is bestowed freely — out of grace — then there can be no boasting of right or of merit on the part of the recipient. On the contrary, he must praise the goodness and kindness of his benefactor. So Paul concludes: God freely gave the blessing and the inheritance to Abraham by promise. Therefore, Abraham did not earn it by his works; nor was it given to him as a reward, much less to his children.

13. It is evident enough to even a child that what is earned by works as a reward is not identical with what is promised or bestowed gratis, out of grace and pure free will. There is a distinction between them. God has stopped the mouth of all the world and deprived it of all occasion for

boasting that it has received God's grace by reason of the Law. For he promised and bestowed that as a gift, before the Law or merit through the Law had any existence. In his dealings with his own people, with Abraham and his descendants, God promised to bless the patriarch and all his race and said nothing of any law, works or reward; he based all solely on the coming seed.

14. In the faith of this promise they lived and died — Abraham himself and his children's children — till over four hundred and thirty years had elapsed. Then only did God give the Law, institute an outward form of worship, a priesthood, etc., and direct them how to live and govern themselves. They had now become a separate people, released from foreign domination, and brought into their own land, and they needed an external form of government. It was not intended that only now and by means of these gifts they should obtain forgiveness of sins and God's blessing.

15. This is the substance of the first part of this epistle. In teaching how we are to be justified before God, Paul would have us distinguish well these two points, promise and law; or again, gift and reward. If we teach that God, out of pure grace, and not because of any law or merit, bestows forgiveness of sins and eternal life, the question at once presents itself: Why is the Law given, or of what use is it? Shall we not perform any good works? Why do we teach the ten commandments at all? Paul takes up this matter and asks the question, "What then is the Law?" Then he proceeds to discuss at length what is the office and use of the Law, and shows the difference between it and the Gospel. Of this enough has been said elsewhere, in other postils.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~NEW~~ GALATIANS 5:16-24.

16 *But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would. 18 But if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, 21 envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 meekness, self-control; against such there is no law 24 And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof.*

WORKS OF THE FLESH AND FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT.

This Epistle has been treated at length in the complete commentary (Luther's Commentary on Galatians). It exhorts to good works or fruits of faith in those who have the Holy Spirit through faith. And it does so in a way to show that it is not the design of this doctrine to forbid good works or to tolerate and refrain from censuring bad ones, or to prevent the preaching of the Law. On the contrary it shows clearly that God earnestly wills that Christians should flee and avoid the lusts of the flesh, if they would remain in the Spirit. To have and retain the Spirit and faith, and yet to fulfil the lusts of the flesh, are two things that cannot harmonize; for "these," Paul says, "are contrary the one to the other," and there is between them a vehement conflict. They cannot tolerate each other; one

must be supreme and cast the other out. For this reason he clearly mentions some works of the flesh which plainly and evidently are not of the Spirit, and immediately concludes that those who commit and practice these are not in a condition to inherit God's kingdom. They have lost the Holy Spirit and faith. But he also shows whence the Christians obtain strength to enable them to resist the lusts of the flesh; namely, from the fact that they have received the Holy Spirit through faith, and from the knowledge that they have a gracious God. Thus their hearts become filled with love and a desire to obey God and to shun sin. Consequently they resist and refuse to obey the lusts of the flesh, lest they make God angry again. And although in this conflict they still feel their weakness, the Law nevertheless cannot condemn them, because through faith they are and remain in Christ.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~4185~~ GALATIANS 5:25-6:10.

25 *If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk.* **26** *Let us not become vainglorious, provoking one another, envying one another.* **1** *Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted.* **2** *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.* **3** *For if a man thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.* **4** *But let each man prove his own work, and then shall he have his glorying in regard of himself alone, and not of his neighbor.* **5** *For each man shall bear his own burden.* **6** *But let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.* **7** *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.* **8** *For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life.* **9** *And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.* **10** *So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith.*

CHURCH OFFICERS WARNED OF VAIN-GLORY.

The chief aim of this epistle text is to instruct those in official authority in the Church. Since Christians are under obligation to honor their pastors and teachers, they are admonished by the apostle to guard against the sin of vain-glory, that those in authority may not become proud nor misuse their office against unity in doctrine and in love, and that they may not despise or pass by the wounded and helpless, as the priest and Levite did. ~~2181~~ Luke 10:31-32. Finally, Paul exhorts all diligently to do the good and thus serve everyone, as Christ also teaches in the Gospel (~~4184~~ Matthew 6:34) that

everyone should do the work of each day and not be anxious about the future. [See the explanation of these verses in Luther's Commentary on the Galatians.]

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~4BRS~~ EPHESIANS 3:13-21. F2

13. *Wherefore I ask that ye may not faint at my tribulations for you, which are your glory. 14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 and that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fullness of God. 20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21 unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen.*

PAUL'S CARE AND PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH.

1. Up to this time Paul has *been* extolling the office of the ministry, which proclaims the Gospel of the New Testament. In lofty and impressive terms he introduces its purpose, power and wisdom — in a word, the great benefits the office effects, since God thereby bestows upon us *abundantly* all manner of wisdom, strength and blessings, all which things, in heaven or earth, are of his dispensing. The Gospel proclaims to us life from death, righteousness from sin, redemption from hell and all evil, and brings us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God. So sublime is the whole subject, Paul does not venture to compass it with words but in the loftiest of language suggests much.

2. In the first part of the text he shows the depth of his concern that the Ephesians should retain the Gospel preaching received from him, not

allowing themselves to be torn away from it. To this end he employs two expedients: first, he consoles and admonishes; second, he prays and desires.

“Wherefore I ask that ye may not faint at my tribulations for you, which are your glory.”

PAUL CONSOLES HIS CONVERTS.

3. Having been imprisoned at Rome by order of the emperor, Paul thus consoles his beloved converts at Ephesus, admonishing them to cleave to the doctrine learned from him; not to be frightened from it by beholding his fate, nor permit themselves to be alienated by such comment as this: “This man Paul in his preaching to you made great pretensions to being commissioned of Christ himself, and to outdoing all the other apostles. And you made your boast in him and relied upon him as if he were the only and all-deserving one. Where is he now? What assistance can he render you? There he lies in Rome, by the Jews condemned to death; more than that, he is in the hands of that cruel tyrant, Emperor Nero. Did we not long ago tell you he would meet such fate? Presumably this puts an end to his boastings over every other man.”

4. To prevent the offense that threatened, Paul writes from his prison, and his message is, in effect, this: “Dear friends, you see I am imprisoned; the devil and the world have me in their hands. This may perhaps alarm you, and rouse in you the evil suspicion, ‘If his doctrine were all right and if he were the great apostle of Christ he claims to be, God would not permit him to suffer such fate.’” For some of the false apostles thus taunted Paul’s disciples. “But I entreat and exhort you,” Paul would say, “not to be offended, or alarmed, not to grow faint, though I am in prison. Whether we be tempted and suffer tribulation, whether we be honored or dishonored, no matter what comes, only cleave to the doctrine I have preached to you — the Gospel, God’s sure Word, as you know.” He reminds them, as before he has done, of that whereunto God has called them, and of what they have received through his preaching.

5. Such admonition is still, and will ever be, necessary in the Christian community. The weak must endure severe conflicts in the tribulations the Gospel inevitably entails. The trial is especially hard when they must lose

their leaders and teachers, and in addition hear the shameful, bitter taunts of the calumniators. We in this day have to expect that some will be offended when teachers are assailed. We should therefore be prepared, and when any of our number fall away from our faith to flatter tyrants and the Pope, and to become liars and knaves, we must individually lay hold of the Gospel in a way to enable us to stand and say: “Not because a certain one has so taught, do I believe. It matters not what becomes of him or what he may be, the doctrine itself is right. This I know, whatever God may permit to befall myself or others because of it.”

THE CHRISTIAN’S CONFIDENCE MUST BE IN GOD.

6. So have I personally had to do, and must still do. Otherwise I would have been terrified and enervated when I saw the Pope, and bishops, emperors, kings and all the world, opposed to the doctrine they ought to sustain. I would have been overwhelmed, thinking, “They, too, are men and cannot all be followers of the devil.” How could I comfort myself and stand firm unless I were able to say: “Though ten other worlds and everything great, lofty, wise and prudent, and all my dear friends and brethren as well, should turn from me, the doctrine still remains true. It stands; it will not, like men, totter and fall. I will adhere to the Word of God, stand or fall what may.”

7. The Christian must be discerning enough to strip the individual of his mask — of his great pomp and majesty — and distinguish it from the Word. He who cannot so do, cannot stand under temptation; let one fall, and he will soon follow suit.

8. Such is the nature of the Church in its earthly government that human wisdom must stumble thereat; various sects of the offended must rise in opposition to the faith. But God delights to rule, not with the sword or with visible power, but through weakness and in opposition to the devil and the world. Seemingly, he would permit his Church to be utterly overthrown. Guard against and resist offenses as well as we may — and the practice is not without its efficacy — still we must ultimately be driven to say defiantly: “He who established the Church and has to this time preserved it, will continue to protect it. Man would not rule it wisely, but the living Christ is seated upon the throne whereon God placed him, and we shall see who can pull him down and destroy his Church.”

PAUL'S SUFFERINGS FOR THE CHURCH'S GOOD.

9. When the trying hour arrives, we are able to accomplish about as little against the enemy as Paul when he lay in chains powerless to succor a soul. He was obliged to commit his cause to the Lord. At the same time, as a faithful apostle, he ceased not, though removed from his followers, to admonish and warn to the full extent of his power. Well he knew that many false apostles were ready, so sure as he said a word, to pervert it and to fill the ears of the people with their own empty words and poisonous teaching. He elsewhere complains (^{सू15} 2 Timothy 1:15) that by the influence of this class all Asia was turned away from him. He had reference to the nearest neighbors of the Ephesians in Asia.

10. For the sake of affording his converts comfort and strength, Paul proceeds to make his sufferings and tribulations pleasing to them by speaking of these afflictions in unusual and beautiful terms. He presents a view quite opposed to the opinion of the world and the judgment of calumniators. "My sufferings and tribulations," says Paul, "which to you and the world, viewed in a fleshy way, are most disastrous, really work you no injury nor disadvantage, notwithstanding what the pernicious babblers claim about such trials. Rather, they are beneficial to you and me. Though your enemies seek thus to injure you to the fullest extent, benefits they never foresee will accrue to us.

"My sufferings are not for my own sake, but yours. They work your benefit; it is better for you as it is, than for me to be present and preach to you. And how so? Because I suffer only for the sake of the ministry, for that Gospel I delivered you. I risk my life and all I have that you may hold it fast; such is my earnest desire. I contend for and cleave to, at the risk of my life, that which Christ gave me and enjoined upon me. Thus by my chains and bands I honor and establish the Gospel, that you may be strengthened and may cleave more firmly to it.

11. "So we shall joyfully transform the tribulation imposed by the world in an attempt to inflict great evils: God will have to pronounce the sentence: 'Hear, O world, devil, emperor, tyrant! Thou hast imprisoned my apostle Paul for the sake of my godly Christians. What injury have they done thee? what fault committed? With no wrong on their part, thou persecutest them. It is simply because I gave them my Word; therefore thou art opposing and defying me. What shall I say but that thou hast imprisoned and bound, not Paul, but me? Is it not insupportable that a perishable worm, be he emperor

or prince, should presume to apprehend God in heaven? But thinkest thou I will remain silent and unprotesting? Thinkest thou I will not break chains, stocks and bands, and give command: Hold thou, devil and tyrant, and submit! Let me rule, substituting for one Paul, ten; and for one Church at Ephesus establishing thirty, yes, a hundred.”

12. And as in Paul’s time, so today: when our enemies get hold of an evangelical preacher, either he must secretly be drowned or murdered, or he must publicly be hanged or burned. Why is it? Because of the Christians to whom he has taught his doctrine. For a while God looks on serenely. He says: “Beloved lords, be not enraged. Know you whom you have apprehended and murdered? It is I, the Divine Majesty. It was not their own word and command but mine which these preachers taught and my Christians believed. You cannot deny the fact. I must, then, consider how to secure myself against your wrath. How shall I do it? Indeed, by way of returning your favors and kindnesses, I must so arrange that where one town had a minister and the Gospel, ten, yes twenty, towns must have their pastor and preachers. I will, O Pope and bishops, invade your own dioceses and you must tolerate and accept the Gospel, whether to your joy or your grief. If you begin to rave, I will give you cause for alarm, for you shall be overthrown, bishops, hats and all.”

13. Note, when Paul says he suffers for the Ephesians, he means that his suffering is for their profit, to teach them they have nothing to fear in suffering. They, not he, are the subjects of concern in this matter. His pains are not merely those of Paul — upon whom not so much depends — but of an apostle or preacher of the Church of Christ. When the latter name is associated with the suffering, when it is not John or Peter who is cast into prison — that God might tolerate — but a minister of the Church, then the deed is a too gross jesting with the majesty of God; it is tempting him too far, yes apprehending him.

14. It was necessary that Paul give his converts this admonition: “Dear children, fear not. Do not be alarmed at my arrest and intended execution. Let our enemies put forth their utmost effort. You shall see how I will rend the cords and burst the prison, humiliating them until they lie in ashes; the place of one resister of the Gospel will be filled by ten who preach it.”

CHRIST PERSECUTED IN CHRISTIANS.

Since Paul's enemies refuse instruction and will not cease their raging, since they refuse to learn against whom they rage, he must make known to them who is the object of their persecution. It is neither Paul nor an apostle, but he to whom it was said (<19B001>Psalm 110:1), "Sit thou at my right hand." It is a perilous thing to take liberties with him. He is now seated where he will brook no suffering. The enemies of the Christians must behold such things as did the Jews who delivered Paul into the Emperor's hands, and as the Romans witnessed. Soon after Paul's execution, Jerusalem lay in ashes, and not a great while after, the city of Rome was destroyed. For when Christ was oppressed, when in the person of his apostles and martyrs he was seized and put to death, he had no alternative but to destroy a whole city. And Germany may expect a similar fate.

NO MAN CAN MERIT ETERNAL LIFE FOR ANOTHER.

15. It is unnecessary here to reply to those wicked and illiterate dolts, the Papists and Anabaptist factions, who explain Paul's words, "my tribulations for you," and similar passages, as teaching that one Christian can by his sufferings merit or aid in the salvation of others. Paul does not say, "My tribulations for you are designed to secure for you forgiveness of sins and salvation." He clearly declares, as the Scriptures everywhere do, that only Christ's sufferings are thus effective and for all men. Paul's thought may well be expressed — and every minister may say the same — in these words: "My preaching and my suffering are for your sake." Just as a parent may say to a child, "I must do or endure this for you."

True, works wrought and sufferings endured for another's sake are productive of the good and comfort of that one or of many, but the worker or sufferer does not thereby merit, either for himself or another, God's grace and eternal life. No, these things demand the offices of a being of another order — Christ. He through his sufferings exterminates your sins, and through his death gives you life. Then again, Paul is addressing those already Christians and having forgiveness of sins and all the requirements of a Christian; yet he suffers for them; that is, for their good — that in proportion as his enemies seek to oppose the Gospel, its influence may be widened and the faith of his followers strengthened.

16. In the effort to comfort and strengthen the Ephesians, Paul yet further glorifies and extols his tribulations in the words “which are your glory.” What unheard of talk is this? Is it not much rather, as reason dictates and as all the world affirms, a disgrace to his followers that he lies there in prison? What greater dishonor can Christians suffer than to have their ministers and pastors — their instructors and consolers — shamefully arrested? So it seems to the world, it is true; but I tell you, in God’s sight and in reality, this trial is a great honor to you, one of which you may proudly boast. This very disgrace and provocation you may turn squarely to your good, saying: “From the very fact of our disgrace, I know the doctrine is true and divine. For it is the lot of the Word of God and of salutary doctrine, together with the supporters of the same, to be defamed and persecuted by the world and the devil.” Such persecution is but glory and honor to Christians. Paul says in ^{<418>}Romans 5:3, “We rejoice in our tribulations.” In other words, we regard them as glorious, beneficial, precious, blessed.

CHRISTIANS TO REJOICE IN PERSECUTIONS.

17. Christians should not, and cannot, have their glory in the things the world esteems and honors; for the world will not, nor can it, honor even God and his Word. Christ’s followers, then, should not be terrified at such treatment as Paul received nor feel disgraced. Let them rather rejoice, deriving comfort and glory therefrom, as did the apostles. We read (^{<403>}Acts 4:13) of their boldness, and (^{<454>}Acts 5:41) that they rejoiced in being “counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name.” So it fared with Christ himself, and Christians ought to be grieved if it be otherwise with them and if the world regard them in a kindly way. In proportion as the world persecutes them and heaps upon them its malice, should they rejoice. Let them accept persecution as a good indication, regarding themselves blessed, as Christ teaches in ^{<451>}Matthew 5:11. So much for the first part of our text; now follows the second:

*“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father [of our Lord Jesus Christ],
from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.”*

PREACHING MUST BE FOLLOWED BY PRACTICE.

18. Having comforted his followers concerning his tribulations, Paul tells them it is his earnest petition, his longing, that God would grant them

power to cleave in firm faith to the Gospel, not forsaking it or growing weary when they have to endure affronts and tribulations, but firmly resisting these. It is not enough merely to accept the Gospel, or even to preach it. Acceptance must be followed by that spiritual power which renders faith firm and manifests steadfastness in conflicts and temptations; for “the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power,” as Paul says, ~~1~~1 Corinthians 4:20. There must be a motive force consisting of the inner belief of the heart and the outward proofs of faith: not mere speaking, but doing: not mere talking, but living. Conditions must be such that the Word does not simply remain on the tongue and in the ears, but becomes operative and accomplishes something. In the Old Testament dispensation, Moses preached much indeed, and the people practiced little; but here Paul desires that much be done and little said. He would not have the Gospel preached in vain, but desires that it accomplish the object of its revelation.

19. Note how Paul devotes himself to the welfare of the Christian community. He sets an example, to us ministers in particular, of how to effect the good of the people. But we do not rightly heed his example. We imagine it sufficient to hear the Gospel and be able to discourse about it; we stop at the mere knowledge of it; we never avail ourselves of the Gospel’s power in the struggles of life. Unquestionably, the trouble is, we do not earnestly pray. We ought constantly to come to God with great longing, entreating him day and night to give the Word power to move men’s hearts. David says (~~1983~~ Psalm 68:33), “Lo, he uttereth his voice, a mighty voice.”

20. Not only preachers, but all Christians, should constantly entreat the God who grants knowledge to grant also efficacy; should beseech him that the Word may not pass with the utterance, but may manifest itself in power. The prevailing complaint at present is that much preaching obtains, but no practice; that the people are shamefully rude, cold and indolent, and less active than ever, while at the same time they enjoy the strong, clear light of revelation concerning all right and wrong in the world. Well may we pray, then, as Paul does here. He says, in effect: “You are well supplied: the Word is richly proclaimed to you — abundantly poured out upon you. But! bend my knees to God, praying that he may add his blessing to the Word and grant you to behold his honor and praise and to be firmly established, that the Word may grow in you and yield fruit.”

21. Feelingly does Paul speak of praying for his followers. He seems to say: “I must lie here imprisoned, not privileged to be with you or to aid you in any way but by bending my knees — that is, entreating and imploring God earnestly and in deep humility — to the end that God may grant you, may effect in you, what neither myself nor any other human being can accomplish — what I could not do even were I free and ever present with you.”

TRUE PRAYER CONSISTS NOT IN OUTWARD THINGS.

22. Observe, the apostle alludes to his prayer by naming its outward expression — bending the knees. But the external posture, if accompanied by nothing else, is sheer hypocrisy. When prayer is genuine, possessing the fire by which it is kindled, prompted by a sincere heart which recognizes its need and likewise the blessings that are ours as proclaimed in the Word, and when faith in God’s Word — in his promise — revives, then the individual will be possessed with a fervor prompting him to fall upon his knees and pray for strength and for the power of the Spirit. When the Spirit of prayer is enkindled and burns within the heart, the body will responsively assume the proper attitude; involuntarily, eyes and hands will be upraised and knees bended. Witness the examples of Moses, David and even Christ himself.

When we pray with glowing hearts, external gestures will take care of themselves. They are prompted by the Spirit, and therefore are not to be denounced. If assumed, unbidden of the Spirit, they are hypocritical; as, for instance, when one presumes outwardly to serve God and perform good works while his heart is far away. The prophet says (²²⁹¹³ Isaiah 29:13), “This people draw nigh unto me, and with their mouth and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me?”

23. By the declaration, “I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” Paul establishes the doctrine that no one should presume to speak to God, to entreat him for any favor, unless approaching, as Paul does here, in the name of “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” For Christ is our sole Mediator, and no one need expect to be heard unless he approach the Father in the name of that Mediator and confess him Lord given of God as intercessor for us and ruler of our bodies and souls. Prayer according to these conditions is approved. Strong faith, however is necessary to lay hold

of the comforting Word, picturing God in our hearts as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

24. The statement that Christ is our Lord is very comforting, though we have made it terrifying by regarding Christ as a stern and angry judge, But the fact is, he is Lord for the sole purpose of securing us against harsh lords, tyrants, the devil, the world, death, sin and every sort of misfortune. We are his inheritance, and therefore he will espouse our cause, deliver us from violence and oppression of all kinds and better our condition.

The name “Lord,” then, is altogether lovable and comforting to us who believe, and gives us confidence of heart. But still more comforting is it to know that our God, our Lord, is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The name “Lord” stands for the complete Godhead, who gives himself to us. Therefore, all we ask in this name must be abundantly bestowed. Naught is here for me but real help and pure grace. For God designs to have me his child in Christ, placed above all things temporal and eternal.

GOD OUR FATHER.

25. Paul further declares that God is not merely a father, but the true Father, “from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.” Earthly fathers are so called because in a flesh and blood way they have begotten us, or on account of their age and their claim to honor. It is the universal custom to apply the term “father” to an old master. In ~~1~~¹2 Kings 5:13, for instance, the servants of Naaman called their lord “father.” Paul’s thought is: “All fatherhood on earth is but a semblance, a shadow, a painted image, in comparison with the divine Fatherhood of God.”

26. But reason can never see it so. And only by the Spirit’s work can the heart recognize the fact. Reason may go so far as to regard God an angry and terrible judge, one who makes the world, even hell itself, too narrow for it and leaves it without a foothold. But it is impossible for natural reason to call God a father in sincerity; much less to regard him the divine Father, preeminent over all who bear the name of “father” in heaven or on earth, of whom all other fathers are as mirror reflections.

27. Think of the attitude of an earthly father toward his child, and of the child toward his father. Even where actual parenthood is lacking, the name engenders a confidence affectionate and pleasing enough to kindle the brightest anticipations of great good to be received. Now, if the sincere,

loyal designs of earthly fathers for their children are mere pretense compared to the blessed purposes of our heavenly Father, what must we look for from this heavenly Father, this Father above all others Paul would teach us to look at the proportions, and from the confidence we repose in our natural fathers estimate the character of God as a Father and what we may expect from him.

28. He who can put his trust in God, who can confidently rely upon him and sincerely cry, “Thou art my beloved Father!” need not fear to ask anything of God, or that God will at all deny him. His own heart will tell him that his petitions will be granted. Because of the strength of his confidence, he cannot fail to secure his heart’s desires. Thus God himself teaches us to break open heaven and lay him bare before our eyes that we may see who this Father is.

[Thus Paul is confident what he asks is pleasing to God and will be granted. If we did the same we would, doubtless, have a like experience. There are still people who pray. It would be a blessing if there were many more. Then the Gospel would make greater progress and impart to us greater power. It is evident, God be praised, that all who rage against the Gospel must be put to shame. The more they rage, the more the Gospel spreads, and all without our help or counsel, only because God awakens hearts to pray that it may prosper, even without our help. The more fervently we pray, the greater is God’s pleasure to hear.]

29. What is the nature of the prayer Paul here presents? It is the same as the Lord’s Prayer, being particularly identical with the first, second and third petitions. In words of different sound but implying the very same thing, Paul briefly embraces these petitions — the hallowing of God’s name and Word in our midst, and the destruction of the devil’s kingdom and all evil — whatever is opposed to the Word and will of God. He says:

*“That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory,
that ye may be strengthened with power.”*

GOD LAVISH IN HIS BLESSINGS.

30. Sublime words are these, wrung from a fervent heart. Evidently, in the effort to express himself fully, clearly and in language worthy of his subject, the apostle finds words too weak and rare. The fervor of his heart

can be but poorly portrayed. By the phrase, “according to the riches of his glory,” Paul means to say: “Such is the greatness of God’s glory, it deserves the title of riches. For it is conducive to God’s honor and praise that he gives abundantly.” These words reveal the nature of God, proclaiming him the source whence we may expect all good, and all aid in time of need. He is God of all the world. The reason the world has made many gods, has invoked many saints, is because it looks to them for aid and benefit. The Scriptures term “gods” certain individuals who do good and lend assistance to their fellows. God says to Moses (~~Exodus~~ Exodus 7:1), “I have made thee as God [a god] to Pharaoh.”

31. But God, because of the abundance and lavishness of his gifts, is entitled to greater honor and glory. He is the true God, to whom alone belongs all glory; yea, the riches of glory. He pours out his blessings abundantly and above measure; he is the source of all blessings in heaven and on earth. Even his most inferior creatures — water, air, the earth and its products — are so generously bestowed that we can appropriate only an infinitesimal part of them. Yet in our blindness and stupidity we do not see, yea, we utterly ignore the fact that God is the giver of these. Now, how much more generous is God in spiritual blessings! He has freely given himself — poured out himself — for us, and also gifts and blessings of the highest order. He has illumined us with a light bright enough to reveal to us the real character of the world, the devil and the angels. Yes, to show to us God’s purposes, present, past and future. Thus we have all wisdom and all power over sin, the devil and death, being lords of all creatures. In a word, our riches are inexpressibly great.

32. Paul employs forcible words to record his prayer here. He has firm confidence in God that the petition must be efficacious, must penetrate the clouds and open heaven. He does not say that God looks upon our merit and worthiness and for the sake of these grants our requests; but for the sake of the riches of his glory. We are not worthy his favors, but his glory is worthy of our recognition, and we are to honor him because he gratuitously lavishes his blessings upon us, that his name alone may be hallowed. Only with a recognition of these facts may prayer be offered if it is to avail before God. If God were to consider our merit, very small would be the portion due us. But if we are to be richly blessed, it must come about through our recognition of pure grace as the source of our gifts, and our praise of God’s exceeding glory.

33. But what are the blessings for which Paul's prayer entreats? Something more than continuance of the Word with his followers, though it is a great and good gift even to have the Word thoroughly taught: he prays that the heart may taste the Word and that it may be effectual in the life. Thus the apostle contrasts a knowledge of the Word with the power of the Word. Many have the knowledge, but few the impelling and productive power that the results may be as we teach. Hence they are criticized and not without reason. But our enemies cannot censure and reproach us to greater extent than to say that we preach and accept much good doctrine to no purpose; that no one practices it and profits thereby; that in fact we are morally worse than before we heard the doctrines, and consequently it would have been better had things remained as they were.

WE SHOULD PRAY FOR THE POWER OF THE WORD.

34. What answer shall we make? This: In the first place, considering our unsatisfactory condition and the lack of power with the Word, we have great reason to pray with the earnestness Paul's example teaches. And secondly, though our enemies see little improvement and few fruits of the Gospel, it is not theirs to judge. They think we ought to do nothing but work miracles — raising the dead and bordering the Christian's walk with roses, until naught but holiness obtains everywhere. This being the case, where would be the need to pray? We cannot, nor dare we, pray for what we already have, but must thank God for it. But, since Paul and other Scripture authorities command us to pray, a defect somewhere in our strength is indicated. Otherwise why say they so much about it?

Thus Paul himself acknowledges the Ephesians were weak. He complains of the same weakness in other Epistles and especially in those to the Corinthians. Everywhere he urges them to do and live as they had been taught. The only reason Paul advocates this is that he saw, as we now see, that everywhere they fail, and things are not as they should be.

In spite of the fact that not everyone's conduct is satisfactory, some do mend their ways; and the happy condition obtains that many consciences are assured and many former evils are now avoided. If the two sides of the question were carefully compared, we would see much advantage with us not now noticed. Again, even though we are somewhat weak, is that any reason for saying all is lost? Further, there is naught else but filth and corruption in the ranks of our enemies, which they would gladly adorn with

our weakness even. But they must look upon their way as excellent and ours as odious.

35. Let them go on with their judging. We admit we are not all strong, but it is also true that were there no weakness in our ranks, we would have no need of prayer, perseverance, exhortation and daily preaching. In condemning the Gospel because of our admitted weakness, something we ourselves confess, our enemies are themselves judged before God by their judging us. It is possible for me to be truly in the kingdom of grace and at the same time outwardly weak enough to be regarded of men as a knave. My faith is not apparent to men, but God sees it and I am myself sensible of it. You meantime erroneously judge me by my outward conduct, thus bringing judgment upon yourself. We are aware of, and also lament, our weakness and imperfection. Hence we cry and groan, and pray to God to grant us strength and power.

WORLD SEES NOT INNER MARKS OF CHRISTIANS.

36. A third answer to our enemies is: We are certain that wherever the Word of God is proclaimed, the fruits of the same must exist. We have the Word of God, and therefore the Spirit of God must be with us. And where the Spirit is, faith must obtain, however weak it may be. Though visible evidence may be lacking, yet inevitably there must be some among us who daily pray, while we may not be aware of it. It is reasonably to be expected that our enemies should judge erroneously, because they look for outward evidences of Christianity, which are not forthcoming.

The Word is too sublime to pass under our judgment; it is the province of the Word to judge us. The world, however, while unwilling to be judged and convicted by us, essays to judge and convict the Word of God. Here God steps in. It would be a pity for the worldly to see a godly Christian, so God blinds them and they miss his kingdom. As Isaiah says (²³⁶⁰Isaiah 26:10): "In the land of uprightness will he deal wrongfully, and will not behold the majesty of Jehovah." For this reason, few real Christians come under the observation of cavilers; the latter, in general, observe fools and fanatics, at whom they maliciously stumble and take offense. They are unworthy to behold God's honor in a godly Christian upon whom the Lord has poured out himself in fullness of blessing.

37. Let the real Christian come into the presence of [the caviler, stand before his very eyes, and the caviler will not see him. Let the fault-finder hear that

one leads an irreproachable life and he will say: “Heretics have behaved similarly, but under a good appearance concealed poison.” Let one be refractory and reckless, and he must be a knave. Whatever we do, they are not satisfied. If we pipe, they will not dance; if we mourn, they will not lament. Neither sweet nor sour appeals to them. Wisdom must permit her

self to be schooled and governed by these cavilers, as Christ says in ~~4019~~ Matthew 11:19. Thus God confounds and shames the world; while all the time tolerating its judgment of himself, he is ever careful to have the Gospel inculcated, even though the worldly burst with rage. I say these things to teach us to be careful not to join the caviler in judging presumptuously the work and Word of God. Notwithstanding our weakness, we are yet certain the kingdom of God is in our midst so long as we have his Word and daily pray for its efficacy and for an increase of our faith, as the following words recommend:

*“That ye may be strengthened with power
through his Spirit in the inward man.”*

THE SPIRIT IMPARTS REAL STRENGTH.

38. The apostle here speaks with varied expression. He leaves little honor and glory, as it were, for free-will, but desires for his followers the heavenly power imparted through the Holy Spirit. There is also a power of the world, and a spirit — the devil, the prince of the world, who blinds and hardens men’s hearts. He boasts of himself and imparts to men a spirit of daring in his purpose to suppress and exterminate Christian doctrine. But while worldings are courageous and daring, so are Christians, and the latter are greater and far more powerful through the Holy Spirit, and are undaunted by the world, the devil, death and all kinds of misfortune. This is real spiritual strength. The Hebrew word “spirit” might well be rendered “bold, undaunted courage.” Spiritual strength is not the strength of muscle and bone; it is true courage — boldness of heart. Weakness, on the contrary, is faint-heartedness, timidity, lack of courage.

39. Paul’s meaning, then, is: “I desire for you, and pray God to grant you, that bold, dauntless courage and that strong, cheerful spirit which will not be terrified by poverty, shame, sin, the devil or death, but is confident that nothing can harm us and we will never be in need.” The courage of the world — the spirit of the world — holds out only until exhaustion of the stores whereon it relies. As the saying is, “Wealth gives temporal boldness,

but the soul must rely on God alone.” The boldness resulting from riches and worldly power is haughty and makes its boast in earthly things. But the soul has no hoarded treasure. In God alone it braves every evil; it has a courage and heart very different from that of the world.

This is the strength for which Paul prays on behalf of his converts, a strength not inherent in flesh and blood. The possessor thereof does not rely and build on his own powers and riches, nor upon any human help and support. This strength dwells in the inner man. It is the trust of the dauntless, cheerful heart in God’s grace and assistance, and in these alone. The heart which so trusts has no fear. It possesses by faith abundance of riches and pleasures — God himself with all his blessings. At the same time, to human sight only want, weakness and terror may be apparent.

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.”

40. The Holy Spirit brings Christ into the heart and teaches it to know him. He imparts warmth and courage through faith in Christ. Paul everywhere intimates that no man should presume to approach God otherwise than through Christ, the one Mediator. Now, if Christ dwells in my heart and regulates my entire life, it matters not though my faith be weak. Christ is not mere bone but also flesh. Yes, he has blisters and boils and sins of which he is not ashamed, notwithstanding the eminent saints may hold their noses thereat. And where he dwells all fullness is, let the individual be weak or strong as God permits.

CHRIST EMBRACED ONLY BY THE HEART.

41. For Christ to dwell in the heart is simply for the heart to know him; in other words, to understand who he is and what we are to expect from him — that he is our Savior, through whom we may call God our Father and may receive the Spirit who imparts courage to brave all trials. It is thus that Christ dwells with us, in our hearts. Only so can he be embraced; for he is not an inanimate thing, but the living God. How does man lay hold of the Savior in the heart? Not by embracing him intellectually. It is accomplished only by living faith. Christ will not permit himself to be received by works, nor to be apprehended with mental vision; he will consent only to be embraced by the heart. If your faith be true and on a firm foundation, you have and feel Christ in your heart and are aware of all he thinks and does in heaven and on earth — how he rules through his Word and his Spirit, and the attitude of those who have Christ and those who have him not.

42. Paul desires Christ to be efficacious in the hearts of his followers unto the full realization of the promises of the Word — liberation from sin and death, and assurance of grace and eternal life. It is impossible for the heart having such experience to be other than firm and courageous to oppose the terrors of the devil and the world. But the heart which has not yet arrived at this point is here advised what course to take, namely, to pray God for such faith and strength, and to avail himself of the prayers of others to the same end. So much in regard to faith; now follows the mention of love.

“That ye, being rooted and grounded in love.”

LOVE, THE EXPRESSION OF FAITH.

43. This is an unusual way of speaking. Is it not in faith that we are to be rooted, engrafted and grounded? Why, then, does Paul here substitute “love?” I reply: Faith, it is true, is the essential thing, but love shows whether or no faith is real and the heart confident and courageous in God. Where one has an unquestioning confidence that God is his Father, necessarily, be his faith never so weak, that faith must find expression in word and deed. He will serve his neighbor in teaching and in extending to him a helping hand. This is what Paul calls being rooted and grounded in love — having the conscious experience of possessing true faith. Love is the test that determines the reality of faith. Peter says (~~6010~~ 2 Peter 1:10), “Give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure.” That is, proceed to good works that others may see and you experience that you have true faith. Until you do, you will always be uncertain, vacillating, superficial in heart, not rooted and grounded. So by these two clauses Paul teaches, first, that we should have in our hearts genuine faith toward God; and second, that faith should find expression in loving service to one’s neighbor.

*“May be strong to apprehend with all the saints
what is the breadth and length and height and depth.”*

TRUE CHRISTIANS FIND CHRIST EVERYWHERE.

44. These words represent another feature of the apostle’s desire for his Christians to be established and comforted in God through faith, and rooted and grounded in love toward their neighbors. “When you are thus strengthened,” he would say, “and are perseveringly pressing forward, you will be able to grasp with all saints the four parts, to increase therein and to

appreciate them more and more.” Faith alone effects this apprehension. Love is not the moving force here, but it contributes by making faith manifest.

45. Some teachers would make these words reflect and measure the holy cross. But Paul does not say a word about the cross. He simply says, in effect: “That you may apprehend all things; may see the length and breadth, the height and depth, of Christ’s kingdom.” This condition obtains when my heart has reached the point where Christ cannot make the spiritual life too long or too wide for me to follow, nor high enough or deep enough to cause my fall from him or his Word; the point where I may be satisfied that wherever I go he is, and that he rules in all places, however long or broad, deep or high, the situation from either a temporal or eternal point of view. No matter how long or wide I measure, I find him everywhere. David says (<19D907>Psalm 139:7-8): “Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there.” Christ rules eternally. His length and breadth, his depth and height, are unlimited. If I descend into hell, my heart and my faith tell me he is there.

46. The sum of the matter is this: Depressed or exalted, circumscribed in whatsoever way, dragged hither or thither, I still find Christ. For he holds in his hands everything in heaven or on earth, and all are subject to him — angels, the devil, the world, sin, death and hell. Therefore, so long as he dwells in my heart, I have courage, wherever I go, I cannot be lost. I dwell where Christ my Lord dwells. This, however, is a situation impossible to reason. Should reason ascend a yard above the earth or descend a yard below, or be deprived of the tangible things of the present, it would have to despair. We Christians are, through Christ, better fortified. We are assured that he dwells everywhere, be it in honor or dishonor, hunger, sorrow, illness, imprisonment, death or life, blessing or affliction. It is Paul’s desire for the Ephesians that God give them grace and strength to have such heart-apprehension of his kingdom. He concludes the details of his prayer in these words:

*“And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge,
that ye may be filled unto all the fullness of God.”*

47. He means: “I desire you, in addition to having faith and apprehending the four proportions of Christ’s kingdom, to know the love of Christ we should have — the love Christ bears toward us, and the love we owe our

neighbor. This knowledge transcends all other, even familiarity with the Gospel; for, know as much as *you may*, your knowledge will avail little or nothing without love.

48. Paul's desire, briefly summed up, is that the faith of Christians may be strengthened unto efficacy, and that love may be warm and fervent, and the heart filled with the fullness of God. "Filled unto all the fullness of God" means, if we follow the Hebrew, filled with everything God's bounty supplies, full of God, adorned with his grace and the gifts of his Spirit — the Spirit who gives us steadfastness, illuminates us with his light, lives within us his life, saves us with his salvation, and with his love enkindles love in us; in short, it means having God himself and all his blessings dwelling in us in fullness and being effective to make us wholly divine — not so that we possess merely something of God, but all his fullness.

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

49. Much has been written about the way we are to become godlike. Some have constructed ladders whereby we are to ascend to heaven, and others similar things. But this is all patchwork. In this passage is designated the truest way to attain godlikeness. It is to become filled to the utmost with God, lacking in no particular; to be completely permeated with him until every word, thought and deed, the whole life in fact, be utterly godly.

50. But let none imagine such fullness can be attained in this life. We may indeed desire it and pray for it, like Paul here, but we will not find a man thus perfect. We stand, however, upon the fact that we desire such perfection and groan after it. So long as we live in the flesh, we are filled with the fullness of Adam. Hence it is necessary for us continually to pray God to replace our weakness with courage, and to put into our hearts his Spirit to fill us with grace and strength and rule and work in us absolutely. We ought all to desire this state for one another. To this end may God grant us grace. Amen.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~ROME~~ **EPHESIANS 4:1-6.**

1 I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, 2 with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.

THE CHRISTIAN CALLING AND UNITY.

1. This, too, is a beautiful sermon, delivered by Paul to the Ephesians, concerning the good works of Christians, who believe and are obedient to the doctrine of the Gospel. In the knowledge of good works Paul desires Christians to grow and increase, as we learned in the epistle for last Sunday. The ground of all doctrine, of all right living, the supreme and eternal treasure of him who is a Christian in the sight of God, is faith in Christ. It alone secures forgiveness of sins and makes us children of God. Now, where this faith is, fruits should follow as evidence that Christians in their lives honor and obey God. They are necessary for God's glory and for the Christian's own honor and eternal reward before him.

2. Paul, remembering the imprisonment and tribulations he suffered because of the Gospel and for the advantage, as he before said, of the Ephesians, gives the admonition here. He would have them, in return for his sufferings, honor the Gospel in their lives. First he names a general rule of life for Christians.

“To walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called.”

THE CHRISTIAN CALLING.

- 3.** The chief thing that should influence a Christian's outward walk is the remembrance of his calling and appointment by God. He should be mindful of why he is called a Christian, and live consistently. He must shine before the world; that is, through his life and God's work, the Word and the name of Christ the Lord must be exalted. Christ exhorts his disciples: "Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." ^{<41516>}Matthew 5:16.
- 4.** Similarly, Paul would say: "You have received God's grace and his Word and are a blessed people. In Christ all your needs are blessedly supplied. Be mindful of this and remember you are called to a far different and vastly higher life than others know. Show by your manner of living that you seek a higher good than the world seeks — indeed, that you have received far greater blessings. Let your lives honor and glorify the Lord who has given you such blessings. Give no occasion for dishonoring your treasured faith, or for scorning his Word. Rather, influence men by your godly walk and good works to believe in Christ and to glorify him."
- 5.** Let the Christian know his earthly life is not unto himself, nor for his own sake; his life and work here belong to Christ, his Lord. Hence must his walk be such as shall contribute to the honor and glory of his Master, whom he should so serve that he may be able to say with Paul, not only with respect to the spiritual life — the life of faith and of righteousness by grace — but also with respect to its fruits — the outward conduct: "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me." ^{<8121>}Galatians 2:20. The Christian's manner of life may be styled "walking in Christ"; yes, as Paul elsewhere has it (^{<5134>}Romans 13:14), "putting on" the Lord Jesus Christ, like a garment or an ornament. The world is to recognize Christ by his shining in us.
- 6.** But the so-called Christian life that does not honor Christ makes its sin the more heinous for the name it bears. Every sin the people of God commit is a provocation of Jehovah; not only in the act of disobedience itself, but also in the transgression of the second commandment. The enormity of the sin is magnified by the conditions that make it a blasphemy of God's name and an occasion of offense to others. Paul says in ^{<8124>}Romans 2:24: "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." So a Christian should, in his life, by all means guard the honor of God — of Christ. He must take heed that he be not guilty of

blaspheming that name and of doing wickedness. The devil, aided by the world, construes every act, when possible, to reflect upon God's honor and glory. His purpose is to manifest his bitter hatred against Christ and the Word; also to injure the Church by charging offenses, thus deterring unbelievers from embracing the Gospel and causing the weak to fall away.

7. To guard against such disaster, Christians should be particularly careful to give, in their conduct, no occasion for offense, and to value the name and honor of their God too highly to permit blasphemy of them. They should prefer to lose their own honor, their wealth, their physical well-being, even their lives, rather than that these, their most precious possessions and greatest blessings, should suffer disgrace. Let them remember that upon keeping sacred the name and honor of God depends their own standing before God and men. God promises (~~(102)~~ 1 Samuel 2:30), "Them that honor me! will honor." But pursuing the opposite course, Christians bring upon themselves God's sternest wrath and effect their own rejection and shame. For he says further: "They that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." And in the second commandment God threatens certain and terrible punishment to abusers of his name; that is, to them who do not employ it to his honor and praise.

8. Well may every Christian examine his own life to see if he is careful to guard against offense to the Gospel and to regulate his words and conduct by God's first commandment, making them contribute to the honor and praise of the divine name and the holy Gospel. Weighty indeed and well calculated to cause complaint are the sins to which every Christian is liable in this respect; well may he avoid them lest he heap to himself the wrath of God. Especially need we be careful in these last and evil times when the Gospel is everywhere suppressed by great offenses. Man was created to be the image of God, that through this his image God might himself be expressed. God's image, then, should be reflected in the lives of men as a likeness in a glass, and a Christian can have no higher concern than to live without dishonor to the name of God.

ADMONITION TO SPECIAL CHRISTIAN VIRTUES.

9. Such is the first part of Paul's admonition concerning the general life of Christians. He goes on to make special mention of several good works which Christians should diligently observe: humility, meekness, long-suffering, preservation of the unity of the Spirit, and so on. These have

been specially treated before, in other epistle lessons, particularly those from Peter. Humility, for instance — mentioned in today's lesson — is taken up the third Sunday after Trinity; patience and meekness, the second Sunday after Easter, and the fifth Sunday after Trinity.

10. The text here presents good works sufficient to occupy all Christians in every station of life; we need not seek other nor better ones. Paul would not impose upon Christians peculiar works, something unrelated to the ordinary walks of life, as certain false saints taught and practiced. These teachers commanded separation from society, isolation in the wilderness, the establishment of monasteries and the performance of self-appointed works. Such works they exalted as superior to ordinary Christian virtues. Indeed, their practice amounted to rejection of the latter, and they actually regarded them as dangerous. The Papacy has in the past shamelessly styled the observance of Christian good works as worldly living, and men were compelled to believe they would find it hard to reach heaven unless they became ecclesiasts — for they regarded only the monks and priests worthy — or at least made themselves partakers of the works of ecclesiasts by purchasing their merits.

But Paul — in fact, the entire Scriptures — teaches no other good works than God enjoins upon all men in the Ten Commandments, and which pertain to the common conditions of life. True, these make not such brilliant show in the eyes of the world as do the self-appointed ceremonials constituting the divine service of hypocrites; nevertheless, they are true, worthy, good and profitable works in the sight of God and man. What can be more acceptable to God and advantageous to man than a life lived, in its own calling, in the way that contributes to the honor of God, and that by its example influences others to love God's Word and to praise his name? Moreover, what virtues, of all man possesses, serve him better than humility, meekness, patience and harmony of mind?

11. Now, where is a better opportunity for the exercise of these virtues than amidst the conditions in which God destined us to live — in society, where we mingle with one another? Upon these conditions, self-appointed, unusual lives and monastic holiness have no bearing. For what other person is profited by your entering a cloister, making yourself peculiar, refusing to live as your fellows do? Who is benefited by your cowl, your austere countenance, your hard bed? Who comes to know God or to have a peaceful conscience by such practices on your part, or who is thereby

influenced to love his neighbor? Indeed, how can you serve your neighbor by such a life? How manifest your love, humility, patience and meekness if you are unwilling to live among men? if you so strenuously adhere to your self-appointed orders as to allow your neighbor to suffer want before you would dishonor your rules?

12. Astonishing fact, that the world is merged in darkness so great it utterly disregards the Word of God and the conditions he designed for our daily living. If we preach to the world faith in God's Word, the world receives it as heresy. If we speak of works instituted of God himself and conditions of his own appointing, the world regards it as idle talk; it knows better. To live a simple Christian life in one's own family, to faithfully perform the duties of a man-servant or maid-servant — "Oh, that," it says, "is merely the following of worldly pursuits. To do good works you must set about it in a different way. You must creep into a corner, don a cap, make pilgrimages to some saint; then you may be able to help yourself and others to gain heaven." If the question be asked, "Why do so? where has God commanded it?" there is, according to their theory, really no answer to make but this: Our Lord God knows nothing about the matter; he does not understand what good works are. How can he teach us? He must himself be tutored by these remarkably enlightened saints.

FRUITS OF ORIGINAL SIN.

13. But all this error results from that miserable inherent plague, that evil termed "original sin." It is a blind wickedness, refusing to recognize the Word of God and his will and work, but introducing instead things of its own heathenish imagination. It draws such a thick covering over eyes, ears and hearts that it renders men unable to perceive how the simple life of a Christian, of husband or wife, of the lower or the higher walks of life, can be beautified by honoring the Word of God. Original sin will not be persuaded to the faithful performance of the works that God testifies are well pleasing to him when wrought by believers in Christ. In a word, universal experience proves that to perform really good works is a special and remarkable grace to which few attain; while the great mass of souls aspiring after holiness vainly busy themselves with worthless works, being deceived into thinking them great, and thus make themselves, as Paul says, "unto every good work reprobate." ^{<50116>} Titus 1:16. This fruitless effort is one evil result of the error of human ideas of holiness and the practice of self-chosen works.

14. Another error is the hindrance — yes, the suppression and destruction — of the beautiful virtues of humility, meekness, patience and spiritual harmony here commended of Paul. At the same time the devil is given occasion to encourage fiendish blasphemy. In every instance where the Word of God is set aside for humanly-appointed works, differing views and theories must obtain. One introduces this and another that, each striving for first recognition; then a third endeavors to improve upon their doctrine. Consequently divisions and factions ensue as numerous as the teachers and their creeds; as exemplified in the countless sects to this time prevalent in Popedom, and in the factious spirits of all time. Under such circumstances, none of the virtues like humility, meekness, patience, love, can have place. Opposite conditions must prevail, since harmony of hearts and minds is lacking. One teacher haughtily rejects another, and if his own opinions fail to receive recognition and approval, he displays anger, envy and hatred. He will neither affiliate with nor tolerate him whose practices accord not with his own.

15. On the other hand, the Christian life, the life of faith with its fruits, controlled as it is by the Word of God, is in every way conducive to the preservation of love and harmony, and to the promotion of all virtues. It interferes not with the God-ordained relations of life and their attendant obligations upon men — the requirements of social order, the duties of father and mother, of son and daughter, master and mistress, servant and maid. All life's relations are confirmed by it as valid and its duties as vital. The Christian faith bids each person in his life, and all in common, to be diligent in the works of love, humility, patience. It teaches that one be not intolerant of another, but rather render him his due, remembering that he whose condition in life is the most insignificant can be equally upright and blessed before God with the occupant of the most significant position. Again, it teaches that man must have patience with the weakness of his fellow, being mindful of how others must bear with his own imperfections. In short, it says one must manifest to another the love and kindness he would have that other extend to him.

16. To this Christian attainment, contributes very largely the single fact that a Christian is conscious he has, through Christ, the grace of God, the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. And these not for his own merits or peculiar life and works, but because he is, no matter how insignificant in condition before the world, a child of God and blessed; a partaker, if he but believes, in all the blessings of Christ, sharing equally with the most

eminent saint. So, then, he need not look about for works not enjoined upon him. He need not covet those wrought in prominence and by the aid of great gifts of God — of unusual attainments. Let him confine himself to his own sphere; let him serve God in his vocation, remembering that God makes him, too, his instrument in his own place.

Again, the occupant of a higher sphere, the possessor of higher gifts and accomplishments, who likewise serves in his vocation received from God, should learn and exhibit harmony of mind. So shall he continue humble and be tolerant of others. He should remember that he is not worthier in the eyes of God because of his greater gifts, but rather is under deeper obligation to serve his fellows, and that God can use the possessor of lesser gifts for even greater accomplishments than himself can boast. Having so learned, he will be able to manifest patience, meekness and love toward his weak and imperfect neighbors, considering them members of Christ with him, and partakers of the same grace and salvation.

THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT.

17. Now you have the reason why the apostles Paul and Peter everywhere so faithfully enforce this virtue, the unity of the Spirit. It is the most necessary and beautiful grace that Christians possess. It holds together the Christian community, preventing factions and schisms, as before explained. So Paul here admonishes men to be careful for harmony, making every endeavor to preserve it. The term “unity of the Spirit” is used to make plain the apostle’s meaning. He would thus emphasize oneness of doctrine — the one true faith. Since the Holy Spirit is present only where there is knowledge of and faith in the Gospel of Christ, “unity of the Spirit” implies a unity of faith. Above all things, then, the effort must be to preserve, in the Church, the doctrine of the Scriptures, pure and in its unity.

18. One of the wickedest offenses possible to commit against the Church is the stirring up of doctrinal discord and division, a thing the devil encourages to the utmost. This sin usually has its rise with certain haughty, conceited, self-seeking leaders who desire peculiar distinction for themselves and strive for personal honor and glory. They harmonize with none and would think themselves disgraced were they not honored as superior and more learned individuals than their fellows, a distinction they do not merit. They will give honor to no one, even when they have to recognize the superiority of his gifts over their own. In their envy, anger,

hatred and vengefulness, they seek occasion to create factions and to draw people to themselves. Therefore Paul exhorts first to the necessary virtue of love, having which men will be enabled to exercise humility, patience and forbearance toward one another.

19. The character of the evils resulting to the Church from divisions and discords in doctrine is evident from the facts. Many are deceived; the masses immediately respond to new doctrine brilliantly presented in specious words by presumptuous individuals thirsting for fame. More than that, many weak but well-meaning ones fall to doubting, uncertain where to stand or with whom to hold. Consequently men reject and blaspheme the Christian doctrine and seek occasion to dispute it. Many become reckless pleasure-lovers, disregarding all religion and ignoring the Word of God. Further, even they who are called Christians come to have hard feelings against one another, and, figuratively, bite and devour in their hate and envy. Consequently their love grows cold and faith is extinguished.

20. Of so much disturbance in the Church, and of the resulting injuries to souls, are guilty those conceited, factious leaders who do not adhere to the true doctrine, preserving the unity of the Spirit, but seek to institute something new for the sake of advancing their own ideas and their own honor, or gratifying their revenge. They thus bring upon themselves damnation infinitely more intolerable than others suffer. Christians, then, should be careful to give no occasion for division or discord, but to be diligent, as Paul here admonishes, to preserve unity. And this is not an easy thing to do, for among Christians occasions frequently arise provoking self-will, anger and hatred. The devil is always at hand to stir and blow the flame of discord. Let Christians take heed they do not give place to the promptings of the devil and of the flesh. They must strive against them, submitting to all suffering, and performing all demands, whether honor, property, physical welfare or life itself be involved, in the effort to prevent, so far as in them lies, any disturbance of the unity of doctrine, of faith and of Spirit.

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.”

21. Christians should feel bound to maintain the unity of the Spirit, since they are all members of one body and partakers of the same spiritual blessings. They have the same priceless treasures — one God and Father in

heaven, one Lord and Savior, one Word, baptism and faith; in short, one and the same salvation, a blessing common to all whereof one has as much as another, and cannot obtain more. What occasion, then, for divisions or for further seeking?

22. Here Paul teaches what the true Christian Church is and how it may be identified. There is not more than one Church, or people of God, one earth. This one Church has one faith, one baptism, one confession of God the Father and of Jesus Christ. Its members faithfully hold, and abide by, these common truths. Every one desiring to be saved and to come to God *must* be incorporated into this Church, outside of which no one will be saved.

23. Unity of the Church does not consist in similarity of outward form of government, likeness of Law, tradition and ecclesiastical customs, as the Pope and his followers claim. They would exclude from the Church all not obedient to them in these outward things, though members of the one faith, one baptism, and so on. The Church is termed “one holy, catholic or Christian Church,” because it represents one plain, pure Gospel doctrine, and an outward confession thereof, always and everywhere, regardless of dissimilarity of physical life, or of outward ordinances, customs and ceremonies.

24. But they are not members of the true Church of Christ who, instead of preserving unity of doctrine and oneness of Christian faith, cause divisions and offenses — as Paul says (⁴⁵¹⁶⁷Romans 16:17) — by the human doctrines and self-appointed works for which they contend, imposing them upon all Christians as necessary. They are perverters and destroyers of the Church, as we have elsewhere frequently shown. The consolation of the true doctrine is ours, and we hold it in opposition to Popedom, which accuses us of having withdrawn from them, and so condemns us as apostates from the Church. They are, however, themselves the real apostates, persecuting the truth and destroying the unity of the Spirit under the name and title of the Church and of Christ. Therefore, according to the command of God, all men are under obligation to shun them and withdraw from them.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~ROM~~ **1 CORINTHIANS 1:4-9.**

4 I thank my God always concerning you; for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus; 5 that in everything ye were enriched in him, in all utterance and all knowledge; 6 even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: 7 so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ; 8 who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye be unprovable in the clay of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, through whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

TREASURE CHRISTIANS HAVE IN THE GOSPEL.

1. We have before us the opening words of the Epistle to the Corinthians, which Paul was moved to write because of unpleasant conditions in the Church at Corinth after his departure. Divisions had arisen and sad confusion prevailed in doctrine and life. Hence the apostle was constrained to rebuke their wickedness and correct their infirmities. Because of these wholesome admonitions, the reading and heeding of this epistle is not only profitable but essential to this day; for the devil takes no respite, but whenever the Gospel is preached in its purity he mixes with the children of God and sows his seed.

2. Paul intends to be rather severe — yea caustic — but he begins very leniently, showing them what they have received through the Gospel. His purpose is to arouse their gratitude to God, and to induce them, for his honor and glory, to be harmonious in doctrine and life, avoiding divisions and other offenses.

*“I thank my God always concerning you,
for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus,” etc.*

3. In other words, Paul would say: Dear brethren, consider, I pray you, what abundant grace and gifts have been given you of God. They are bestowed not because of the Law, or because of your righteousness, your merits and works; you are given no reason to exalt yourselves above others, or to originate sects or schisms. Nay, all these blessings have been freely given you in Christ and for his sake, through the preaching of the Gospel. The Gospel is a grace which brings to you all manner of gifts, by him enriching you in everything. You lack nothing from God, but you await this one thing, that blessed day when Christ will reveal himself to you with all those heavenly gifts which you now possess in faith.

4. In this wise he extols to them the preaching of the Gospel (as indeed he does on different occasions); his purpose is to induce them to regard it most appreciatively. He gives them an example of his own gratitude, thanking God on their behalf, for the purpose of calling forth their especial gratitude when they should consider what they formerly were and what they now had received through the Gospel. And again, he would have them beware lest, forgetful of their former misery and present grace, they relapse into their old blindness. A sad beginning in such backsliding had been made by factions in their midst, who, satiated with the Gospel and indifferent to the abundant grace they enjoyed, began to cast about for something else.

5. Now observe: If the exalted apostle and venerable teacher of the Gentiles in his day had to witness in his own parish such factions and sects as those which, in sinful security and ingratitude toward the Gospel, arose during his life, what wonder is it that today, when we do not have the excellent preachers and pious Christians of those times, there are similar sects? We are aware of the great benefits bestowed upon us, but at the same time we see and realize that the devil instigates divisions and scandals. And the cause of these evils may be traced to our ingratitude; we have quickly forgotten the ills we endured under the blindness of popery, and how miserably we were deluded and tormented. Necessarily, where God's mercies are lightly dismissed from the mind and disregarded, gratitude and regard for God's Word cannot be the result; satiated, listless Christians go their way fancying that spiritual conditions always were and always will be as now.

6. The people, therefore, must be awakened to consider their former destitution, the very wretchedness they were in. The apostle later on vividly pictures such condition to his Corinthians, while here, in the

opening chapter, he intimates to them, in kind and courteous words, to consider, in the light of the Gospel benefits they now enjoy, what they lacked before and might be deprived of again.

7. Therefore he says, You now have received the grace whereby in everything ye are enriched. Formerly you had not this grace and would not have it today had not the Gospel been preached to you. You are enriched in everything pertaining to yonder life, for it is not the purpose of the Gospel to give earthly riches. But in spiritual blessings ye come behind in no gift and have need of naught except this one thing, that the Lord himself should come. This blessing you are yet to have, and biding its advent you here live by the gifts and grace with which you were enriched, until you are finally redeemed from the sinful, wicked life of the world and from all its oppressions. You must know, and must thank God for it, that you need not seek after any higher calling or better gifts, thinking you have not all that is essential, as the factious spirits would have you believe.

8. For in your own judgment, what better thing could you have than is the Christian's in his Gospel and his faith? He has assurance of sins forgiven and washed away in holy baptism, of justification and holiness before God, and of the fact that he is God's child and heir to eternal life. Furthermore, although the Christian is conscious of remaining weakness and sin, yea, although he be overcome by a fault, he may avail himself of absolution, comfort and strength through his fellow Christians and by the aid of the sacraments; and he has daily guidance for his conduct and faith in all the walks of life. Again, he can call upon God in prayer in the day of trouble, and the firm assurance is his that God will hear and help him. What further can one desire, or what more does he need, than the knowledge that he is God's child through baptism and has God's Word at hand for comfort and strength in weakness and sin? Do you consider it slight enrichment to have assurance of the fact that God himself is speaking to you and, by means of the office of the ministry, is effective in you, teaching, admonishing, comforting, sustaining you, yea, granting you victory over the devil, death and all evil influences on earth?

9. Formerly what would we not gladly have given and done for but a single Gospel truth in our distress and trials of conscience! True, when one was discouraged or perplexed he was advised to seek and follow the counsel of some intelligent and judicious mind; but such judicious one who might assist with his counsel was nowhere to be found. For a wise man's counsel

does not answer in such case. The Word of God alone suffices, and you are to rely on it as if God himself revealed his counsel to you from heaven.

10. As Paul says, it is great riches, a precious treasure, to possess in very fact the Word of God and not to doubt that it is the Word of God. It is this that will answer; this can comfort your heart and support it. Of spiritual benefits you know we had none under the tyranny and darkness of the Pope. At that time we suffered ourselves to be led and driven by his commandments, vain human baubles, by bulls, lies, invocation of saints, indulgences, masses, monkery. And we did whatever was enjoined in the name of the Church, solely to gain comfort and help, that we might not despair of God's grace. But instead of comforting us, these things led us to the devil and thrust us into greater anguish and terror; for there was nothing in the doctrine of the papists that could give us certainty. Indeed, they themselves had to confess that by its teachings no man could or should be certain of his state of grace.

11. Yea, they forced poor, timid, tempted hearts to dread and fear Christ more than the devil even, as! myself experienced full well. I resorted to the dead — St. Barbara, St. Ann and other departed saints — regarding them as mediators between me and Christ's wrath. But this availed me nothing, nor did it free me from a fearful and fugitive conscience. There was not one among us all — and we were called very learned doctors of Holy Writ — who could have given true comfort from God's Word, saying: This is God's Word; this one thing God asks of you, that you honor him by accepting comfort; believe and know that he forgives your transgressions and has no wrath against you. If someone could have told me this, I would have given all I possessed for the knowledge; yea, for such word of comfort I would not have taken in exchange the glory and the crowns of all kings, for it would have restored my soul, it would have refreshed and sustained my body and life.

12. All this we should bear in mind, by no means should we forget it; that we may return thanks to God, recounting the superior and wonderful gifts which have enriched us in all things. We have besides the Word, free prayer and the Lord's Prayer, knowing what to pray for and how to pray — knowledge common to the very children today, thank God. In former times, all men, especially we monks, tormented themselves with lengthy repetitions in reading and singing; yet our prayers were but chattering, as the noise of geese over their food, or of monks repeating a psalm.

13. I, too, wanted to be a pious and godly monk and I prepared with earnest devotion for mass and for prayers. But when most devout! went to the altar a doubter and left the altar a doubter. When I had rendered my confession I still doubted, and I doubted when! did not render it. For we were wholly wrapped up in the erroneous idea that we could not pray and would not be heard unless we were absolutely dean and without sin, like the saints in heaven. It would have been much better not to pray at all and to have done something else, than thus to take God's name in vain. Still, we monks — in fact all the ecclesiastics — eluded the people, promising them our prayers for their money and possessions, actually selling our prayers, though we did not even know that we prayed in a manner acceptable to God. But today, thank God, we do know and understand, not only what to pray for and how to approach God “nothing doubting,” but we can also add a hearty Amen, believing that according to his promise he will certainly hear us.

THE CHRISTIAN'S TREASURE.

14. The Christian has indeed inestimable treasure. In the first place he has the testimony of the Word of God, which is the word of eternal grace and comfort, that he has a right and true conception of baptism, the Lord's Supper, the Ten Commandments and the Creed. In addition he has the sure refuge of God's promise to deliver us from every trouble in which we shall call upon him, and to give us, as he promised by the prophet ~~381210~~ Zechariah 12:10, the Spirit of grace and of prayer. And the Christian, by virtue of his enlightened understanding, can wisely discern what are good works and what callings are pleasing to God; on the other hand, his judgment is equally true as to unprofitable and vain works and false services. Before, we had not this wholesome knowledge. We knew not what we believed, or how we prayed and lived. We sought comfort and salvation in self-devised trivialities, in penances, confessions and satisfactions, in self-righteous works of monkery and in obedience to the commands of the Pope. We believed such works to be fully satisfactory and, indeed, the only things that were holy; the pursuits of common Christians we considered worldly and dangerous.

15. In illustration of this idea, a picture was exhibited — with the sanction of the Pope — representing a great ship in the wild, wide sea, containing only the holy monks and the super-holy popes, cardinals, bishops, etc., who were throwing their merits to those in peril struggling in the water, or

extending a hand, or by means of ropes and their stoles drawing the drowning to safety in the boat.

16. In contrast to this darkness, consider the priceless and to-be-cherished blessing of knowing with certainty wherein the heart is to take comfort, how to seek help in distress and how to conduct one's self in one's own station. If, though provided with spiritual riches on all sides, you are not sufficient of yourself at all times to grasp them, you can, nevertheless, always reach and appropriate them by means of the ordinary ministry and office of the Church, yes, by the aid of your fellow-Christians. Again, it is productive of the greatest happiness to know that when living aright in the ordinary walks of life established by God, you are more acceptable and pleasing to him than you would be to purchase the works and merits of all the monks and hermits.

17. What Paul terms being "enriched," first, "in all utterance," or knowledge — which, in the exalted spiritual meaning of the words, bears on life everlasting — is having the comfort of faith in Christ and of invocation and prayer. And enriched in "all knowledge," means having true conception and right judgment in all things of our physical life and in all our earthly relations. All things that a Christian should know and should possess are comprehended in these two terms. These blessings are gifts and treasures indescribably great. He who will contrast them with the destitution of our former condition cannot but be joyful and thankful. I remember the time when I, engaged in earnest study of Holy Writ, would have given a great deal for the right exposition of a psalm; and when had I but begun to understand a verse aright, I would have been as rejoiced as if born to life anew.

18. Truly, then, we should now render to God heartfelt thanks for the great favor and blessing of restored light and understanding in Scripture, and the right conception of doctrinal matters. But, alas! it is likely to be with us as with the Corinthians, who had received most abundantly from Paul but by way of return had made ill use of it and proved shamefully unthankful. And they met with retribution, the worst of it being false doctrine and seductions, until at last that grand congregation was wholly ruined and destroyed. A similar retribution threatens us, yes, is before the door with appalling knock, in the instance of the Turks and in other distress and calamity. For this reason we should, with a thankful heart and serious mind, pray, as Paul here does for his Corinthians, that God would keep us

steadfast in the possession of his gifts and blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

19. Paul admonishes us to continue in this knowledge and appreciation of the grace and gifts of God. Since by these blessings we have received riches and happiness to the satisfying of all our need, the apostle further admonishes us to look only for the Lord to reveal to us publicly by his coming that which he has promised and through faith already granted us.

20. In the past, much has been written and ingeniously devised on the topic of preparing for death and the final judgment. But it has only served to further confuse timid consciences. For these comforters were not able to show anything of the comfort to be found in the riches of grace and bliss in Christ. They directed the people to oppose with their own works and good life, death and God's judgment. In place of this delusion is now evident the precious truth; he who knows the Gospel doctrines, goes on and performs his own work and duty in his respective calling. He takes comfort in the fact that through baptism he is engrafted into Christ; he receives absolution and partakes of the holy supper for the strengthening of his faith, commending his soul and body to Christ. Why should such a one fear death? Though it come at any time, in form of pestilence or accident, it will always find the Christian ready and well prepared, be he awake or asleep; for he is in Christ Jesus.

21. For all these things the Christian may well thank and bless God, realizing that he has no further need, nor can he gain anything better than he already has in the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the faithful prosecution of his calling; however, he should remain in, and daily grow in, faith and supplication. But he cannot hope to attain to another and better doctrine, faith, Spirit, prayer, sacrament, reward, etc., than had all the saints, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, or in fact than has now every Christian that is baptized. Therefore I need not idly spend time in trying to prepare people for death and inspire them with courage by such commonplaces as recalling and relating the innumerable daily accidents, ills and dangers of this life. This method will not answer; death will not thereby be frightened away, nor will the fear of death be removed. The Gospel teaching is: Believe in Christ, pray and live in accordance with God's Word, and then, when death overtakes and attacks you, you will know that you are Christ the Lord's. Paul says (⁵⁴⁸Romans 14:8): "Whether we live... or die, we are the Lord's." Indeed, we Christians live upon this earth to the

very end that we may have assured comfort, salvation and victory over death and hell.

22. Of this Paul here reminds us, and dwells on it more fully later in this Epistle; he would have us duly thankful for this great grace and living among ourselves in a Christian and brotherly manner, in doctrine and practice, ignoring and avoiding that wild, disorderly conduct of the contentious and disorderly. He who recognizes such grace and blessing cannot but love and thank God and conduct himself aright toward his neighbor; and when he finds himself falling short in this he will, by admonition and the Word of God, make amends.

23. Here you might put the question: Why does Paul speak in such a commendatory way of the Corinthians, saying that they were enriched in everything and came behind in no gift, when he himself confesses later on that they had contentions and schisms — in regard to baptism, to the sacrament, to the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead and in regard to abuse of liberty, and some lived as they pleased. Would you not call these things faults and shortcomings? How, then, is he in a position to say that they were abundantly supplied with all things spiritual, lacking not one thing?

24. Well, you should recall what I have repeatedly stated: Christendom is never so spotless that there are not some spurious and wicked admixed, just as you will always find weeds, darnel, tares, or wild mustard together with pure grain. And he who will examine the Church with only a view of finding faults and frailties among those called Christians, will miss the Church, yes, the Gospel and Christ, and never discover a Church at all.

25. But we have the consolation of knowing that if we have the Gospel pure, we have the treasure God gives his Church and we cannot go astray nor want. But as yet we have not reached that degree of perfection where all hearers of the Gospel will grasp it fully and wholly or are faultless in faith and life; at all times there will be some who do not believe and some who are weak and imperfect. However, that great treasure and rich blessing of doctrine and knowledge is present. There is no defect in this, and it is effective and fruitful. The fact that some do not believe, does not weaken baptism or the Gospel or the Church; they only harm themselves. To sum up, where the Word remains, there most assuredly is also the Church. For wherever the doctrine is pure, there you can also keep purity in baptism, the sacrament, absolution, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's

Prayer, good works and all callings; and wherever you find a defect or an irregularity, you can admonish, amend and rectify by means of the Word.

26. Some there must be who have the Word and sacraments pure and unadulterated, who have faith, pray aright, keep God's commandments and do other things, as, thank God, we have with us. Then we may firmly conclude: If the true Church were not here, these characteristics would be lacking; therefore we must have among ourselves true members of the Church and true saints. Now even though children of the world intermingle (as will be the case always and in all places), who show neither faith nor a godly life, it would corrupt neither faith, nor baptism, nor doctrine, nor would the Church perish on that account — the treasure remains in its integrity and efficacy, and God may graciously cause some to turn from their unbelief and wicked life and be added to the faithful and to mend their ways.

27. Again, they with whom this treasure — the Word or doctrine and its knowledge — is not found, cannot be the Christian Church nor members of it, and for that reason they cannot pray or believe aright or do good works pleasing to God. It follows that their whole lives are in God's sight lost and condemned, though they may assiduously extol God and the Church and before the world may have the appearance and reputation of leading particularly holy lives and excelling even the upright Christians in virtues and honor. It is a settled fact that outside the Church of Christ there is no God, no grace, no bliss; as Paul says (^{<4015>}Ephesians 4:5): "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all," etc. And ^{<4012>}Acts 4:12 says: "And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved."

28. And so Paul, when here extolling the Corinthians, has not an eye to the contentious, the Epicureans, or to those who give public offense, as the man that "had his father's wife;" but the apostle looks to the fact that a few remain who have the pure Word of God, faith, baptism and the sacrament, though some hypocrites be among them. Because of these few — and few indeed there may be — we recognize the presence of that inestimable treasure of which the apostle speaks. It is found as well where two or three are gathered together as with thousands. Neither the Gospel nor the ministers nor the Church is to be blamed that the multitude miss this treasure; the multitude have but them, selves to blame, for they close their ears and eyes.

29. Now behold how loftily Paul has extolled and how beautifully portrayed the Christian Church — where she is to be found on earth and what inestimable blessings and gifts she has received of Christ, for which she is in duty bound to thank and praise him in her confession and in her life. This subject the apostle concludes with the words:

“God is faithful, through whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”

30. The good work which Christ has begun in you and already assured to you, he will without fail establish in you until the end and for ever, if you but do not fall away through unbelief, or cast grace from you. For his Word or promise given to you, and his work begun in you, are not changeable as is man’s word and work, but are firm, certain, divine, immovable truth. Since you are in possession of this your divine calling, draw comfort therefrom and rely on it without wavering. Amen.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~402~~EPHESIANS 4:22-28.

22 That ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit; 23 and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth. 25 Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. 26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27 neither give place to the devil. 28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need.

DUTY TO NEW AND OLD MAN.

1. Here again is an admonition for Christians to follow up their faith by good works and a new life, for though they have forgiveness of sins through baptism, the old Adam still adheres to their flesh and makes himself felt in tendencies and desires to vices physical and mental. The result is that unless Christians offer resistance, they will lose their faith and the remission of sins and will in the end be worse than they were at first; for they will begin to despise and persecute the Word of God when corrected by it. Yea, even those who gladly hear the Word of God, who highly prize it and aim to follow it, have daily need of admonition and encouragement, so strong and tough is that old hide of our sinful flesh. And so powerful and wily is our old evil foe that wherever he can gain enough of an opening to insert one of his claws, he thrusts in his whole self and will not desist until he has again sunk man into his former condemnable unbelief and his old way of despising and disobeying God.
2. Therefore, the Gospel ministry is necessary in the Church, not only for instruction of the ignorant — such as the simple, unlettered people and the

children — but also for the purpose of awakening those who know very well what they are to believe and how they are to live, and admonishing them to be on their guard daily and not to become indolent, disheartened or tired in the war they must wage on this earth with the devil, with their own flesh and with all manner of evil.

3. For this reason Paul is so persistent in his admonitions that he actually seems to be overdoing it. He proceeds as if the Christians were either too dull to comprehend or so inattentive and forgetful that they must be reminded and driven. The apostle well knows that though they have made a beginning in faith and are in that state which should show the fruits of faith, such result is not so easily forthcoming. It will not do to think and say: Well, it is sufficient to have the doctrine, and if we have the Spirit and faith, then fruits and good works will follow of their own accord. For although the Spirit truly is present and, as Christ says, willing and effective in those that believe, on the other hand the flesh is weak and sluggish. Besides, the devil is not idle, but seeks to seduce our weak nature by temptations and allurements.

4. So we must not permit the people to go on in their way, neglecting to urge and admonish them, through God's Word, to lead a godly life. Indeed, you dare not be negligent and backward in this duty; for, as it is, our flesh is all too sluggish to heed the Spirit and all too able to resist it. Paul says (⁴⁸⁵¹⁷Galatians 5:17): "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh ... that ye may not do the things that ye would." Therefore, God is constrained to do as a good and diligent householder or ruler, who, having a slothful man-servant or maid-servant, or careless officers, who otherwise are neither wicked nor faithless, will not consider it sufficient once or twice to direct, but will constantly be supervising and directing.

5. Nor have we as yet arrived at the point where our flesh and blood will joyfully and gladly abound in good works and obedience to God as the spirit is inclined and faith directs. Even with the utmost efforts the Spirit scarce can compel our old man. What would be the result if we were no more urged and admonished but could go our way thinking, as many self-satisfied persons do: I am well acquainted with my duties, having learned them many years ago and having heard frequent explanations of them; yea, I have taught others? It might be that one year's intermission of preaching and admonition would place us below the level of the heathen.

6. Now, this exhortation in itself is simple and easy of comprehension. The apostle is but repeating his exhortations of other places — on the fruits of faith, or a godly walk — merely in different terms. Here he speaks of putting away the old man and putting on the new man, of being “renewed in the spirit of your mind.”

“THE OLD MAN.”

7. What he calls “the old man” is well known to us; namely, the whole nature of man as descended from Adam after his fall in paradise, being blinded by the devil, depraved in soul, not keeping God before his eyes nor trusting him, yes, utterly regardless of God and the judgment day. Though with his mouth he may honor God’s Word and the Gospel, yet in reality he is unchanged; if he does have a little additional knowledge, he has just as little fear, love and trust in God as heretofore.

8. Such a life and such conduct should not be found among you, says the apostle; you are not to continue with “the old man.” He must be put off and laid aside. Your former manner of life, inherited of Adam, consisted in disobeying God, in neither fearing, trusting nor calling upon him. Again, in your body you obeyed not God’s commandments, being given to lust, pride, insatiable greed, envy, hatred, etc. A life and walk of this nature is not becoming a Christian who is regarded as, and truly is, a different order of being from his former self, as we shall hear. Necessarily he should walk differently.

9. In this respect a Christian must take heed that he does not deceive himself; the true Christian differs from the hypocrite. True Christians so live that it is apparent from their lives that they keep God before their eyes and truly believe the Gospel, while hypocrites likewise show by their walk that their pretensions of faith and forgiveness of sin are hollow. No proof is seen in their lives and works showing that they have in any wise mended their former ways; they merely deck themselves with a pretense, with the name of Gospel, of faith, of Christ.

10. Now, the apostle has two things to say of the old man: that he corrupts himself in error as to the soul and in lusts as to the body. Paul portrays the old man — meaning every man without true faith though he bear the name of a Christian — as in the first place given to error: coming short of the truth, knowing naught of the true knowledge of Christ and faith in him, indifferent alike to God’s wrath and God’s grace, deceiving himself with

his own conceit that darkness is light. The old man believes that God will not be moved to vengeance though he do as he pleases, even to decorating vices with the names of virtues. Haughtiness, greed, oppressing and tormenting the poor, wrath, envy — all this he would call preserving his dignity, exercising strict discipline, honestly and economically conducting his domestic affairs, caring for his wife and children, displaying Christian zeal and love of justice, etc. In short, he proceeds in the perfectly empty delusion and self-conceit that he is a Christian.

11. Out of this error proceeds the other corruption, the lusts of the body, which are fruits of unbelief. Unbelief causes men to walk in sinful security and yield to all the appetites of their flesh. Such have no inclination toward what is good, nor do they aim to promote orderliness, honor or virtue. They take desperate chances on their lives, wanting to live according to the lusts of their flesh, and yet not be reprimanded.

12. This, says the apostle, is the old man's course and nature. He will do naught but ruin himself. The longer continued, the greater his debasement. He draws down upon himself his own condemnation and penalty for body and soul; for in proportion as he becomes unbelieving and hardhearted, does he become haughty, hateful and faithless, and eventually a perfect scoundrel and villain. This was your former manner of life, when as yet you were heathen and non-Christians. Therefore you must by all means put off the old *man* and cast him far from you; otherwise you cannot remain a Christian. For glorying in the grace of God and the forgiveness of sin is inconsistent with following sin — remaining in the former old un-Christian life and walking in error and deceitful lusts.

THE GROWTH OF “THE NEW MAN.”

“And that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.”

13. Having put away the old man, the apostle exhorts us further to put on the new man, that day by day we may grow as new creatures. This is effected by first being delivered from error — from the erroneous thoughts and ideas incident to our corrupt nature with its false conceptions of God, wherein we do not fear nor believe him — and then from God's Word receiving the right understanding of him. When we rightly understand, we shall fear his wrath against sin and rely on his grace in true faith, believing

that he will forgive our sins for Christ's sake and will hear our prayer for strength and assistance to withstand and conquer, and to continually grow in faith.

14. This change Paul calls being “renewed in the spirit of your mind”; that is, constantly growing and becoming established in that true conception and clear knowledge of Christ begun in us, in opposition to error and idle vaporings. He who is thus received, says the apostle, is a man “that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.” In the old man there is naught but error, by means of which the devil leads to destruction. But the new man has the Spirit and the truth, by which the heart is illumined unto righteousness and holiness, wherein man follows the guidance of God's Word and feels a desire for a godly walk and good life; just as, on the other hand, the desire and love for sin and wickedness is the product of error. This new man is created after God, as an image of God, and must of necessity differ from such as live in error and in lusts, without the knowledge of God and disobedient to him. For if God's image is in man, man must consequently have the right knowledge of God and right conceptions and ideas, and lead a godly life consistent with holiness and righteousness as found in God himself.

15. Such an image of God Adam was when first created. He was, as to the soul, truthful, free from error, and possessed of true faith and knowledge of God; and as to the body, holy and pure, that is, without the impure, unclean desires of avarice, lasciviousness, envy, hatred, etc. And all his children — all men — would have so remained from their birth if he had not suffered himself to be led astray by the devil and to be thus ruined. But since Christians, by the grace and Spirit of God, now have been renewed to this image of God, they are so to live that soul and spirit are righteous and pleasing to God through faith in Christ; and that also the body — meaning the whole external life — be pure and holy, which is genuine holiness.

16. Some there are who pretend to great holiness and purity, but it is mere pretense, deceiving the people in general. Such are the factious spirits and monastic saints, who base their holiness and uprightness solely on an external, peculiar life and on self-elected works. Theirs may be apparently a commendable, holy and pure way of praying and fasting, of denying self, etc., and the people may call it so; but inwardly they are and remain haughty, venomous, hateful, filled with the filth of human lust and evil thoughts, as Christ says of such. <1519> Matthew 15:19; <1615> Luke 16:15.

Likewise their righteousness on which they pride themselves before God has a certain gloss, on the strength of which they presume to merit the grace of God for themselves and others; but inwardly they have no true conception of God, being in rank unbelief, that is, false and vain suppositions, or doubts. Such righteousness, or holiness, is not true nor honest. It is made up wholly of hypocrisy and deceit. It is built, not of God nor after God, but after that lying spirit, the devil.

17. The true Christian, Paul asserts, has been molded through faith in Christ into a new man, like unto God, truly justified and holy in his sight; even as Adam originally was in perfect harmony of heart with God, showing true, straightforward confidence, love and willingness. And his body was holy and pure, knowing naught of evil, impure or improper desire. Thus the whole life of the man was a beautiful portrait of God, a mirror wherein God himself was reflected; even as the lives and natures of the holy spirits the angels are wrapped up in God and represent true knowledge of him, assurance, and joy in him and utterly pure and holy thoughts and works according to the will of God.

18. But since man is now so grievously fallen from this cheerful confidence, this certainty and joy, into doubts or into presumption toward God, and from unspotted, noble obedience into the lusts of iniquity and ungodliness, it follows that not from mankind can come help or relief. Nor can any one hope for remedy except the Christians, who through faith in Christ begin again to have a joyful and confident heart toward God. They thus enter again into their former relation and into the true paradise of perfect harmony with God and of justification; they are comforted by his grace. Accordingly they are disposed to lead a godly life in harmony with God's commandments and to resist ungodly lusts and ways. These begin to taste God's goodness and loving kindness, as Paul says, and realize what they lost in paradise. He, therefore, that would be a Christian should strive to be found in this new man created after God; not in blind error and vain conceit, but in the very essence of righteousness and holiness before God.

TWO CLASSES OF SINS.

“Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.”

19. Lest there might be one who failed to understand the meaning of the old and the new man, or of true and false righteousness and holiness, the

apostle now proceeds to give an example or two, making it easier for us to grasp the idea. All sin comes under one of two classes: First, that of the devil's own making, such as murder and deceit; for by lies he establishes all idolatry, error, false faith and holiness, and among men he creates faithlessness, deceit, malice, etc. Secondly, those sins which he instigates man to commit against man; deeds of wrath, hatred, vengeance and murder. Paul combines these two classes.

20. Now, when a man does not deal fairly with his neighbor, but practices dishonesty and deceit, be it in matters spiritual or temporal (and the world is ever deceitful in all transactions), then certainly the old man holds sway and not righteousness nor holiness, however much the man may effect a good appearance and evade the courts. For such conduct does not reflect God's image, but the devil's. For the heart does not rely on God and his truth, otherwise it would war with fraud and deception; but its object is to clothe itself with a misleading garb, even assuming the name of God, and thus to deceive, belie, betray and forsake its neighbor at the bidding of every fiendish whim, and all for the satisfaction of its avarice, selfishness and pride.

21. In contrast thereto you can recognize the new man. He speaks the truth and hates lies, not only those momentous lies against the first table of the Ten Commandments, but also those against the second table; for he deals faithfully and in a brotherly way with others, doing as he would be done by himself. Thus should Christians live with each other, as members of one body, according to the apostle, and as having in Christ all things common and alike.

“Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”

22. Half the sins which the world has learned of its lord and master, the devil, consist in lying and deceiving, and that in the name and appearance of truth. No one wants to be called a liar, and even the devil covers his lies with the name of truth. The other half, which is easier to recognize, consists in wrath and its fruits. And this class is usually the result of the other. The world, for its own advantage, lies and deceives; and when it sees mankind acting in opposition to its wishes, or beholds its lies exposed and its schemes thwarted, it begins to rage in wrath against God, endeavoring to avenge itself and inflict harm, but fraudulently disguising its wicked motive under the plea of having good and abundant reasons for its action.

23. Therefore Paul admonishes the Christians as new creatures, to guard against this vice of wrath, adducing the fourth verse of the fourth Psalm: “Stand in awe and sin not.” The repetition of this passage sounds, in Paul’s rendering, as if permission to be angry were given; he says: “Be ye angry, and sin not.” But Paul is taking into consideration the way of the world. Men are tempted and moved to anger. There are no clean records. Under sudden provocation the heart swells with ire, while the devil busily fans the flame; for he is ever alert to stamp upon us his seal and image and make us like unto him, either through error and false doctrine, or through wrath and murder in conflict with love and patience. These two forms of evil you will encounter, especially if you make an effort to be a godly Christian, to defend the truth and to live uprightly in the sight of all. You will meet with all manner of malice aforethought and deceit, and with faithlessness and malignity on the part of those you have benefited; again, with unmasked violence and injustice on the part of those who should protect you and see to your interests. This will hurt and move you to wrath. Yea, in your own house and among your dear Christian brethren you will often meet with that which vexes you; again, a word of yours may hurt their feelings. And it will not be otherwise. This life of ours is so constituted that such conditions must be. Flesh and blood cannot but be stirred at times by wrath and impatience, especially when it receives evil for good; and the devil is ever at hand kindling your anger and endeavoring to fan into a blaze the wrath and ill humor between yourself and your neighbor.

24. But right here, says the apostle, you should beware and not sin; not give rein, nor yield to the impulse and promptings of wrath. That you may indeed be moved, the apostle would say, I well know, and you may fancy to have the best of reasons for exhibiting anger and vengeance; but beware of doing what your wrath would have you do: and if overcome by wrath and led to rashness, do not continue in it, do not harbor it, but subdue and restrain it, the sooner the better; do not suffer it to take root or to remain with you over night.

25. If followed, wrath will not suffer you to do a single right thing, as James affirms (~~500~~ James 1:20). It causes man to fall and sin against God and his neighbor. Even the heathen have seen that wrath gets the better of reason and is never the source of good counsel. In line with this, we read that St. Ambrose reproved the emperor Theodosius for having, while in a rage, caused the execution of many persons in Thessalonica; and that he succeeded in having the emperor issue a rescript to the effect that no one

should be executed, even on his imperial order and command, until a full month had passed by, thus affording an opportunity to rescind the order if given in haste and wrath.

26. Therefore the Psalm says: When wrath attacks and moves you, do not at once give it leave to do its will. Therein you would certainly commit sin. But go into your chamber, commune and take counsel with yourself, pray the Lord's Prayer, repeat some good passages from God's Word, curb yourself and confide in God; he will uphold your rights.

27. It is this the apostle has in mind when saying: "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." A Christian must not entertain wrath; he should instantly quench and stifle it. It is the part of the new man to control anger, that the devil may not move him from his new-found faith and make him lose what he has received. If he yields to these instigations of his flesh, he thereby returns to the error and condemnation in the old man and loses control of himself, following his own desires. Then he adorns a lie with the appearance of truth, claiming the right to be angry and take revenge; just as the world does when it asserts: This fellow has done me infinite violence and injustice; am I to suffer it? I have a just cause and shall not recline my head in ease until he is repaid! By such talk it loses its case before both God and men; as the saying goes: He that strikes back has the most unjust cause.

28. Both divine and human justice forbids that a man be judge in his own case. For this very reason God has established governmental and judicial authority, in his stead to punish transgressions, which — when properly administered — is not man's but God's judgment. He therefore that invades such judgment, invades the authority of God himself; he commits a double wrong and merits double condemnation. If you desire to seek and obtain redress in the courts, you are at liberty to do so, provided you proceed in the proper way, at the proper place and with those to whom God has entrusted authority. To these authorities you may appeal for redress. If you obtain it according to law, well and good; if not, you must suffer wrong and commit your case to God, as we have explained more fully elsewhere.

29. In short, we find in this unique passage a statement to the effect that he who curbs not his wrath but retains it longer than a day, or over night, cannot be a Christian. Where then do they stand who entertain wrath and hatred indefinitely, for one, two, three, seven, ten years? Such is no longer

human wrath but fiendish wrath from hell; it will not be satisfied nor extinguished, but when it once takes possession of a man he would, if able, destroy everything in a moment with his hellish fire. Even so the arch-fiend is not satisfied with having cast the whole human race into sin and death, but will not rest content unless he can drag all human beings into eternal damnation.

30. A Christian therefore has ample cause to carefully guard against this vice. God may have patience with you when wrath wells up in your heart — although that, too, is sinful — but take heed that wrath does not overcome you and cause you to fall. Rather take serious counsel with yourself and extinguish and expel your anger by applying passages of Holy Writ and calling upon your faith. When alone or about to retire, repeat the Lord's Prayer, ask for forgiveness and confess that God daily forgives you much oftener than your neighbor sins against you.

“Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need.”

31. This thought is brought out also in the next Epistle, namely, that a Christian should guard against giving offense to anybody by his life, lest God's name be blasphemed. It is a grand thing to be a Christian, who, as has been stated, is a new man created after God and a true image of God, wherein God himself desires to be reflected. Therefore, whatever of good a Christian does, or whatever of evil he does, under the name of a Christian, either honors or disgraces God's name. Now, says Paul, whenever you follow your lusts, in obedience to your old Adam, you do naught but give occasion to the slanderers — the devil and his troop — to blaspheme the name of God. For the devil, even without your assistance, at all times seeks opportunity — nor can he desist — to befoul our dear Gospel and the name of God with his slanderous tales, composed, if need be, entirely of lies. But where he finds the semblance of occasion he knows how to profit by it. He will then open his mouth wide and cry: Behold, these are your Gospel people! Here you have the fruits of this new doctrine! Is their Christ such a one as they honor by their lives?

32. So then a Christian should be exceedingly careful and cautious for this reason, if for no other: to protect the name and honor of his dear God and Savior and not to do the devil the favor of letting him whet his slanderous tongue on Christ's name. How shall we stand and answer in his sight when

we cannot deny the fact that our life gives just cause for complaint and offense? By such a life we intentionally bring disgrace and shame upon God's name and Word, which things should be our highest treasures and most valuable possessions.

33. When the apostle says, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need," he indicates the true fruit of repentance, which consists in abandoning and utterly abstaining from evil and in doing good. He at the same time attacks and reproveth the sin of theft so common in all walks of life. And them who idle away their time and neglect their duty of serving and helping their fellow-beings, he calls — and rightfully — thieves in God's sight.

34. For the right interpretation of the commandment, Thou shalt not steal, is this: Thou shalt live of thine own work, that thou mayest have to give to the needy. This is your bounden duty, and if you do not so God will pronounce you not a Christian but a thief and robber. In the first place, because you are an idler and do not support yourself, but live by the sweat and toil of others; in the second place, because you withhold from your neighbor what you plainly owe him. Where now shall we find those who keep this commandment? Indeed, where should we dare look for them except where no people live? But such a class of people should Christians be. Therefore, let each of us beware lest he deceive himself; for God will not be mocked nor deceived. ~~◀RHT▶~~ Galatians 6:7.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~ROMES~~ **EPHESIANS 5:15-21.**

15 *Look therefore carefully how ye walk [See then that ye walk circumspectly], not as unwise, but as wise; 16* *redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17* *Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18* *And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit; 19* *speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 20* *giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; 21* *subjecting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ.*

THE CAREFUL WALK OF THE CHRISTIAN.

1. Paul's admonition here is designed for those who, having heard the Gospel and made a fine start in believing, immediately imagine themselves secure and think they have accomplished all. Forgetful that they are still flesh and blood, and in the world and in contact with the devil's kingdom, they live in unconcern, as if delivered from all danger, and the devil far fled. By the very reason of their security they are overcome of the devil and their own flesh, and fall unawares from the Gospel. They have just enough connection with it to be able to prate of it, boasting themselves Christians but giving no indication of the fact in their conduct.

2. Paul would tell them how, in view of these things, vigilance is essential to the Christian life. To regulate the life by keeping God's will ever before the eyes, always conforming the conduct to it — this he calls walking circumspectly and being wise. If you for a moment lose sight of God's will, the devil immediately possesses you and works pernicious results, transforming a Christian into an indolent, self-secure hypocrite; a hypocrite into a heretic and factionist; and a heretic into an open enemy. So the apostle here teaches that in all seriousness if we would secure ourselves

against the craft and power of the devil we must be vigilant; we must be careful how we walk. In Satan we have an enemy bent on hindering us; on undermining our very foundation.

3. Consequently they who fail to keep earnest watch over their Christian life — that is, to have a care for soundness of belief and to gladly hear and obey the Word of God — are unwise, even foolish, and have no knowledge of God's will. They have removed the light from before their eyes to behold instead a thing of their own imagination. They see as through a painted glass, presuming they do well in following such phantoms of their reason, until they are misled and defeated of the devil.

THE WORD, THE GUIDE OF THE CHRISTIAN.

4. Therefore, not without reason does Paul warn Christians to be always wise and circumspect — to keep the Word of God before them. Upon so doing depends their wisdom and understanding. Let each one make it a matter of personal concern, and especially should it be the general interest of the congregation. Where care is not observed to retain the Word in the Church, but there are admitted to the pulpit brawlers who set forth their own fraudulent doctrines, the Church is injured; the congregation will soon be as the preacher. Again, if the individual fails to regulate his daily life — the affairs of his calling — by the Word of God; if he forgets the Word and absorbs himself in accumulating wealth; if he is tangled with secular interests, he soon becomes a cold and indolent Christian, then an erring soul, and finally utterly disregards God's will and his Word.

It is for these reasons God so frequently commands us in the Scriptures continually to explain and apply his Word, to hear it willingly and practice it faithfully, and to meditate upon it day and night. He would have our lives emanate from the Word in honor to God and gratitude to him — from the Word wherein we daily look as in a mirror. But care and diligence are necessary to bring it to pass, and we should faithfully assist each other by instruction, advice, and in other ways.

5. In my admonitions I have often enough urged those who have influence, to use all diligence in drawing the young to school, where they may receive proper instruction to become pastors and preachers; and I have earnestly advised that in cases of necessity ample financial provision be made for students. But, alas, few communities, few States, are interested in the matter. In all Germany, look at the bishops, princes, noblemen, the

inhabitants of town and country — how confidently they go on sleeping and snoring in their indifference to the question. They presume to think there is no need for action; the matter will adjust itself; there will always be pastors and preachers. But assuredly they deceive themselves if they think they are consulting their best interests in this affair; for they will, as the text says, become foolish and fail to recognize the will of God. Therefore they will some day have to experience what they do not now believe: in a few years after our day they will seek preachers and find none; they will have to hear rude, illiterate dolts who, lacking understanding of the Word of God, will, like all stupid Papists, preach the vile, offensive things of the Pope, about consecrated water and salt, about gray gowns, new monasteries and the like.

6. Cry, preach and admonish as we will, no one will hear; foreseeing which, Paul prophesies that they who observe not God's will, become unwise, foolish, and consequently waste the day of grace and neglect their salvation. Now, it is God's will we should sanctify his name, love and advance his Word, and so aid in building up his kingdom. When we fulfill his will in these things, he will regard our desires, providing us with daily bread and granting peace and happiness.

7. Now, it should be our chief concern to preserve to ourselves the Word and will of God. That would truly be wisdom, and redeeming the time. But failing therein, it must be with us as with the unwise and fools; we will have to hear the declaration: "Since you refuse to sanctify my name, to advance my kingdom and to do my will, neither will I provide you daily bread, nor forgive your sins, nor keep from temptation and deliver from evil." God will then permit us to deplore the great calamities of the world — its turmoil and wickedness, the cause whereof the world attributes to the Gospel. But the punishment just mentioned must be visited upon them who will not recognize the will of God and submit to it. These, however, desire to justify themselves and are unwilling to receive censure for having conducted themselves unwisely, even foolishly.

8. So much for a general observation upon the expression "walking wisely and circumspectly"; so much upon unwise conduct in regard to matters of vital importance to the Church, which have to do with the office of the ministry and with God's Word. Where the ministry and the Word of God are preserved, there will always be some among the masses to attend upon the preaching of the Word and to conform their lives to it. But when the

Bible leaves the pulpit, little good will be accomplished, even though one here and there be able to read the Scriptures for themselves and imagine they have no need of the preached Word. Where will the untaught masses stand? Note how it has been with the poor people in our time who were misled by Munzer and Munster, and their prophets and factionists.

PUBLIC PREACHING OF THE WORD ENJOINED.

Then let everyone lend earnest effort to promote public preaching of the Word everywhere, and public attendance upon that preaching; and thus rightly to found and build up the Church. Let him also put on the wedding garment himself (mentioned in the Gospel for today); let him take care to be found an earnest advocate of the Word of God, uninfluenced by thoughts common to the secure spirit: "Oh, there are pastors and preachers enough for me. I can hear or read the Word when I please; have access to it any day. I must give first attention to bread-winning and like things. Let others look out for themselves." Take care, my dear sir; you can easily fail by carelessness here and be found without the wedding garment, perhaps may die without it, unaware how you are being deceived. Whose fault will it be but your own since you would not hear Paul's admonition to walk wisely and circumspectly?

9. We should make provision while the opportunity is at our doors, for, judging from the present course of the world, it will not long retain what it has. Everywhere men are diligently helping to hunt down ministers, or at least to so bring to bear upon them hunger and poverty, to so oppose them with secret fraud, as to drive them from the land. And little trouble and labor will be required to accomplish it. We shall only too soon be rid of our ministers and have their places amply supplied by deceivers. I would much rather suffer in hell with Judas the Betrayer than to bear the guilt of accomplishing one minister's death or of being instrumental in offering place to one deceiver. For it would not be so intolerable to suffer the anguish of the betrayer of Christ as to endure that of one who, by his sin in this respect, is responsible for the loss of countless souls.

NECESSITY OF IMPROVING THE TIME.

10. Paul goes on to elaborate his admonition by explaining what it is to walk circumspectly and wisely — to "redeem the time, because the days are evil." In other words: Think not happy days are in store for you and

you may defer duty till better times; better times will never be. The devil is always in the world to hinder your every effort to do good, and his opposition increases with time. The longer you tarry, the less your power to accomplish good; wasted time only makes matters worse. Then redeem the time; grasp your opportunities as best you can. Let no interest be so dear to you as the promotion of God's kingdom and the serving of the public in every good and useful way possible, whatever befall yourself.

11. Christ in like manner says to the Jews: "While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light." ^{<4126>}John 12:36. And Paul, after quoting from ^{<2348>}Isaiah 49:8, adds: "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." ^{<4102>}2 Corinthians 6:2. So his counsel in our text means: Take heed you receive not the grace of God in vain. Or, neglect not the matter of your salvation; enjoy while you may the opportunity of furthering the kingdom of God, for the sake of your own and others' salvation. Defer not the thing to another time, lest the opportunity escape you.

Elsewhere (^{<4160>}Galatians 6:10) the apostle says, "As we have opportunity, let us work that which is good." In other words: Act now, while you may. Your time passes with astonishing rapidity. Be not deceived, then, by the thought, "Oh, I can attend to the matter a year from now — two years — three." That is simply foolish. It is an unwise conclusion of the thoughtless. Before they are aware, they have lost the salvation extended them. They defer to consider God's will, putting it off for a season, until they shall have accomplished their own aims; then they have deferred too long.

12. The Lord comes to your door. You do not have to seek him. If you are grateful he tarries to speak with you. But if you let him pass by you will have to complain as did the bride in ^{<2186>}Song of Solomon 5:6: "I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone ... I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer." Think not you will find the Lord when he has once gone, though you traverse the world. But while he is near you may seek and find; as Isaiah says (^{<2386>}Isaiah 55:6), "Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found." If through your neglect he pass by, all seeking then will be vain.

For more than twenty years in my cloister I experienced the meaning of such disappointment. I sought God with great toil and with severe mortification of the body, fasting, watching, singing and praying. In this way I shamefully wasted my time and found not the Lord. The more I

sought and the nearer I thought I was to him, the farther away I got. No, God does not permit us to find him so. He must first come and seek us where we are. We may not pursue and overtake him. That is not his will.

13. Then be careful to avail yourself of the present opportunity. Embrace it while he is near, and faithfully consider what he requires of you. To ascertain this, go to the Creed and the Ten Commandments. They will tell you. Regulate your life by them. Be helped by the Lord's Prayer. Begin with yourself; then pray for the Church. Let it be your desire that God's name be everywhere sanctified and that your life conform to his will. If you are faithful in these things, assuredly you will walk wisely; you will avoid sin and do good. For the study and practice of these precepts will leave you no opportunity to do evil. God's Word will soon teach you to sanctify his name, to extend his kingdom, to do your neighbor no injury in mind, body or estate.

14. Observe this is "redeeming the time." This is employing it well, while the golden days last in which we have remission from pain and sin. Not such remission as the Pope grants in his jubilees, wherein he deceives the world. Right here let us be careful not to cheat ourselves with the false idea that salvation cannot escape us. Let it not be with us as befell the children of Israel, of whom it is said in Psalms 95:11 and ^{<804B>}Hebrews 4:3 that because of their unbelief they entered not into the rest of God. They would not accept their opportunity in the forty years wherein he gave them his Word and showed them his wonders, daily admonishing them and calling to repentance and faith. They but tempted and provoked him the more. Hence another admonition was given the people of God and a certain day appointed: "Today if ye shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts." ^{<804E>}Hebrews 4:7. Every day with us is "today" and we are permitted to hear God's voice still imploring us not to waste the time.

15. Surely we ought supremely to thank God, as the latter part of our text enjoins, for the great blessing of his nearness to us. We have his presence in our homes. He is with us at our board, by our couch — anywhere we desire him. He offers us all assistance and grants all we may ask. So gracious a guest should indeed receive our high esteem. We ought to honor him while he is with us.

16. Well may we pray, as I have said. There is too much slumbering everywhere in Germany. We cannot perceive how it is possible to preserve the Gospel and fill the pulpits for ten years longer. To such extent does

wickedness rage in the world that blindness and error must sweep it as before. And no one will be to blame but the stupid bishops and princes, and those of us who esteem not the Word of God.

INGRATITUDE WILL BE PUNISHED.

Alas, that I am compelled against my will to be a prophet of ill to Germany. Yet it is not I, but the prayer of my Lord and your Lord; for according to its teachings he will say: “You neglected my Word. Unwilling to tolerate it, you persecuted and starved out its messengers. Therefore I will withhold your daily bread and give instead famine and war and murder, unto utter desolation; for you wish to have it so. Then when you cry for forgiveness of sins and deliverance from the evils come upon you, I will hear you as you heard my Word, my entreaties. I will leave you in your misfortunes as you left me and my Word.”

17. In fact, no one for a moment thinks of how God has signally, richly and graciously blessed us; how we are in possession of actual paradise — yes, the entire kingdom of heaven — if we only recognized the fact: and yet we shamefully, ungratefully and unreasonably reject the kingdom; as if it were not enough for us to overstep the Ten Commandments in our disobedience, but must even trample under foot the mercy God offers in the Gospel. Then why should we be surprised if he send down wrath upon us? What else is he to do but fulfill our Gospel passage for today, which threatens every individual rejecter and persecutor of God’s Son and his servants, by whom we are invited to the marriage — what else is God to do but send out a divine army of servants to arrest the career of such murderers and to terminate their existence? We are given a special illustration — an example to the world — in the instance of the fate of Jerusalem, and in fact of the entire Jewish nation. They sinned unceasingly against all God’s commandments, and when he proclaimed grace and offered forgiveness of sins, they trampled upon his mercy. Should Christ not revenge himself when they shamed and mocked his precious blood?

18. Unto all the abominable sins mentioned, we must heap blasphemies; for when wrath and punishment come upon us we make outcry, complaining that the Gospel — or the new doctrine, as it is now called — is responsible. The Jews blame us Christians alone for the fact that they are scattered throughout the world. Their prayers day and night are directed against us, in blasphemies and reproaches inexpressible. Nevertheless, it

was not the Christians who harassed and scattered them, but the heathenish Roman emperor.

But whom other than themselves have the Jews to blame for their condition? for they would not tolerate Christ, when he brought them only help and boundless grace. Refusing to accept him whom God gave and in whom he promised all blessings, they necessarily lost their daily bread from God, except as they rebelliously extort it by usury and wickedness. They had also to suffer the loss of their national life, their priesthood and public worship, forgiveness of sins and redemption, and so remain eternally captive under the wrath and condemnation of God. Such is the just and inevitable punishment of the unwise — the foolish — who refused to recognize their opportunity when Christ was with them.

19. With this terrible example before our eyes, we are still unrepentant, pursuing the same course the Jews followed, not only in disobedience to the will of God, but in rejecting his grace. For that grace we should earnestly long and pray, striving to secure to our children after us baptism, the ministry and the sacrament, in their purity. In return for our perversity, it will eventually be with us as with the Jews and other ungrateful persecutors and rejecters.

20. Then let him who will receive advice and help, faithfully heed Paul's counsel and redeem the time, not sleeping away the blessed golden hour of grace; as Christ earnestly admonishes in the parable of the five foolish virgins. ^{<4153>}Matthew 25:13. The foolish virgins might have made their purchases in season, before the bridegroom's arrival; but failing to attend to the matter until time to meet the bridegroom, they missed both the market and the wedding.

21. The ancient poets and sages make use of a similar illustration at the expense of the cricket or grasshopper. As the fable runs, when winter came the grasshoppers, having nothing to eat, went to the ants and asked them to divide their gathered store. "What did you in the summer time that you gathered nothing?" asked the ants. "We sang," the grasshoppers replied. "If you sang in the summer, you must dance for it in the winter," was the response. Similarly should fools unwilling to learn the will of God be answered. Terrible and alarming is the wrath of God when with scorn and mockery he turns away a soul. In ^{<4102>}Proverbs 1:24 and 26 he threatens: "Because I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hand,

and no man hath regarded I also will laugh in the day of your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh.”

22. Some may ask what Paul means by adding to the phrase, “Redeeming the time,” the modifier, “because the days are evil”; if we are to regard the present opportunity golden, why are the days evil?

EVIL DOCTRINES EVER OPPOSE THE CHRISTIAN.

23. I answer: The time is unquestionably good so long as the Gospel is sounded — is faithfully preached and received. At the same time, even today the world is filled with evils, factions, false theories and bad examples of every sort; much of this wickedness is inherent in ourselves. With these things the Christian must always contend; the devil pursues, and our own flesh discourages us and allures from recognition and observance of the divine will. If we strive not against it, we shall soon lose sight of God’s will, to our own injury, even while listening to the Gospel. For the devil’s strongest fury is exerted to befoul the world with fanaticism, and to draw from the pure doctrine of faith into that evil even them who possess the Gospel. Moreover, being still flesh and blood we are always self-secure, unwilling to be led by the Spirit, and indolent and unresponsive in relation to the Word of God and to prayer. Again, in the outward walks of life, in temporal conditions, only obstacles and evils meet us everywhere, impeding our spiritual progress and impelling us to suppress the Gospel and to rend the Church.

24. Let no one, then, expect to enjoy an era of peace and pleasure here on earth. Although the present time is in itself good, and God bestows upon us the golden year of his Word and his grace, yet the devil is here with his factions and followers, and our own flesh supports him. He corrupts the blessed days of grace at every possible opportunity, and so oppresses Christians that they must contend against him with their utmost strength and vigilance if they would not, through the influence of evils and obstacles, be wrested from the Gospel they have received, and if they would persevere therein unto the end.

Wherefore, we have the best reasons to adapt ourselves to the present time in the best possible way; to walk wisely and circumspectly, showing all faithfulness to the will of God; obeying it while we have opportunity — while still in possession of God’s Word, his grace and his Spirit. Being opposed and obstructed by the devil and our own flesh, we must, as Paul

implies, be wise and careful; we must guard against following them. If we fail in this respect, it will not avail us to pretend we did not know our duty, or had not time to perform it and consequently could not cope with them. So, then, we are to understand by “evil days” the allurements that lead us away from God’s Word and his will. “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess.”

25. The apostle touches upon several evils strongly tending to waste of time and neglect of the golden opportunity. Especially is drunkenness one, for drink makes men particularly self-secure, reckless and disorderly. The evil was formerly common in Greece, and in Germany today are men who delight in being riotously drunk night and day. Such individuals are utterly lacking in the faithfulness and interest essential to following the will of God. They are unable, even in temporal affairs, to persistently apply themselves, much less to be opportune. Indeed, so beastly and swinish do they become, they lose all sense of either shame or honor; they have no modesty nor any human feeling. Alas, examples are before our eyes plainer and more numerous than we can depict.

26. Paul’s words of admonition, “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,” are treated in the epistle passage for the fifth Sunday after Epiphany, where the text is similar.

TWENTY FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~4060~~EPHESIANS 6:10-17.

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. **11** Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. **12** For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the worldrulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. **13** Wherefore take up the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. **14** Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, **15** and having shod your foot with the preparation of the gospel of peace; **16** withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. **17** And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

THE CHRISTIAN ARMOR AND WEAPONS.

This epistle text is fully expounded in “The Explanations and Sermons on Paul’s Epistles” — in the sermon on ~~4060~~Ephesians 6:10-17, entitled “The Christian Armor and Weapons,” preached in the year 1533.

TWENTY SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~ROM~~ PHILIPPIANS 1:3-11.

3 I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you, **4** always in every supplication of mine on behalf of you all making my supplication with joy, **5** for your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now; **6** being confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ: **7** even as it is right for me to be thus minded on behalf of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as, both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers with me of grace. **8** For God is my witness, how I long after you in all the tender mercies of Christ Jesus. **9** And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment; **10** so that ye may approve the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and void of offense unto the day of Christ; **11** being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

PAUL'S THANKS AND PRAYERS FOR CHURCHES.

1. First, the apostle Paul thanks God, as his custom is in the beginning of his epistles, for the grace whereby the Philippians came into the fellowship of the Gospel and were made partakers of it. Secondly, his desire and prayer to God is for their increase in the knowledge of the Gospel, and their more abundant fruits. His intent in extolling the Gospel is to admonish them to remain steadfast in their faith, continuing as they have begun and as they now stand. Apparently this is a simple passage, especially to learned and apt students of the Scriptures. They may not think it holds any great truth to be discovered. Yet we must explain this and like discourses

for the benefit of some who do not fully understand it, and who desire to learn.

2. These words give us an exact delineation of the Christian heart that sincerely believes in the holy Gospel. Such hearts are rare in the world. It is especially difficult to find one so beautiful as we observe here unless it be among the beloved apostles or those who approached them in Christ-likeness. For in the matter of faith we today are entirely too indolent and indifferent.

3. But the Christian heart is such as inspired Paul's words; here its characteristics are shown. He rejoices in the Gospel with his inmost soul. He thanks God that others have come into its fellowship. His confidence is firm regarding certain beginners in the faith, and he is so interested in their salvation he rejoices in it as much as in his own, seeming unable to thank God sufficiently for it. He unceasingly prays that he may live to see many come with him into such fellowship and be preserved therein until the day of the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall perfect and complete all the defects of this earthly life. He prays these beginners may go forth faultlessly in faith and hope until that joyful day.

Thus the godly apostle expresses himself, pouring out the depths of his heart — a heart filled with the real fruits of the Spirit and of faith. It burns with love and joy whenever he sees the Gospel recognized, accepted and honored, and the Church flourishing. Paul can conceive for the converts no loftier desire — can offer no greater petition for them than to implore God they may increase and persevere in the Gospel faith. Such is the inestimable value he places upon possessing and holding fast God's Word. And Christ in ~~<2128>~~Luke 11:28 pronounces blessed those who keep the Word of God.

I. THE DUTY OF GRATITUDE.

5. Now, the first thing in which Paul is here an example to us is his gratitude. It behooves the Christian who recognizes the grace and goodness of God expressed in the Gospel, first of all to manifest his thankfulness therefor; toward God — his highest duty — and toward men. As Christians who have abandoned the false services and sacrifices that in our past heathenish blindness we zealously practiced, let us remember our obligation henceforth to be the more fervent in offering true service and right sacrifices to God. We can render him no better — in fact, none other — service, or outward work, than the thank-offering, as the Scriptures

term it. That is, receiving and honoring the grace of God and the preaching and hearing of his Word, and furthering their operation, not only in word, but sincerely in our hearts and with all our physical and spiritual powers. This is the truest gratitude.

6. God calls that a “pure offering” which is rendered to him “among the gentiles” (^{<3011>}Malachi 1:11), where his name is not preached and praised from avariciousness, not from pride and presumption in the priesthood and in the holiness of human works. These motives actuated the boasting Jews, who, as God charges in this reference, presumptuously thought to receive honor from him for every trivial service like closing a door or opening a window. But the offering of the gentiles is joyfully rendered from a sincere, willing heart. This kind of thanksgiving and sacrifices are acceptable to God, for he says in ^{<19B003>}Psalm 110:3, “Thy people shall be willing”; and in ^{<4007>}2 Corinthians 9:7, “God loveth a cheerful giver.” The knowledge of the Gospel should inspire us with gratitude of this order. Let us not be found unthankful, and forgetful of God’s infinite goodness.

INGRATITUDE DENOUNCED BY THE HEATHEN.

7. The heathen everywhere, despite their ignorance of God and his grace, condemned to the utmost the evil of ingratitude. They regarded it the mother of evils, than which was none more malevolent and shameful. Among many examples in this respect is one left us by a people in Arabia called Nabathians, who had an excellent form of government. So strict were they in regard to this evil that anyone found guilty of ingratitude to his fellows was looked upon as a murderer and punished with death.

8. No sin is more abominable to human nature, and of none is human nature less tolerant. It is easier to forgive and to forget the act of an enemy who commits a bodily injury, or even murders one’s parents, than it is to forget the sin of him who repays simple kindness and fidelity with ingratitude and faithlessness; who for love and friendship returns hatred. In the sentiment of the Latin proverb, to be so rewarded is like rearing a serpent in one’s bosom. God likewise regards this sin with extreme enmity and punishes it. The Scriptures say: “Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house.” ^{<3073>}Proverbs 17:13.

9. Thus we have the teaching of nature and of reason regarding the sin of men’s ingratitude toward one another. How much greater the evil, how much more shameful and accursed, when manifested toward God who, in

his infinite and ineffable goodness, conferred upon us while yet enemies to him and deserving of the fires of hell — conferred upon us, I say, not ten dollars, not a hundred thousand dollars even, but redemption from divine wrath and eternal death, and abundantly comforted us, granting us safety, a good conscience, peace and salvation! These are inexpressible blessings, incomprehensible in this life. And they will continue to occupy our minds in yonder eternal life. How much more awful the sin of ingratitude for these blessings, as exemplified in the servant mentioned in the Gospel passage for today, to whom was forgiven the debt of ten thousand talents and who yet would not forgive the debt of his fellow-servant who owed him a hundred pence!

10. Is it not incredible that there are to be found on earth individuals wicked enough to manifest for the highest and eternal blessings such unspeakable ingratitude? But alas, we have the evidence of our own eyes. We know them in their very dwelling-places. We see how the world abounds with them. Not only are the ingrates to be found among deliberate rejecters of the acknowledged truth of the Gospel, concerning God's grace, an assured conscience and the promise of eternal life, terrible as such malice of the devil is, but they are present also in our midst, accepting the Gospel and boasting of it. Such shameful ingratitude prevails among the masses it would not be strange were God to send upon them the thunders and lightnings of his wrath, yes, all the Turks and the devils of hell.

There is a generally prevalent ingratitude like that of the wicked servant who readily forgot the straits he experienced when, being called to account for what he could not pay, the wrathful sentence was pronounced against him that he and all he possessed must be sold, and he be indefinitely imprisoned. Nor have we less readily forgotten how we were tortured under the Papacy; how we were overwhelmed, drowned as in a flood, with numberless strange doctrines, when our anxious consciences longed for salvation. Now that we are, through the grace of God, liberated from these distresses, our gratitude is of a character to increasingly heap to ourselves the wrath of God. So have others before us done, and consequently have endured terrible chastisement.

11. Only calculate the enormity of our wickedness when, God having infinitely blessed us in forgiving all our sins and making us lords over heaven and earth, we so little respect him as to be unmindful of his

blessings; to be unwilling for the sake of them sincerely to forgive our neighbor a single slighting word, not to mention rendering him service. We conduct ourselves as if God might be expected to connive at our ingratitude and permit us to continue in it, at the same time conferring upon us as godly and obedient children, success and happiness. More than this, we think we have the privilege and power to live and do as we please. Indeed, the more learning and power we have and the more exalted our rank, the greater knaves we are; perpetrating every wicked deed, stirring up strife, discord, war and murder for the sake of executing our own arbitrary designs, where the question is the surrender of a penny in recognition of the hundreds of thousands of dollars daily received from God notwithstanding our ingratitude.

12. Two mighty lords clash with each other like powerful battering rams, and for what? Perhaps for undisputed possession of a city or two, a matter they must be ashamed of did they but call to mind what they have received from God. They would be constrained to exclaim: “What are we doing that we injure one another — we who are all baptized in one name, the name of Christ, and pledged to one Lord?” But no, it will not do for them to consider this matter; not even to think of it. They must turn their eyes away from it, and put it far from their hearts. Wholly forgetting God’s benefits, they must wage war against each other, involving nations, and subjecting people to the Turk. And all for sake of the insignificant farthing each refused to yield to the other.

13. The world permits the very devil to saddle and ride it as he pleases. It seems to be characteristic of every phase of life that one will not yield to another — will not submit to any demand. Everyone is disposed to force his arrogant authority. The presumption is that supreme honor and final success depend upon an unyielding, unforgiving disposition, and that to seek to retain our possessions by peaceable means will prove our ruin. Even the two remaining cows in the stall must be brought into requisition, and war waged to the last stick, until when the mutineer comes and we have neither cow nor stall, nor house nor stick, we are obliged to cease.

RETRIBUTION FOLLOWS INGRATITUDE.

Oh, had we but grace enough to reflect on how it would be with us did God require us, as he has a perfect right to do, to pay our whole indebtedness, none being forgiven! grace enough to think whether we

would not this very moment be in the abyss of hell! But so must it finally be with those who disregard the question and continually heap to themselves the wrath of God, being at the same time unwilling for him to deal otherwise with them than he did with the servant he forgave. But against that servant was finally passed the irrevocable sentence which, without mercy, delivered him to the tormentor till he should pay the debt, something he could never do.

14. Nor is there any wrong or injustice in this ruling. For, as St. Bernhard says, ingratitude is an evil damnable and pernicious enough to quench all the springs of grace and blessing known to God and men; it is like a poison-laden, burning, destructive wind. Human nature will not tolerate it. Nor can God permit you, upon whom he has bestowed all grace and goodness, all spiritual and temporal blessing, to go on continually in wickedness, defiantly abusing his benevolence and dishonoring him; you thus recklessly bring upon yourself his wrath. For God cannot bless you if you are ungrateful, if you reject his goodness and give it no place in your heart.

In such case the fountain of grace and mercy that continually springs for all who sincerely desire it, must be quenched for you. You cannot enjoy it. It would afford you an abundant and unceasing supply of water did you not yourself dry it up by the deadly wind of your ingratitude; by shamefully forgetting the ineffable goodness God bestows upon you; and by failing to honor the blood of Christ the Lord, wherewith he purchased us and reconciled us to God — failing to honor it enough to forgive your neighbor, for Christ's sake, a single wrong word.

15. What heavy burden is there for the individual who, in submission and gratitude to his God, and in honor to Christ, would conduct himself something like a Christian? It will cost him no great effort nor trouble. It will not break any bones nor injure him in property or honor. Even were it to affect him to some trifling extent, to incur for him some slight injustice, he should remember what God has given him, and will still give, of his grace and goodness.

Yes, why complain even were you, in some measure, to endanger body and life? What did not the Son of God incur for you? It was not pleasure for him to take upon himself the wrath of God, to bear the curse for you. It cost him bloody sweat and unspeakable anguish of heart, as well as the sacrifice of his body, the shedding of his blood, when he bore for you the

wrath and curse of God, which would have rested upon you forever. Yet he did it cheerfully and with fervent love. Should you not, then, be ashamed in your own heart, and humiliated before all creatures, to be so slow and dull, so stock-and-stone-hardened, about enduring and forgiving an occasional unkind word — something to be suffered in token of honor and gratitude to him? What more noble than, for the sake of Christ, to incur danger, to suffer injury, to aid the poor and needy? in particular to further the Word of God and to support the ministry, the pulpit and the schools?

16. It would be no marvel had Germany long ago sunk to ruin, or had it been razed to its very foundations by Turks and Tartars, because of its diabolical forgetfulness, its damnable rejection, of God's unspeakable grace. Indeed, it is a wonder the earth continues to support us and the sun still gives us light. Because of our ingratitude, well might the heavens become dark and the earth be perverted — as the Scriptures teach (Psalm 106) — and suffer the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, no longer yielding a leaf nor a blade of grass, but completely turned from its course — well might it be so did not God, for the sake of the few godly Christians known and acknowledged of him, forbear and still delay.

EXAMPLES OF INGRATITUDE FOR THE GOSPEL.

17. Wherever we turn our eyes we see, in all conditions of life, a deluge of terrible examples of ingratitude for the precious Gospel. We see how kings, princes and lords scratch and bite; how they envy and hate one another, oppressing their own people and destroying their own countries; how they tax themselves with not so much as a single Christian thought about ameliorating the wretchedness of Germany and securing for the oppressed Church somewhere a shelter of defense against the murderous attacks of devil, Pope and Turks. The noblemen rake and rend, robbing whomever they can, prince or otherwise, and especially the poor Church; like actual devils, they trample under foot pastors and preachers. Townsmen and farmers, too, are extremely avaricious, extortionate and treacherous; they fearlessly perpetrate every sort of insolence and wickedness, and without shame and unpunished. The earth cries to heaven, unable longer to tolerate its oppression.

18. But why multiply words? It is in vain so far as the world is concerned; no admonition will avail. The world remains the devil's own. We must

remember we shall not by any means find with the world that Christian heart pictured by the apostle; on the contrary we shall find what might be represented by a picture of the very opposite type — the most shameless ingratitude. But let the still existing God-fearing Christians be careful to imitate in their gratitude the spirit of the apostle’s beautiful picture. Let them give evidence of their willingness to hear the Word of God, of pleasure and delight in it and grief where it is rejected. Let them show by their lives a consciousness of the great blessing conferred by those from whom they received the Gospel. As recipients of such goodness, let their hearts and lips ever be ready with the happy declaration: “God be praised!” For thereunto are we called. As before said, praise should be the constant service and daily sacrifice of Christians; and according to Paul’s teaching here, the Christian’s works, his fruits of righteousness, should shine before men. Such manifestation of gratitude assuredly must result when we comprehend what God has given us.

19. Notwithstanding the world’s refusal to be influenced by the recognition of God’s goodness, and in spite of the fact that we are obliged daily to see, hear and suffer the world’s increasing ungratefulness the longer it stands, we must not allow ourselves to be led into error; for we will be unable to change it. We must preach against the evil of ingratitude wherever possible, severely censuring it, and faithfully admonish all men to guard against it. At the same time we have to remember the world will not submit. Although compelled to live among the ungrateful, we are not for that reason to fall into error nor to cease from doing good. Let our springs be dispersed abroad, as Solomon says in ^{<1056>}Proverbs 5:16. Let us continually do good, not faltering when others receive our good as evil. Just as God causes his sun to rise on the thankful and the unthankful. ^{<1055>}Matthew 5:45.

20. But if your good works are wrought with the object of securing the thanks and applause of the world, you will meet with a reception quite the reverse. Your reward will justly be that of him who crushes with his teeth the hollow nut only to defile his mouth. Now, if when ingratitude is met with, you angrily wish to pull down mountains, and resolve to give up doing good, you are no longer a Christian. You injure yourself and accomplish nothing. Can you not be mindful of your environment — that you are still in the world where vice and ingratitude hold sway? that you are, as the phrase goes, with “those who return evil for good”? He who would escape this fact must flee the boundaries of the world. It requires no

great wisdom to live only among the godly and do good, but the keenest judgment is necessary to live with the wicked and not do evil.

21. Christianity should be begun in youth, to give practice in the endurance that will enable one to do good to all men while expecting evil in return. Not that the Christian is to commend and approve evil conduct; he is to censure and restrain wickedness to the limit of the authority his position in life affords. It is the best testimony to the real merit of a work when its beneficiaries are not only ungrateful but return evil. For its results tend to restrain the doer from a too high opinion of himself, and the character of the work is too precious in God's sight for the world to be worthy of rewarding it.

II. THE DUTY OF PRAYER.

22. The other Christian duty named by Paul in this passage is that of prayer. The two obligations — gratitude for benefits received, and prayer for the preservation and growth of God's work begun in us — are properly related. Prayer is of supreme importance, for the devil and the world assail us and delight in turning us aside; we have continually to resist wickedness. So the conflict is a sore one for our feeble flesh and blood, and we cannot stand unvanquished unless there be constant, earnest invocation of divine aid. Gratitude and prayer are essential and must accompany each other, according to the requirements of the daily sacrifice of the Old Testament: the offering of praise, or thank-offering, thanks to God for blessings received; and the sacrifice of prayer, or the Lord's Prayer — the petition against the wickedness and evil from which we would be released.

23. Our life has not yet reached the heights it is destined to attain. We know here only its incipient first-fruits. Desire is not satisfied; we have but a foretaste. As yet we only realize by faith what is bestowed upon us; full and tangible occupancy is to come. Therefore, we need to pray because of the limitations that bind our earthly life, until we go yonder where prayer is unnecessary, and all is happiness, purity of life and one eternal song of thanks and praise to God.

But heavenly praise and joy is to have its inception and a measure of growth here on earth through the encouragement of prayer — prayer for ourselves and the Church as a whole; that is, for them who have accepted and believe the Gospel and are thus mutually helpful. For the Gospel will receive greater exaltation and will inspire more joy with the individual

because of its acceptance by the many. So Paul says he thanks God for the fellowship of the Philippians in the Gospel, and offers prayer in their behalf.

PRAYER FOR OTHERS.

24. Yes, it should be the joy of a Christian heart to see multitudes accept the offer of mercy, and praise and thank God with him. This desire for the participation of others in the Gospel promotes the spirit of prayer. The Christian cannot be a misanthrope, wholly unconcerned whether his fellows believe or not. He should be interested in all men and unceasingly long and pray for their salvation; for the sanctification of God's name, the coming of his kingdom, the fulfilment of his will; and for the exposure everywhere of the devil's deceptions, the suppression of his murderous power over poor souls and the restraint of his authority.

25. This prayer should be the sincere, earnest outflow of the true Christian's heart. Note, Paul's words here indicate that his praise and prayer were inspired by a fervent spirit. It is impossible that the words "I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you, always in every supplication" be the expression of any but a heart full of such sentiments.

Truly, Paul speaks in a way worthy of an apostle — saying he renders praise and prayer with keenest pleasure. He rejoices in his heart that he has somewhere a little band of Christians who love the Gospel and with whom he may rejoice; that he may thank God for them and pray in their behalf. Was there not much more reason that all they who had heard the Gospel should rejoice, and thank Paul in heart and in expression for it, praying God in his behalf? should rejoice that they became worthy of the apostle's favor, were delivered from their blindness and had now received from him the light transferring from sin and death into the grace of God and eternal life?

26. But Paul does not wait for them to take the initiative, as they ought to have done to declare their joy and their gratitude to him. In his first utterance he pours out the joy of his heart, fervently thanking God for them, etc. Well might they have blushed, and reproached themselves, when they received the epistle beginning with these words. Well might they have said, "We should not have permitted him to speak in this way; it was our place first to show him gratitude and joy."

FEW BELIEVERS NO REASON FOR DISCOURAGEMENT.

27. We shall not soon be able to boast the attainment of that beautiful, perfect Christian spirit the apostle's words portray. Seeing how the apostle rejoices over finding a few believers in the Gospel, why should we complain because of the smaller number who accord us a hearing and seriously accept the Word of God? We have no great reason to complain nor to be discouraged since Christ and the prophets and apostles, meeting with the same backwardness on the part of the people, still were gratified over the occasional few who accepted the faith. We note how Christ rejoiced when now and then he found one who had true faith, and on the other hand was depressed when his own people refused to hear him, and reluctantly censured them. And Paul did not meet with more encouragement. In all the Roman Empire — and through the greater part of it he had traveled with the Gospel — he only occasionally found a place where was even a small band of earnest Christians; but over them he peculiarly rejoices, finding in them greater consolation than in all the treasures on earth.

28. But it is a prophecy of good to the world, a portent of ultimate success, that Christ and his apostles and ministers must rejoice over an occasional reception of the beloved Word. Such acceptance will tell in time. One would think all men might eagerly have hastened to the ends of the earth to be afforded an opportunity of hearing an apostle. But Paul had to go through the world himself upon his ministry, enduring great fatigue and encountering privations and grave dangers, being rejected and trampled upon by all men. However, disregarding it all, he rejoiced to be able now and then to see some soul accept the Gospel. In time past it was not necessary for the Pope and his officials to run after anyone. They sat in lordly authority in their kingdom, and all men had to obey their summons, wherever wanted, and that without thanks.

29. What running on the part of our fathers, even of many of us, as if we were foolish — running from all countries, hundreds of miles, to Jerusalem, to the holy sepulcher, to Compostella, St. James, Rome, to the heads of St. Peter and St. Paul; some barefooted and others in complete armor — all this, to say nothing of innumerable other pilgrimages! We thus expended large sums of money, and thanked God, and rejoiced to be able thereby to purchase the wicked indulgences of the Pope and to be worthy to look upon or to kiss the bones of the dead exhibited as holy relics, but

preferably to kiss the feet of His Most Holy Holiness, the Pope. This condition of things the world desires again, and it shall have nothing better.

TWENTY THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 3, 17, 21.

17 Brethren, be ye imitators [followers] together of me, and mark them that so walk even as ye have us for an ensample. 18 For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 whose end is perdition, whose god is the belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. 20 For our citizenship [conversation] is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation [change our vile body], that it may be conformed [fashioned] to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto him self.

ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN'S CITIZENSHIP IN HEAVEN.

1. Paul *immeasurably* extols the Philippicians for having made a good beginning in the holy Gospel and for having acquitted themselves *commendably*, like men in earnest, as manifest *by* their fruits of faith. The reason he shows this sincere and strong concern for them is his desire that they remain steadfast, not being led astray *by* false teachers among the roaming Jews. For at that time many Jews went about with the intent of perverting Paul's converts, pretending they taught something far better; while they drew the people away from Christ and back to the Law, for the purpose of establishing and extending their Jewish doctrines. Paul, contemplating with special interest and pleasure his Church of the Philipplians, is moved by parental care to admonish them lest they sometime be misled by such teachers to hold steadily to what they have received, not seeking anything else and not imagining, like self secure, besotted souls who allow themselves to be deceived by the devil not imagining themselves perfect and with complete understanding in all things.

In the verses just preceding our text he speaks of himself as having not yet attained to full knowledge.

PURITY OF DOCTRINE ENJOINED.

2. He particularly admonishes them to follow him and to mark those ministers who walk as he does; also to shape their belief and conduct by the pattern they have received from him. Not only of himself does he make an example, but introduces them who similarly walk, several of whom he mentions in this letter to the Philippians. The individuals whom he bids them observe and follow must have been persons of special eminence. But it is particularly the doctrine the apostle would have the Philippians pattern after. Therefore we should be chiefly concerned about preserving the purity of the office of the ministry and the genuineness of faith. When these are kept unsullied, doctrine will be right, and good works spontaneous. Later on, in chapter 4, verse 8, Paul admonishes, with reference to the same subject: "If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

3. Apparently Paul is a rash man to dare boast himself a pattern for all. Other ministers might well accuse him of desiring to exalt his individual self above others. "Think you," our wise ones would say to him, "that you alone have the Holy Spirit, or that no one else is as eager for honor as yourself?" Just so did Miriam and Aaron murmur against Moses, their own brother, saying: "Hath Jehovah indeed spoken only with Moses? hath he not spoken also with us?" Numbers 12, 2. And it would seem as if Paul had too high an appreciation of his own character did he hold up his individual self as a pattern, intimating that no one was to be noted as worthy unless he walked as he did; though there might be some who apparently gave greater evidence of the Spirit, of holiness, humility and other graces, than himself, and yet walked not in his way.

4. But he does not say "I, Paul, alone." He says, "as ye have us for an example", that does not exclude other true apostles and teachers. He is admonishing his Church, as he everywhere does, to hold fast to the one true doctrine received from him in the beginning. They are not to be too confident of their own wisdom in the matter, or to presume they have independent authority; but rather to guard against pretenders to a superior doctrine, for so had some been misled.

RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW IS VAIN.

5. In what respect he was a pattern or example to them, he has made plain; for instance, in the beginning of this chapter, in the third verse and following, he says: “For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh: though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh: if any other man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews.” That is, he commands the highest honor a Jew can boast. “As touching the law,” he goes on, “a Pharisee; as touching zeal, persecuting the Church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless. Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.”

6. “Behold, this is the picture or pattern,” he would say, “which we hold up for you to follow, that remembering how you obtained righteousness you may hold to it a righteousness not of the Law.” So far as the righteousness of the Law is concerned, Paul dares to say he regards it as filth and refuse (that proceeds from the human body); notwithstanding in its beautiful and blameless form it may be unsurpassed by anything in the world such righteousness as was manifest in sincere Jews, and in Paul himself before his conversion; for these in their great holiness, regarded Christians as knaves and meriting damnation, and consequently took delight in being party to the persecution and murder of Christians.

7. “Yet,” Paul would say, “I who am a Jew by birth have counted all this merit as simply loss that I might be found in ‘the righteousness which is from God by faith’.” Only the righteousness of faith teaches us how to apprehend God how to confidently console ourselves with his grace and await a future life, expecting to approach Christ in the resurrection. By “approaching” him we mean to meet him in death and at the judgment day without terror, not fleeing but gladly drawing near and hailing him with joy as one waited for with intense longing. Now, the righteousness of the Law cannot effect such confidence of mind. Hence, for me it avails nothing

before God; rather it is a detriment. What does avail is God's imputation of righteousness for Christ's sake, through faith. God declares to us in his Word that the believer in his Son shall, for Christ's own sake, have God's grace and eternal life. He who knows this is able to wait in hope for the last day, having no fear, no disposition to flee.

8. But is it not treating the righteousness of the Law with irreverence and contempt to regard it and so teach as something not only useless and even obstructive, but injurious, loathsome and abominable? Who would have been able to make such a bold statement, and to censure a life so faultless and conforming so closely to the Law as Paul's, without being pronounced by all men a minion of the devil, had not the apostle made that estimation of it himself? And who is to have any more respect for the righteousness of the Law if we are to preach in that strain ?

9. Had Paul confined his denunciations to the righteousness of the world or of the heathen the righteousness dependent upon reason and controlled by secular government, by laws and regulations his teaching would not have seemed so irreverent. But he distinctly specifies the righteousness of God's Law, or the Ten Commandments, to which we owe an obligation far above what is due temporal powers, for they teach how to live before God something no heathenish court of justice, no temporal authority, knows anything about. Should we not condemn as a heretic this preacher who goes beyond his prerogative and dares find fault with the Law of God? who also warns us to shun such as observe it, such as trust in its righteousness, and exalts to sainthood "enemies of the cross of Christ whose God is the belly" who serve the appetites instead of God?

10. Paul would say of himself: "I, too, was such a one. In my most perfect righteousness of the Law I was an enemy to and persecutor of the congregation, or Church, of Christ. It was the legitimate fruit of my righteousness that I thought I must be party to the most horrible persecution of Christ and his Christians. Thus my holiness made me an actual enemy of Christ and a murderer of his followers. The disposition to injure is a natural result of the righteousness of the Law, as all Scripture history from Cain down testifies, and as we see even in the rest of the world who have not come to the knowledge of Christ. Princes, civil authorities in proportion to their wisdom, their godliness and honor are the bitter and intolerant enemies of the Gospel.

11. Of the sensual papistical dolts at Rome, cardinals, bishops, priests and the like, it is not necessary to speak here. their works are manifest. All honorable secular authorities must confess they are simply abandoned knaves, living shameless lives of open scandal, avarice, arrogance, unchastity, vanity, robbery and wickedness of every kind. Not only are they guilty of such living, but shamelessly endeavor to defend their conduct. They must, then, be regarded enemies of Christ and of all honesty and virtue. Hence every respectable man is justly antagonistic toward them. But, as before said, Paul is not here referring to this class, but to eminent, godly individuals, whose lives are beyond reproach. These very ones, when Christians are encountered, are hostile and heinous enough to be able to forget all their own faults in the sight of God, and to magnify to huge beams the motes we Christians have. In fact, they must style the Gospel heresy and satanic doctrine for the purpose of exalting their own holiness and zeal for God.

RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW OPPOSES THE CROSS.

12. The thing seems incredible, and I would not have believed it myself, nor have understood Paul's words here, had I not witnessed it with my own eyes and experienced it. Were the apostle to repeat the charge today, who could conceive that our first, noblest, most respectable, godly and holy people, those whom we might expect, above all others, to accept the Word of God that they, I say, should be enemies to the Christian doctrine? But the examples before us testify very plainly that the "enemies" the apostle refers to must be the individuals styled godly and worthy princes and noblemen, honorable citizens, learned, wise, intelligent individuals. Yet if these could devour at one bite the "Evangelicals," as they are now called, they would do it.

13. If you ask, Whence such a disposition? I answer, it naturally springs from human righteousness. For every individual who professes human righteousness, and knows nothing of Christ, holds that efficacious before God. He relies upon it and gratifies himself with it, presuming thereby to present a flattering appearance in God's sight and to render himself peculiarly acceptable to him. From being proud and arrogant toward God, he comes to reject them who are not righteous according to the Law; as illustrated in the instance of the Pharisee. ^{<DIS>}Luke 18:11 12. But greater is his enmity and more bitter his hatred toward the preaching that dares to

censure such righteousness and assert its futility to merit God's grace and eternal life.

14. I myself, and others with me, were dominated by such feelings when, under popery, we claimed to be holy and pious; we must confess the fact. If thirty years ago, when I was a devout, holy monk, holding mass every day and having no thought but that I was in the road leading directly to heaven if then anyone had accused me had preached to me the things of this text and pronounced our righteousness which accorded not strictly with the Law of God, but conformed to human doctrine and was manifestly idolatrous pronounced it without efficacy and said I was an enemy to the cross of Christ, serving my own sensual appetites, I would immediately have at Mast helped to find stones for putting to death such a Stephen, or to gather wood for the burning of this worst of heretics.

15. So human nature ever does. The world cannot conduct itself in any other way, when the declaration comes from heaven saying: "True you are a holy man, a great and learned jurist, a conscientious regent, a worthy prince, an honorable citizen, and so on, but with all your authority and your upright character you are going to hell; your every act is offensive and condemned in God's sight. If you would be saved you must become an altogether different man; your mind and heart must be changed." Let this be announced and the fire rises, the Rhine is all ablaze; for the self righteous regard it an intolerable idea that lives so beautiful, lives devoted to praiseworthy callings, should be publicly censured and condemned by the objectionable preaching of a few insignificant individuals regarded as even pernicious, and according to Paul, as filthy refuse, actual obstacles to eternal life.

16. But you may say: "What? Do you forbid good works? Is it not right to lead an honorable, virtuous life? Do you not acknowledge the necessity of political laws, of civil governments? that upon obedience to them depends the maintenance of discipline, peace and honor? Indeed, do you not admit that God himself commands such institutions and wills their observance, punishing where they are disregarded? Much more would he have his own Law and the Ten Commandments honored, not rejected. How dare you then assert that such righteousness is misleading, and obstructive to eternal life? What consistence is there in teaching people to observe the things of the Law, to be righteous in that respect, and at the same time censuring

those things as condemned before God? How can the works of the Law be good and precious, and yet repulsive and productive of evil?"

17. I answer, Paul well knows the world takes its stand on this point of righteousness by the Law, and hence would contradict him. But let him who will, consult the apostle as to why he makes such bold assertions here. For indeed the words of the text are not our words, but his. True, law and government are essential in temporal life, as Paul himself confesses, and God would have everyone honor and obey them. Indeed, he has ordained their observance among Turks and heathen. Yet it is a fact that these people, even the best and most upright of them, they who lead honorable lives, are naturally in their hearts enemies to Christ, and devote their intellectual powers to exterminating God's people. It must be universally admitted that the Turks, with all the restrictions and austerity of life imposed upon them by the Koran, a life more rigorous even than that of Christians it must be admitted they belong to the devil. In other words, we adjudge them condemned with all their righteousness, but at the same time say they do right in punishing thieves, robbers, murderers, drunkards and other offenders; more, that Christians living within their jurisdiction are under obligation to pay tribute, and to serve them with person and property. Precisely the same thing is true respecting our princes who persecute the Gospel and are open enemies to Christ: we must be obedient to them, paying the tribute and rendering the service imposed; yet they, and all obedient followers willingly consenting to the persecution of the Gospel, must be looked upon as condemned before God.

18. Similarly does Paul speak concerning the righteousness of all the Jews and pious saints who are not Christians. His utterance is bold and of certain sound. He censures them and, weeping, deprecatingly refers to certain who direct the people to the righteousness of the law with the sole result of making "enemies to the cross of Christ."

19. Again, all the praise he has for them is to say that their "end is perdition"; they are condemned in spite of strenuous efforts all their lives to teach and enforce the righteousness of work. Here on earth it is truly a price less distinction, an admirable and noble treasure, a praise worthy honor, to have the name of being a godly and upright prince, ruler or citizen; a pious, virtuous wife or virgin. Who would not praise and exalt such virtue? It is indeed a rare and valuable thing in the world. But

however beautiful, priceless and admirable an honor it is, Paul tells us, it is ultimately condemned and pertains not to heaven.

HUMAN RIGHTEOUSNESS IDOLATROUS.

20. The apostle makes his accusation yet more galling with the words “whose god is their belly.” Thus you hear how human righteousness, even at its best, extends no higher than to service of the sensual appetites. Take all the wisdom, justice, jurisprudence, artifice, even the highest virtues the world affords, and what are they? They minister only to that god, carnal appetite. They can go no farther than the needs of this life, their whole purpose being to satisfy physical cravings. When the physical appetites of the worldly pass, they pass likewise, and the gifts and virtues we have mentioned can no longer serve them. All perish and go to destruction together righteousness, virtues, laws and physical appetites which they have served as their god. For they are wholly ignorant of the true and eternal God; they know not how to serve him and receive eternal life. So then in its essential features such a life is merely idolatrous, having no greater object than the preservation of this perishable body and its enjoyment of peace and honor.

21. The fourth accusation is, “whose glory is in their shame.” That is all their glory amounts to. Let wise philosophers, scrupulous heathen, keen jurists, receive the acme of praise and honor it is yet but shame. True, their motto is “Love of Virtue”; they boast strong love of virtue and righteousness and may even think themselves sincere. But judged by final results, their boast is without foundation and ends in shame. For the utmost their righteousness can effect is the applause of the world here on earth. Before God it avails nothing. It cannot touch the life to come. Ultimately it leaves its possessor a captive in shame. Death devours and hell clutches him.

22. You may again object, “If what you say it true, why observe temporal restrictions? Let us live in *indulgent* carelessness following our inclinations. Let pass the godly, honorable man; the virtuous, upright wife or virgin.” I answer, By no means; that is not the design. You have heard it is God’s command and will that there be temporal righteousness even among Turks and heathen. And later on (ch. 4, 8) Paul admonishes Christians to “think on these things,” that is, on what is true. He says: “Whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure,

whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” And continuing, in verse 9, he refers them to his own example, saying, “which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me.”

FRUITS OF FAITH.

23. With the believers in Christ, them who have their righteousness in him, there should follow in this life on earth the fruits of upright living, in obedience to God. These fruits constitute the good works acceptable to God, which, being works of faith and wrought in Christ, will be rewarded in the life to come. But Paul has in mind the individuals who, rejecting faith in Christ, regard their self directed lives, their humanly wrought works, which conform to the Law, as righteousness availing in the sight of God. His reference is to them who so trust, though wholly ignorant of Christ, for whose sake, without any merit on our part, righteousness is imputed to us by God. The only condition is we must believe in Christ; for he became man, died for our sins and rose from the dead, for the very purpose of liberating us from our sins and granting us his resurrection and life. Toward the heavenly life we should tend, in our life here walking in harmony with it; as Paul says in conclusion: “Our citizenship is in heaven [not earthly and not confined to this temporal life only]; whence also we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” If we have no knowledge, no consciousness, of this fact, it matters not how beautiful and praiseworthy our human, earthly righteousness may be, it is merely a hindrance and an injury. For flesh and blood cannot help relying on its own righteousness and arrogantly boasting in this strain: “We are better, more honorable, more godly, than others. We Jews are the people of God and keep his Law.” Even Christians are not wholly free from the pernicious influence of human holiness. They ever seek to bring their own works and merits before God. I know for myself what pains are inflicted by this godless wisdom, this figment of righteousness, and what effort must be made before the serpent’s head is bruised.

24. Now, this is the situation and there is no alternative: Either suffer hell or regard your human righteousness as loss and filth and endeavor not to be found relying on it at your last hour, in the presence of God and judgment, but rather stand in the righteousness of Christ. In the garment of Christ’s righteousness and reared in him you may, in the resurrection from sin and death, meet Christ and exclaim: “Hail, beloved Lord and Savior,

thou who hast redeemed me from the wretched body of sin and death, and fashioned me like unto thy holy, pure and glorious body

GOD'S PATIENCE WITH HUMAN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

25. Meantime, while we walk in the faith of his righteousness, he has patience with the poor, frail righteousness of this earthly life, which otherwise is but filth in his sight. He honors our human holiness by supporting and protecting it during the time we live on earth; just as we honor our corrupt, filthy bodies, adorning them with beautiful, costly garments and golden ornaments, and reposing them on cushions and beds of luxury. Though but stench and filth encased in flesh, they are honored above every thing else on earth. For their sake are all things performed the ordering and ruling, building and laboring; and God himself permits sun and moon to shine that they may receive light and heat, and everything to grow on earth for their benefit. What is the human body but a beautiful pyx containing that filthy, repulsive object of reverence, the digestive organs, which the body must always patiently carry about; yes, which we must even nourish and minister to, glad if only they perform their functions properly?

26. Similarly God deals with us. Because he would confer eternal life upon man, he patiently endures the filthy righteousness of this life wherein we must dwell until the last day, for the sake of his chosen people and until the number is complete. For so long as the final day is deferred, not all to have eternal life are yet born. When the time shall be fulfilled, the number completed, God will suddenly bring to an end the world with its governments, its jurists and authorities, its conditions of life; in short, he will utterly abolish earthly righteousness, destroying physical appetites and all else together. For every form of human holiness is condemned to destruction; yet for the sake of Christians, to whom eternal life is appointed, and for their sake only, all these must be perpetuated until the last saint is born and has attained life everlasting. Were there but one saint yet to be born, for the sake of that one the world must remain. For God regards not the world nor has he need for it, except for the sake of his Christians.

27. Therefore, when God enjoins upon us obedience to the emperor, and godly, honest lives on earth, it is no war rant that our subjection to temporal authority is to continue forever. Instead, God necessarily will

minister to, adorn and honor this wretched body — vile body, as Paul here has it with power and dominion. Yet the apostle terms human righteousness “filth,” and says it is not necessary to God’s kingdom; indeed, that it is condemned in the sight of God with all its honor and glory, and all the world must be ashamed of it in his presence, confessing themselves guilty. Paul in ~~ROM~~Romans 3:27 and ~~ROM~~Romans 4:2 testifies to this fact when he tells how even the exalted, holy fathers Abraham, and others though having glory before the world because of their righteous works, could not make them serve to obtain honor before God. Much less will worldly honor avail with God in the case of individuals who, being called honorable, pious, honest, virtuous lords and princes, wives and husbands boast of such righteousness.

28. Outwardly, then, though your righteousness may appear dazzlingly beautiful before the world, inwardly you are but filth. Illustrative of this point is the story told of a certain nun regarded holy above all others. She would not fellowship with anyone else, but sat alone in her cell in wrapt devotion, praying unceasingly. She boasted special revelations and visions and had no consciousness of any thing but that beloved angels hovered about and adorned her with a golden crown. But some outside, ardently desiring to behold such sights, peeped through holes and crevices, and seeing her head but defiled with filth, laughed at her.

29. Notice, the reason Paul calls the righteousness of the Law filth and pollution, is his desire to denounce the honor and glory claimed for it in God’s sight; notwithstanding he honors before the world the observance of the Law by styling it “righteousness.” But if you ostentatiously boast of such righteousness to him, he pronounces his sentence of judgment making you an abomination, an enemy of the cross of Christ, and shaming your boasted honor and finally casting you into hell. Concerning the righteousness of faith, however, which in Christ avails before God, he says: “Our citizenship [conversation] is in heaven, from Whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.”

30. We who are baptized and believe in Christ, Paul’s thought is, do not base our works and our hope on the righteousness of this temporal life. Through faith in Christ, we have a righteousness that holds in heaven. It abides in Christ alone; otherwise it would avail naught before God. And our whole concern is to be eternally in Christ; to have our earthly existence

culminate in yonder life when Christ shall come and change this life into another, altogether new, pure, holy and like unto his own, with a life and a body having the nature of his.

THE CHRISTIAN A CITIZEN OF HEAVEN.

31. Therefore we are no longer citizens of earth. The baptized Christian is born a citizen of heaven through baptism. We should be mindful of this fact and walk here as if native there. We are to console ourselves with the fact that God thus accepts us and will transplant us there. Meantime we must await the coming again of the Savior, who is to bring from heaven to us eternal righteousness, life, honor and glory.

32. We are baptized and made Christians, not to the end that we may have great honor, or renown of righteousness, or earthly dominion, power and possessions. Notwithstanding we do have these because they are requisite to our physical life, yet we are to regard them as mere filth, wherewith we minister to our bodily welfare as best we can for the benefit of posterity. We Christians, however, are expectantly to await the coming of the Savior. His coming will not be to our injury or shame as it may be in the case of others. He comes for the salvation of our unprofitable, impotent bodies. Wretchedly worthless as they are in this life, they are much more unprofitable when lifeless and perishing in the earth.

33. But, however miserable, powerless and contemptible in life and death, Christ will at his coming render our bodies beautiful, pure, shining and worthy of honor, until they correspond to his own immortal, glorious body. Not like it as it hung on the cross or lay in the grave, blood stained, livid and disgraced; but as it is now, glorified at the Father's right hand. We need not, then, be alarmed at the necessity of laying aside our earthly bodies; at being despoiled of the honor, righteousness and life adhering in them, to deliver it to the devouring power of death and the grave something well calculated to terrify the enemies of Christ: but we may joyfully hope for and await his speedy coming to deliver us from this miserable, filthy pollution. "According to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

THE GLORIFIED BODY OF THE CHRISTIAN.

34. Think of the honor and the glory Christ's righteousness brings even to our bodies! How can this poor, sinful, miserable, filthy, polluted body

become like unto that of the Son of God, the Lord of Glory? What are your powers and abilities, or those of all men, to effect this glorious thing? But Paul says human righteousness, merit, glory and power have nothing to do with it. They are mere filth and pollution, and condemned as well. Another force intervenes, the power of Christ the Lord, who is able to bring all things into subjection to himself. Now, if he has power to subject all things unto himself at will, he is also able to glorify the pollution and filth of this wretched body, even when it has become worms and dust. In his hands it is as clay in the hands of the potter, and from the polluted lump of clay he can make a vessel that shall be a beautiful, new, pure, glorious body, surpassing the sun in its brilliance and beauty.

35. Through baptism Christ has taken us into his hands, actually that he may exchange our sinful, condemned, perishable, physical lives for the new, imperishable righteousness and life he prepares for body and soul. Such is the power and the agency exalting us to marvelous glory something no earthly righteousness of the Law could accomplish. The righteousness of the Law leaves our bodies to shame and destruction; it reaches not beyond physical existence. But the righteousness of Christ inspires with power, making evident that we worship not the body but the true and living God, who does not leave us to shame and destruction, but delivers from sin, death and condemnation, and exalts this perishable body to eternal honor and glory.

TWENTY FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~SUB~~ COLOSSIANS 1:3 14.

3 We give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, **4** having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have toward all the saints, **5** because of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, **6** which is come unto you; even as it is also in all the world bearing fruit and increasing, as it doth in you also, since the day ye heard and knew the grace of God in truth; **7** even as ye learned of Epaphras our beloved fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, **8** who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. **9** For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, **10** to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; **11** strengthened with all power, according to the might of his glory, unto all patience and longsuffering with joy; **12** giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; **13** who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; **14** in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.

PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE.

1. In this short epistle to the Colossians Paul treats of many things, but particularly of faith, love, patience and gratitude. Upon these topics he is remarkably eloquent, for as God himself declares in ~~495~~ Acts 9:15, Paul is a chosen vessel, or instrument, of God his best preacher on earth. He is particularly strong in his discussion of the main principle of the Gospel,

faith in Christ. And he exalts Christ supremely, in person and kingdom, making him all in all in his Church God, Lord, Master, Head and Example, and everything mentionable in goodness and divinity.

2. The apostle's first words are praise for the Colossians. He remarks upon the good report he has heard of them, how they have faith in Christ and love for all saints, and hold fast the hope of eternal life reserved for them in heaven: in other words, that they are true Christians, who have not allowed themselves to be led away from the pure Word of God but who earnestly cling to it, proving their faith by their fruits; for they love the poor Christians, and for Christ's sake have endured much in the hope of the promised salvation. So he exalts them as model Christians, a mirror of the entire Christian life.

3. "Hearing these things of you," Paul would say, "*I heartily rejoice in your good beginning.*" Apparently he was not the one who first preached to them. In the first verse of the second chapter he speaks of his care for them and others who have not seen his face, and he also intimates here that the Colossians learned of Christ and the Gospel from Epaphras, Paul's fellow servant.

4. "And therefore I always pray for you," he writes, "that you may continue in this way; may increase and be steadfast." He is aware of the necessity for such prayer and exhortation in behalf of Christians if they are to abide firm and unchangeable in their new found faith, against the ceaseless assaults of the devil, the wickedness of the world, and the weakness of the flesh in tribulation and affliction. "That ye may be filled," Paul continues, "with the knowledge of his will."

5. This is his chief prayer and desire for them and if it is fulfilled there can be no lack. The words are, "be filled"; that is, not only hear and understand God's will, but be come rich in the knowledge of it, with ever increasing fullness. "You have begun well; you are promising shoots. But something more than a good beginning is required, and the knowledge of God's will is not to be exhaustively learned immediately on hearing the Word. On the contrary it must be constantly pursued and practiced as long as we live if it is ever to be rounded and perfected in us.

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL IMPOSES OBLIGATION.

6. "Knowing the will of God" means more than simply knowing about God, that he created heaven and earth and gave the Law, and so on, a knowledge even the Jews and Turks possess. For doubtless to them has been revealed that knowledge of God and of his will concerning our conduct which nature the works of creation an teach. ^{<B13>}Romans 1:20. But if we fail to do God's revealed will, the knowledge of it does not benefit us. Such mere mental consciousness is a vain, empty thing; it does not fulfill God's will in us. In deed, it eventually becomes a condemnatory knowledge of our own eternal destruction. When this point has been reached, further enlightenment is necessary if man is to be saved. He must know the meaning of Christ's words in ^{<B54>}John 5:40: "This is the will of my Father, that every one that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have eternal life"; and in ^{<B14>}Matthew 18:14: "It is not the will of your Father, that one of these should perish, which believe on me."

7. Since we have not done God's will according to the first revelation and must be rejected and condemned by his eternal, unendurable wrath, in his divine wisdom and mercy he has determined, or willed, to permit his only Son to take upon himself our sin and wrath; to give Christ as a sacrifice for our ransom, whereby the unendurable wrath and condemnation might be turned from us; to grant us forgiveness of sins and to send the Holy Spirit into our hearts, thus enabling us to love God's commandments and delight in them. This determination or will he reveals through the Son, and commands him to declare it to the world. And in ^{<B17>}Matthew 3:17 he directs us to Christ as the source of all these blessings, saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him."

SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE ENJOINED.

8. Paul would gladly have a spiritual knowledge of these things increase in us until we are enriched and filled wholly assured of their truth. Sublime and glorious knowledge this, the experience of a human heart which, born in sins, boldly and confidently believes that God, in his unfathomable majesty, in his divine heart, has irrevocably purposed and wills for all men to accept and believe it that he will not impute sin, but will forgive it and be gracious, and grant eternal life, for the sake of his beloved Son.

9. This spiritual knowledge or confidence, is not so easily learned as are other things. It is not so readily apprehended as the knowledge of the law

written in nature, which when duly recognized by the heart overpowers with the conviction of God's wrath. Indeed, that more than anything else hinders Christians and saints from obtaining the knowledge of God's will in Christ, for it compels heart and conscience to plead guilty in every respect and to confess having merited the wrath of God; therefore the soul naturally fears and flees from God. Then, too, the devil fans the flame of fear and sends his wicked, fiery arrows of dismay into the heart, presenting only frightful pictures and examples of God's anger, filling the heart with this kind of knowledge to the exclusion of every other thought or perception. Thus recognition of God's wrath is learned only too well, for it becomes bitterly hard for man to unlearn it, to forget it in the knowledge of Christ. Again, the wicked world eagerly contributes its share of hindrance, its bitter hatred and venomous outcry against Christians as people of the worst type, outcast, condemned enemies of God. Moreover, by its example it causes the weak to stumble. Our flesh and blood also is a drawback, being waywardly inclined, making much of its own wisdom and holiness and seeking thereby to gain honor and glory or to live in security a life of wealth, pleasure and covetousness. Hence on every side a Christian must be in severe conflict, and fight against the world and the devil, and against himself also, if he is to succeed in preserving the knowledge of God's will.

WE MUST PRAY FOR SPIRITUAL LIGHT.

10. Now, since this knowledge of the Gospel is so difficult to attain and so foreign to nature, it is necessary that we pray for it with all earnestness and labor to be increasingly filled with it, and to learn well the will of God. Our own experience testifies that if it be but superficially and improperly learned, when one is overtaken by a trifling misfortune or alarmed by a slight danger or affliction, his heart is easily overwhelmed with the thunderbolts of God's wrath as he reflects: "Woe to me! God is against me and hates me." Why should this miserable "Woe!" enter the heart of a Christian upon the occasion of a little trouble? If he were filled with the knowledge of God as he should be, and as many secure, self-complacent spirits imagine themselves to be, he would not thus fear and make outcry. His agitation and his complaint, "O Lord God! why dost thou permit me to suffer this?" are evidence that he as yet knows not God's will, or at least has but a faint conception of it; the woe exceeds the joy. But full

knowledge of God's will brings with it a joy that far overbalances all fear and terror, ay, removes and abolishes them altogether.

11. Therefore let us learn this truth and with Paul pray for what we and all Christians supremely need full knowledge of God's will, not a mere beginning; for we are not to imagine a beginning will suffice and to stop there as if we had comprehended it all. Everything is not accomplished in the mere planting; watering and cultivation must follow. In this case the watering and cultivating are the Word of God, and prayer against the devil, who day and night labors to suppress spiritual knowledge, to beat down the tender plants wherever he sees them springing up; and also against the world, which promotes only opposition and directs its wisdom and reason to conflicting ends. Did not God protect us and strengthen the knowledge of his will, we would soon see the devil's power and the extent of our spiritual understanding.

12. We have a verification of this assertion in that poetical work, the book of Job. Satan appears before God, who asks (~~8008~~ Job 1:8): "Hast thou considered my servant Job? for there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God." And Satan answers on this wise: "Yea, thou hast surrounded him with thy protection and kept me at bay; but only withdraw thy hand and I venture I will soon bring him around to curse thee to thy face"; as he afterward did when he afflicted Job with ugly boils and in addition filled him with his fiery arrows terrifying thoughts of God. Further, Christ said to Peter and the other apostles: "Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not." ~~42281~~ Luke 22:31 32. In short, if God hinders him not, Satan dares to overthrow even the greatest and strongest saints.

13. Therefore, although we have become Christians and have made a beginning in the knowledge of God's will, we ought nevertheless to walk in fear and humility, and not to be presumptuous like the soon wearied, secure spirits, who imagine they exhausted that knowledge in an instant, and know not the measure and limit of their skill. Such people are particularly pleasing to the devil, for he has them completely in his power and makes use of their teaching and example to harm others and make them likewise secure, and unmindful of his presence and of the fact that God may suffer them to be overwhelmed. Verily, there is need of earnest and diligent use of the Word of God and prayer, that Christians may not only learn to know the will of God, but also to be filled with it. Only so can

the individual walk always according to God's will and make constant progress, straining toward the goal of an ever increasing comfort and strength that shall enable him to face fears and terrors and not allow the devil, the world, and flesh and blood to hinder him.

SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE BRINGS INCREASING JOY.

14. Such is the nature of this fullness of knowledge that the possessor never becomes satiated with it or tired of it, but it yields him ever increasing pleasure and joy, and he is ever more eager, more thirsty, for it. As the Scriptures declare, "They that drink me shall yet be thirsty." Ecclus 24, 21. For even the dear angels in heaven never become sated with fullness of knowledge, but as Peter says, they find an everlasting joy and pleasure in the ability to behold what is revealed and preached to us. ^{<0112>1} Peter 1:12. Therefore, if we have not a constant hunger and thirst after the full and abundant comprehension of God's will — and certainly we ought to have it in greater degree than the angels — until we, too, shall be able to behold it eternally in the life everlasting, then we have but a taste of that knowledge, a mere empty froth, which can neither refresh nor satisfy us, cannot comfort us nor make us better.

WHY AFFLICTIONS ARE SENT.

15. To create and stimulate this hunger and thirst in us, and to bring us to the attainment of full knowledge, God kindly sends upon his Christians temptation, sorrow and affliction. These preserve them from carnal satiety and teach them to seek comfort and help. So God did also in former ages, in the time of the martyrs, when he daily suffered them to be violently seized in person and put to death by sword, fire, blood and wild beasts. In this way he truly led his people to school, where they were obliged to learn to know his will and to be able defiantly to say: "No, O tyrant, O world, devil and flesh, though you may injure me bodily, may beat or torment me, banish me or even take my life, you shall not deprive me of my Lord Jesus Christ — of God's grace and mercy." So faith taught them and confirmed to them that such suffering was God's purpose and immutable will concerning themselves, which, whatever attitude to wards them he might assume, he could not alter, even as he could not in the case of Christ himself. This discipline and experience of faith strengthened the martyrs and soon accustomed them to suffering, enabling them to go to their death with pleasure and joy. Whence came, even to young girls thirteen and

fourteen years old, like Agnes and Agatha, the courage and confidence to stand boldly before the Roman judge, and, when led to death, to go as joyfully as to a festivity, whence unless their hearts were filled with a sublime and steadfast faith, a positive assurance that God was not angry with them, but that all was his gracious and merciful will and for their highest salvation and bliss ?

16. Behold, what noble and enlightened, what strong and courageous, people God produced by the discipline of cross and affliction! We, in contrast, because unwilling to experience such suffering, are weak and enervated. If but a little smoke gets into our eyes, our joy and courage are gone, likewise our perception of God's will, and we can only raise a loud lamentation and cry of woe. As I said, this is the inevitable condition of a heart to which the experience of affliction is unknown. Just so Christ's disciples in the ship, when they saw the tempest approach and the waves beat over the vessel, quite forgot, in their trembling and terror, the divine will, although Christ was present with them. They only made anxious lamentation, yet withal cried for help: "Save, Lord; we perish!"

<11825> Matthew 8:25. So also in the time of the martyrs, many Christians became timid and at first denied Christ from fear of torture or of long confinement in prison.

17. It is God's will that we, too, should learn to accustom ourselves to these things through temptation and affliction, though these be hard to bear and the heart is prone to become agitated and utter its cry of woe. We can quiet our disturbed hearts, saying: "I know what is God's thought, his counsel and will, in Christ, which he will not alter: he has promised to me through his Son, and confirmed it through my baptism, that he who hears and sees the Son shall be delivered from sin and death, and live eternally."

18. Now, what Paul calls being filled with the knowledge of the divine will in Christ through the faith of the Gospel, means faith in and the comfort of the forgiveness of sins, since we have not in ourselves the ability to fulfill his will in the ten commandments. This knowledge is not a passive consciousness, but a living, active conviction, which will stand before the judgment of God, contend with the devil and prevail over sin, death and life.

19. Now, the heart possessing such knowledge or faith is kindled by the Holy Spirit and acquires a love for and delight in God's commandments. It becomes obedient to them, patient, chaste, modest, gentle, given to

brotherly kindness, and honors God in confession and life. Thus it is increasingly filled with the knowledge of God's will; it is armed and fortified on all sides to withstand and defeat the flesh and the world, the devil and hell.

“SPIRITUAL WISDOM” DEFINED.

20. By way of explanation Paul adds the words, “all spiritual wisdom and understanding.” This is not the wisdom of the world. There is no necessity to strive and to endure persecution for that which concerns itself with other than spiritual matters. Nor is it the wisdom of reason, which indeed presumes to judge of divine things, but yet can never understand them; on the contrary, although it accepts them, it quickly falls away into doubt and despair.

21. “Wisdom” signifies with Paul, when he places it in apposition with “spiritual understanding,” the sublime and secret doctrine of the Gospel of Christ, which teaches us to know the will of God. And a “wise man” is a Christian, who knows himself and can intelligently interpret God's will toward us and how we perceive his will by faith growing and obediently living in harmony with it. This wisdom is not devised of reason; it has not entered into the heart of man nor is it known to any of the princes of this world, as Paul says in ^{<418>}1 Corinthians 2:8 10. But it is revealed from Heaven by the Holy Spirit to those who believe the Gospel.

22. But there is necessary to the full completion of wisdom something which the apostle calls “understanding”; that is, a careful retention of what has been received. It is possible for one having the spiritual wisdom to be overtaken by the devil through a momentary intellectual inspiration, or through anger and impatience, or even through greed and similar deceitful allurements. Therefore it is necessary here to be cautious, alert and watchful in an effort to guard against the devil's cunning attacks and always to oppose him with his own spiritual wisdom, that he may not be undeceived. The Pauline and scriptural use of the word “understanding” signifies the ability to make good use of one's wisdom; to make it effective as a test whereby to prove all things, to judge with keen discernment whatever presents itself in the name and appearance of wisdom. Thus armed, the soul defends itself and does not in any case violate its own discretion. To furnish himself with understanding, the Christian must ever have regard to the Word of God, must put it into practice, lest the devil

dazzle his mind with some palaver and error and deceive him before he is aware of it. This Satan is well able to do; indeed, he uses every art to accomplish it if a man be not on his guard and seek not counsel in God's Word. Such is the teaching of David's example, who says in <19B911>Psalm 119:11: "Thy word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." And again in verse 24: "Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counselors."

23. A man may be familiar with God's Word, yet if he walks in self security, concerned about other matters, or if perhaps being tempted he loses sight of God's Word, it may easily come to pass that he is seduced and deceived by the secret craft and cunning of the devil; or of himself he may become bewildered, losing his wisdom and being unable to find counsel or help even in the most trivial temptations. For the devil and reason, or human wisdom, can dispute and syllogize with extraordinary subtlety in these things until one imagines to be true wisdom that which is not. A wise man soon becomes a fool; men readily err and make false steps; a Christian likewise is prone to stumble; ay, even a good teacher and prophet can easily be deceived by reason's brilliant logic. Essentially, then, Christians must take warning and study, with careful meditation, the Word of God.

24. We read of St. Martin how he would not undertake to dispute with heretics for the simple reason that he was unwilling to fall into wrangling, to rationalize with them or to attempt to defeat them by the weapon of reason, the sole means whereby they pointed and adorned all their arguments, as the world always does when opposing the Word of God. The shrewd Papists today pretend, as they think, very acutely to confirm and support all their anti Christian abominations by the name of the Church, making the idiotic claim that one must not effect nor suffer any change in the religious teaching commonly accepted by Christendom. They say we must believe the Christian Church is always guided by the Holy Spirit and therefore demands our obedience. Notice here the name of the Church, concerning which your spiritual wisdom teaches according to the article: "I believe in a holy Christian Church. But that name is distorted to confirm the lies and idolatry of the Papacy, just as is true of the name of God. So there is need of understanding, of careful, keen discernment, that wisdom be not perverted and falsified, and man be deceived with its counterfeit.

25. By close examination and comparison with God's Word, the standard and test, you may clearly prove the Papacy to be not the Church of Christ, but a sect of Satan; it is filled with open idolatry, lies and murder, which its adherents fain would defend. These things the Church of Christ does not endorse, and to tax it with resolving, appointing, ordering and demanding obedience to that which is at variance with the Word of God, is to do the Church wrong and violence.

CHURCH NOT TO COMPROMISE WITH PAPISTS.

26. The world at the present time is sagaciously discussing how to quell the controversy and strife over doctrine and faith, and how to effect a compromise between the Church and the Papacy. Let the learned, the wise, it is said, bishops, emperor and princes, arbitrate. Each side can easily yield something, and it is better to concede some things which can be construed according to individual interpretation, than that so much persecution, bloodshed, war, and terrible, endless dissension and destruction be permitted. Here is lack of understanding, for understanding proves by the Word that such patchwork is not according to God's will, but that doctrine, faith and worship must be preserved pure and unadulterated; there must be no mingling with human nonsense, human opinions or wisdom. The Scriptures give us this rule: "*We must obey God rather than men.*" ⁴⁴³Acts 5:29.

27. We must not, then, regard nor follow the counsels of human wisdom, but must keep ever before us God's will as revealed by his Word; we are to abide by that for death or life, for evil or good. If war or other calamity results complain to him who wills and commands us to teach and believe our doctrine. The calamity is not of our effecting; we have not originated it. And we are not required to prove by argument whether or no God's will is right and to be obeyed. If he wills to permit persecution and other evils to arise in consequence of our teaching, for the trial and experience of true Christians and for the punishment of the ungrateful, let them come; and if not, his hand is doubtless strong enough to defend and preserve his cause from destruction, that man may know the events to be of his ordering. And so, praise his name, he has done in our case. He has supported us against the strong desires of our adversaries. Had we yielded and obeyed them, we would have been drawn into their falsehood and destruction. And God will still support us if we deal uprightly and faithfully in these requirements, if

we further and honor the Word of God, and be not unthankful nor seek things that counterfeit God's Word.

28. So much by way of explaining what Paul means by wisdom and understanding to know the will of God, and by way of teaching the necessity of having both wisdom and understanding. For not only must the doctrine where by wisdom is imparted be inculcated in Christendom, but there is also need for admonition and exhortation concerning that understanding necessary to preserve wisdom, and [or defense in strife and conflict. Were not these principles exercised and inculcated in us, we would be deceived by false wisdom and vain imaginations, and would accept their gloss and glitter for pure gold, as many in the Church have ever done.

29. The Galatians had received from Paul the wisdom of justification before God by faith in Christ alone. Nevertheless, inspite of that knowledge, they were deceived and would have lost their wisdom altogether through the claim of the false prophets that the God given Law must be observed, had not Paul aroused their understanding at this point and brought them back from error. The Corinthians were taught by their spiritual wisdom the article of Christian liberty; they knew that sacrifices to idols are nothing. But they failed in this respect: they proceeded without understanding, and made carnal use of their liberty, contrary to wisdom and offending others. Therefore Paul had to remind them of their departure from his doctrine and wisdom.

30. The Scriptures record many instances of failure in this matter of understanding. A notable one is found in the thirteenth chapter of First Kings. A man of God from the kingdom of Judah, who had in the presence of King Jeroboam openly denounced the idolatry instituted by the king, and had confirmed his preaching and prophecy by a miracle, was commanded by God not under any circumstances to abide in the place whither he had gone to prophesy, nor to eat and drink there. He was to go straight home by another way than the route he had come. Yet on the way homeward he allowed himself to be persuaded by another prophet, one who falsely claimed to have a revelation from God, by an angel, commanding him to take the man of God to his home and give him to eat and drink. While they sat together at the table the Word of the Lord came to the inviting prophet and under its inspiration he told the other that he should not reach home alive. The latter, departing on his journey, was killed on the way by a lion,

which remained standing by the body and the ass the man of God had ridden, not touching them further, until the old prophet came and found them. He brought the body home on the ass and buried it, commanding that after his own death he should be laid in the same grave. Such was God's punishment of the prophet who allowed himself to be deceived and obeyed not God's express command. However, his soul suffered not harm, as God testified by the fact the lion did not devour his body but defended it. Now, in what was the prophet lacking? Not in wisdom, for he had the Word of God. He lacked in understanding, allowing himself to be deceived when the other man declared himself a prophet whom the angel of the Lord had instructed. The man of God should have abided by the word given to him, and have said to the other: "You may be a prophet, indeed, but God has commanded me to do this thing. Of that I am certain and I will be governed by it. I will regard no conflicting order, be it in the name of an angel or of God."

NEITHER REASON NOR FEELINGS A RIGHT JUDGE.

31. So it is often with man today, not only in doctrinal controversy but in private affairs and in official capacity. He is prone to stumble and to fail in understanding when not watchful of his purposes and motives, to see how they accord with the wisdom of God's Word. Particularly is his understanding unreliable when the devil moves him to wrath, impatience, dejection, melancholy, or when he is otherwise tempted. Often they who have been well exercised with trials become bewildered in small temptations and uncertain what course to take. Here must one be watchful and not go by his reason or his feelings, but remember God's Word or ascertain if he does not know what it is — and be guided thereby. When tempted man cannot judge aright by the dictates of reason. Therefore he ought not to follow his own natural intelligence nor to act from hasty conclusions. Let him be suspicious of all his reasoning and beware the cunning of the devil, who seeks either to allure or to intimidate us by his specious arguments. First of all let man call upon the understanding born of his wisdom in the Gospel, what his faith, love, hope and patience counsel, in fact, what God's will eloquently teaches everywhere and in all circumstances if only one strive, labor and pray to be filled with such knowledge.

32. Paul uses the expression, "spiritual wisdom and understanding," because it represents that which makes us wise and prudent to oppose the

devil and his assaults and temptations, or wiles as Paul calls them in ~~the~~ Ephesians 6:11; which governs and guides, shepherds and leads, teaches and keeps us, and enables us to fare well spiritually in faith and a good conscience toward God and also in the temporal affairs of life when reason fails as a counselor or teacher. Paul further says: “To walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work; and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to the might of his glory, unto all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

33. What is meant by “walking worthily of the Lord” we have heard in other epistles, namely to believe, and to confess the faith by doctrine and life, as people worthy of the Lord and of whom the Lord can triumphantly say: “These are my people Christians who live and abide in what they have been taught by the Word, who know my will and obediently do and suffer for it.”

34. Our wisdom and understanding of the knowledge of God should serve to make us characters that are an honor and praise to God, in whom he may be glorified, and who live to God unto all pleasing, that is, please him in every way, according to his Word. And because of such wisdom and knowledge, we should, in our lives, in our stations and appointed work, not be unfruitful nor harmful hypocrites and unbelievers, as false Christians are, but doers of much good, useful characters to the honor of God’s kingdom. All the time we are to make constant growth and progress in the knowledge of God, that we may not be seduced or driven from it by the cunning of the devil, who at all times and in all places assails Christians and strenuously seeks to effect their fall from the Word and from God’s will, even as in the beginning he did with Adam and Eve in paradise.

ONLY GOD’S POWER CAN OVERCOME THE DEVIL.

35. The apostle continues: “strengthened with all power, according to the might of his glory.” Here is preparation to sustain the conflict against the devil, the world and the flesh, and to overcome. Not our own power, nor the combined power of all mankind, can effect it. Only God’s own divine, glorious power and might can overcome the devil and win honor and praise in the contest with the gates of hell. Christ in himself proved such efficacy of the divine strength when he overcame all the devil’s superlative assaults.

36. By this power and might of God must we be strengthened in faith. We must strive after such divine agency and by the help of the Word persevere and pray, that there may be not only a beginning, but a continuation and a victorious end. So shall we become ever stronger and stronger in God's might. Whatever we do, it must not be undertaken in and by our own strength. We must not boast as if we had our selves accomplished it, but must rely upon God, upon his strength and support. Certainly it is not due to our ability but to his own omnipotent agency if one remains a Christian, steadfast in the knowledge of God and not deceived nor conquered by the devil.

PATIENCE ESSENTIAL TO ENDURANCE.

37. But, the writer tells us, the attainment of strength and victory calls for "all patience." We must have patience to endure the persistent persecution of the devil, the world and the flesh. Not only patience is required here, but "long suffering." The apostle makes a distinction between the two words, regarding the latter as something more heroic. It is the devil's way, when he fails to defeat by affliction and trouble, to try the heart with endurance. He makes the ordeal unbearably hard and long to patience, even apparently without end. His scheme is to accomplish by unceasing persistence what he cannot attain by the severity and multitude of his temptations; he aims to wear out one's patience and to discourage his hope of conquering. To meet these conditions there is necessary, in addition to patience, long suffering, which holds out firmly and steadfastly in suffering, with the determination: "Indeed, you cannot try me too severely or too long, even though the trial continue to the end of the world." True, knightly, Christian strength is that which in conflict and suffering is able to endure not only severe and manifold assaults of the devil, but to hold out indefinitely. More than anything else do we need to be strengthened, through prayer, with the power of God, that we may not succumb in such grievous warfare, but achieve the end.

CHRISTIANS SHOULD REJOICE AND BE THANKFUL.

38. And your patience and long suffering, Paul says, must be exercised "with joy." In these severe, multiplied and long temptations you must not allow yourselves to be filled with sad and depressing thoughts. You are to be hopeful and joyous, despising the devil and the troubles and tumults of the world and himself. Rejoice because you have on your side the

knowledge of the divine will in Christ, and his power and glorious might, and doubt not that his omnipotence will help you through.

39. Finally the apostle enjoins us to give thanks, or to be thankful. Forget not, he would say, the unspeakable benefits and gifts God has bestowed upon you above all men on earth. He has richly blessed you, and liberated you from the power and might of sin, death, hell and the devil, wherein you would, for all you could help yourselves, have had to remain eternally captive; he has appointed you for eternal glory, making you co heirs with the saints elected for his eternal kingdom; and he has made you partakers of all eternal, divine, heavenly blessings. In your sufferings and conflicts, remember these glories ordained for and given to you, and remembering rejoice the more and willingly fight and suffer to obtain possession, to enjoy the fruition, of what is certainly appropriated to you in the Word and in faith.

40. The writer of the epistle calls it “the inheritance of the saints in light,” or of the “light” saints, that is, the true saints. Thus he distinguishes from false saints, intimating that there are two classes of saints. To one class belong the many in the world who have only their own claim to sainthood: the Jews, for instance, with their holiness of the Law; and the world generally, the philosophers, jurists and their kind, with their self righteousness. These are not saints of light; they are saints of darkness, unclean, even defiled. In ^{ROMS}Philippians 3:8 Paul counts such righteousness loss and refuse. To this class belong also many false, hypocritical saints in the company of Christians who have the Gospel; they, too, hear the Gospel and attend upon the Holy Supper, but they remain in darkness, without the least experience of the wisdom and understanding that knows the divine will. But they who exercise themselves in these spiritual graces by faith, love and patience in temptation, and perceive the wonderful grace and blessing God imparts through the Gospel these honorably may be called the saints, destined, even appointed, to eternal light and joy in God’s kingdom. “Who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.”

41. Paul now expatiates on the things that call for our gratitude to God the Father. He sums up the whole teaching of the Gospel, showing us what is ours in Christ and giving a glorious and comforting description of his person and the blessing he brings. But first, he says, we ought, above all, to

thank God unceasingly for the knowledge of his revealed Gospel. In it we have no small treasure. Rather, it is a possession with which all the gold, silver and other riches of this world, all the earthly joy and comfort of this life, are not to be compared. For it means redemption from eternal, irreparable loss and ruin under God's eternal, unbearable wrath and condemnation. And this wretchedness was the result of our sin. We were committed to sin and without help, without deliverance, ay, we were captive in such blindness and darkness that we did not recognize our misery; much less could we devise and effect our escape. Now, in place of this misery, we have, without any merit on our part, any preparation, any deed or design, ay, without even a thought, assuredly received, through God's unfathomable grace and mercy, redemption, or the forgiveness of sins.

GOD'S GRACE INCOMPREHENSIBLE.

42. The measure of such graciousness and blessing no tongue can express; indeed, in this life no man can understand it. In hell the wicked shall become sensible of it by the realization of their condemnation and the never ending wrath of the eternal, divine Majesty and of all creatures. No created thing shall they be able to behold with joy, because in these ever shall be reflected the condemned one's own unceasing, lamentable sorrow, terror and despair. Nor, on the other hand, can the creature behold the condemned with pleasure, but must abhor them; it must be an object of further terror and condemnation to the damned. However, in this life God in his unspeakable goodness has subjected the creature to vanity, as Paul says in ~~(EPI)~~ Romans 8:20, and to the service of the wicked. Yet it serves against its will, travailing as a woman in pain, with the supreme desire to be liberated from this service of the wicked, condemned world. It must, however, have patience in its hope of redemption, for the sake of those children of God yet to come to Christ and finally to be brought to glory; otherwise it is as hostile to sin as God himself.

43. But because an eternal, unchangeable sentence of condemnation has passed upon sin for God cannot and will not regard sin with favor, but his wrath abides upon it eternally and irrevocably redemption was not possible without a ransom of such precious worth as to atone for sin, to assume the guilt, pay the price of wrath and thus abolish sin.

44. This no creature was able to do. There was no remedy except for God's only Son to step into our distress and himself become man, to take upon himself the load of awful and eternal wrath and make his own body and blood a sacrifice for the sin. And so he did, out of his immeasurably great mercy and love towards us, giving himself up and bearing the sentence of unending wrath and death.

45. So infinitely precious to God is this sacrifice and atonement of his only beloved Son who is one with him in divinity and majesty, that God is reconciled thereby and receives into grace and forgiveness of sins all who believe in this Son. Only by believing may we enjoy the precious atonement of Christ, the forgiveness obtained for us and given us out of profound, inexpressible love. We have nothing to boast of for ourselves, but must ever joy fully thank and praise him who at such priceless cost redeemed us condemned and lost sinners.

46. The essential feature of redemption forgiveness of sins being once obtained, everything belonging to its completion immediately follows. Eternal death, the wages of sin, is abolished, and eternal righteousness and life are given; as Paul says in ^{<602>}Romans 6:23, the grace, or gift, of God is eternal life. And now that we are reconciled to God and washed in the blood of Christ, everything in heaven and earth, as Paul again declares (^{<610>}Ephesians 1:10), is in turn reconciled to us. The creatures are no longer opposed, but at peace with us and friendly; they smile upon us and we have only joy and life in God and his creation.

47. Such is the doctrine of the Gospel, and so is it to be declared. It shows us sin and forgiveness, wrath and grace, death and life; how we were in darkness and how we are redeemed from it. It does not, like the Law, make us sinners, nor is its mission to teach us how to merit and earn grace. But it declares how we, condemned and under the power of sin, death and the devil, as we are, receive by faith the freely given redemption and in return show our gratitude.

48. Paul also explains who it is that has shed his blood for us. He would have us understand the priceless cost of our redemption, namely, the blood of the Son of God, who is the image of the invisible God. The apostle declares that he existed before creation, and by him were all things created, and that therefore he is true, eternal God with the Father. Hence, Paul says, the shed blood truly is God's own blood. And so the writer of this epistle

clearly and mightily establishes the article of the divinity of Christ. But this requires a special and separate sermon.

TWENTY FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~SMB~~ **1 THESSALONIANS 4:13 18.**

13 *But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope. 14* *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15* *For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. 16* *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; 17* *then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18* *Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

LIVING AND DEAD WHEN CHRIST RETURNS.

Paul writes these words to comfort Christians who were troubled about what would take place at the resurrection of the dead. Shall all rise together? Shall those living on the earth at the last day meet Christ before others? These and like thoughts worried them. Here Paul answers them by saying that Christ would take all his believers to himself at the same time, etc. This epistle text you will find richly expounded in “The Explanation of Certain Epistles,” which appeared on special occasions. [The Miscellaneous Sermons of the Year 1532.]

TWENTY SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~SMR~~² THESSALONIANS 1:3 10.

3 *We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, even as it is meet, for that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another aboundeth; 4 so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which ye endure; 5 which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God; to the end that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: 6 if so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, 7 and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, 8 rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: 9 who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, 10 when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day.*

GOD'S JUDGMENT WHEN CHRIST RETURNS.

1. First, Paul has words of praise for his Church at Thessalonica. In view of its faith and its love it was one of the first rank. Patiently it stood firm, and even increased, under crosses of affliction. The apostle's intent in commending these people is to incite to perseverance. He would hold them up to others as an example an illustration of the fruits resulting when the Gospel is preached and received. He also points out in what the edification and success of the true Church of Christ consist. Then he consoles them for their patient sufferings with the mention of the glorious coming of Christ the Lord, which shall mean their final redemption, the recompense of peace and joy for their tribulations, and the bringing of eternal wrath upon their persecutors.

2. This consolation Paul draws from their sufferings and God's righteous judgment, by which he makes plain why God lets them suffer here on earth, what is his purpose in it. Looking at the Christian community with the eye of human reason and reflection, no more wretched, tormented, persecuted, unhappy people are in evidence on earth than those who confess and glory in Christ the crucified. In the world they are continually persecuted, tormented and assailed by the devil with all manner of wretchedness, misfortune, distress and death. Even to their own perceptions, it seems as if they surely are forgotten and forsaken by God in the sight of mankind. For he allows them to remain prostrate under the weight of the cross, while others in the world, particularly their persecutors, live in the enjoyment of honor and fortune, of happiness, power and riches, with everything moving to the fulfillment of their desires. The Scriptures frequently deplore this condition of things, especially the Psalms, and Paul in ~~4:15~~ 1 Corinthians 15:19 confesses: "If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable."

CHRISTIAN'S SUFFERINGS LEAD TO HAPPINESS.

3. Now, assuredly this state of affairs cannot continue without end; it cannot be God's intention to permit Christians thus to suffer continually while they live, to die because of it and remain dead. It would be incompatible with his eternal, divine truth and honor manifest in his Word. For there he declares he will be the God of the pious, of them who fear and trust him, and gives them unspeakable promises. Necessarily, then, he has planned a future state for Christians and for non Christians, in either instance unlike what they know on earth. Possibly one of the chief reasons why God permits Christians to suffer on earth is to make plain the distinction between their reward and that of the ungodly. In the sufferings of believing Christians, and in the wickedness, tyranny, rage, and persecution directed by the unrighteous against the godly, is certain indication of a future life unlike this and a final judgment of God in which all men, godly and wicked, shall be forever recompensed.

4. Notice, Paul means to say here when he speaks of the tribulations and sufferings of Christians: "These afflictions are the indication of God's righteous judgment, and a sign you are worthy of the kingdom of God for which you suffer." In other words: "O beloved Christians, regard your sufferings as dear and precious. Think not God is angry with you, or has forgotten you, because he allows you to endure these things. They are your

great help and comfort, for they show God will be a righteous judge, will richly bless you and avenge you upon your persecutors. Yes, therein you have unfailing assurance. You may rejoice, and console yourselves, believing without the shadow of a doubt that you belong to the kingdom of God, and have been made worthy of it, because you suffer for its sake.

5. Whatever the Christian suffers here on earth at the hands of the devil and the world, befalls him simply for the sake of the name of God and for his Word, True, as a baptized child of God the Christian should justly enjoy unalloyed goodness, comfort and peace on earth; but since he must still dwell in the kingdom of the devil, who infuses sin and death into human flesh, he must endure the devil. Yet all Satan's inflictions and the world's plagues, persecutions, terrors, tortures, even the taking of the Christian's life, and all its abuse, is wrought in violence and injustice. But to offset this, the Christian has the comforting assurance of God's Word that because he suffers for the sake of the kingdom of Christ and of God he shall surely be eternally partaker of that kingdom. Certain it is, no one will be worthy of it unless he suffers for it.

6. "If so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you," continues the apostle. It is impossible it should continue to be, as now, well with the world and evil with you. God's righteousness will not admit of it. Just because he is a righteous judge, things must be eventually different: the godly must have eternal good, and the wicked, on the other hand, must be punished forever. Otherwise God's judgment would not be righteous; in other words, he would not be God. Now, since this is an impossible proposition, since God's righteousness and truth are immutable, in his capacity of judge he must perforce, in due time, come from heaven, when he shall have assembled his Christians, and avenge them of their enemies, recompense the latter according to their merits, and confer eternal rest and peace upon his followers for the temporal sufferings they have endured here.

GOD DOES NOT FORGET HIS CHILDREN.

7. Christians should certainly expect this and comfort themselves in the confidence that God will not permit the wrongs of his people to continue unpunished and unavenged. We might think he had forgotten were we to judge from the facts that godly Abel was shamefully murdered by his brother, that God's prophets and martyrs John the Baptist, Jeremiah, Paul

and others suffered death at the hands of bloodhounds like the Herods, Neros and other shameless, sanguinary tyrants of the sort, and this when God had, even in this life, given glorious testimony to their being his beloved children. A judgment must be forthcoming that tyrants may suffer pains and punishments, and that the godly, delivered from sufferings, may have eternal rest and joy. Let all the world know God does not forget, even after death.

8. This is the consolation the future judgment at the resurrection of the dead holds, that, as God's righteousness requires, the saints shall receive for their sufferings a supremely rich and glorious recompense. Paul seems to present as the principal reason why God must punish the world with everlasting pain, the fact that the world has inflicted tribulations on Christians. Apparently his words imply that the perpetrations of the devil and the world their supreme contempt and hatred of God's name and Word, their blasphemies of these, their wickedness and disobedience in other respects, whereby they bring upon themselves everlasting pain and damnation — that for these sins against himself God is not so ready to punish as for their persecution and torment of his poor, believing Christians. This truth is indicated where we read that Christ on the last day shall say: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels . . . inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me." ~~4254~~ Matthew 25:41 and 45.

9. Paul's further observations, concerning the manner of the judgment to come and the painful punishment of the ungodly, is sufficiently clear as rendered, and is also explained in the sermon on the Gospel text. Further explanation here is unnecessary.

TWENTY SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

TEXT: ~~GRB~~ 2 PETER 3:3 7.

TO THE READER.

When the year has twenty seven Sundays after Trinity, which seldom occurs, substitute the text of ~~GRB~~ 2 Peter 3:3 7 for the twenty sixth Sunday and use the text of the twenty sixth Sunday for the twenty seventh Sunday.

FOOTNOTES

^{ft1} This sermon was first printed in 1535, at Wittenberg.

^{Ft2} This sermon appeared in three editions the first year it was printed in 1525, at Wittenberg.

PUBLISHERS NOTES

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The Library consists of books and other literature of enduring value to the Christian community. Our goal since the beginning has been to “make the words of the wise available to all —inexpensively.” We have had in mind the student, teacher, pastor, missionary, evangelist and church worker who needs a high quality reference library, one that is portable, practical and low in cost.

ON WHAT BASIS WERE THEY SELECTED?

Volumes in the Library have been added based on several criteria: usefulness, user request, breadth of content or reputation. This has meant that the collection is eclectic and may include works that contain positions with which we at AGES Software do not agree. This paradox is consistent with our design, however: any useful library consists of books on a wide variety of subjects and sometimes includes information for reference purposes only. The AGES Digital Library hopefully will reflect — as its components are released — the necessary breadth and depth for a solid personal library.

HOW WERE THESE VOLUMES PREPARED?

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ARE THESE EXACT COPIES OF THE ORIGINAL WORKS?

Usually not. In the process of preparing the Library, we at AGES Software have taken the liberty to make certain edits to the text. As we discovered errors in spelling, certain archaic forms, typographical mistakes or

omissions in the original we have done our best to correct them. Our intention has been to remove anything that might obscure the meaning or otherwise detract from the usefulness of a book for the modern reader. We have, however, attempted to retain the essential content and thoughts of the original — even when we found ourselves in disagreement.

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