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Sermon Study on Phil. 1, 27-2, 4

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end of a year. The imperial governor, however, is a *propraetor*, *ἀντιστάτης*, or, as he was more often called, a *legatus*, *πρεσβευτής*, of the emperor. He goes out from Italy with all the pomp of a military commander, and he does not return until the emperor recalls him.¹⁵⁾ His great dependence on the emperor is evident at once. In fact, the object of Augustus in effecting this provincial arrangement was to have a corps of officials in command of all the military forces who were immediately dependent upon him in their office.

It was a senatorial province, then, which Paul entered when he came to Cyprus ca. 47 A. D., for the title of the governor is *ἀνδράνατος*. The incumbent of this office at this time was Sergius Paulus, who very likely had previously held the office of *Curator Riparum et Alvei Tiberis* and was possibly of pretorian rank.¹⁶⁾ This man called Paul and his companions before him. But an antagonist appeared in the form of the sorcerer Elymas; he was blinded, and Sergius Paulus believed, "marveling at the teaching of the Lord."¹⁷⁾ It was not an ordinary convert whom the apostle had gained; for this man in his official position as Roman proconsul could have six lictors, had a small number of soldiers at his command, exercised the imperium over all his provincials, presided in tribunals, judged the claims of the usurer and the tax-gatherer, and was attended by a host of secretaries, notaries, heralds, physicians, and augurs.¹⁸⁾ (To be concluded.)

Seward, Nebr.

H. O. A. KEINATH.

Sermon Study on Phil. 1, 27—2, 4.

(Eisenach Epistolary Lesson for Septuagesima.)

A thorough study of this text, the Eisenach Epistle-lesson for Septuagesima, will confirm the impression received by a casual reading of the words that their import is an exhortation of the Apostle Paul to the congregation at Philippi to remain steadfast in the faith of the Gospel and united in spirit, in spite of all hindrances that might come from without or within. It will be found quite convenient to group the various items found in the text under any theme which expresses the above thought.

The apostle, in writing this present chapter of his letter to the

15) Conybeare and Howson, *Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, I, 143.

16) Pauly, Wissowa, Kroll, *Realencyklopaedie*, s. v. *Sergius*.

17) Acts 13, 12.

18) Merivale, *History of the Romans*, III, 407—409.

Philippians, had just come to the conclusion of a debate which he had had with himself. He had debated with himself whether it would be better for him to live or to die. It was not a question of "to be or not to be"; Paul was not contemplating suicide. Death would release him from the many troubles of this life and from the prison chains which fettered him at that time and bring him to Christ and heaven. But, on the other hand, if he were spared, he might be able to see his beloved Philippians again. He concluded that "to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." He expects to be released from prison and to be present with the Christians at Philippi once more. 1, 23, 24.

But whether he will ever get to see them again or not, there is one thing that he expects of them and hopes for. No matter whether he lives or dies, whether he is present or absent, they should let their conversation, their daily lives, be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ, and they are to stand fast in the faith and be united in one spirit. The phrase "let your conversation be" is to be translated, behave as citizens, *πολιτεύεσθε*. The Philippians were very proud of their Roman citizenship, which had been granted them by Caesar Augustus in memory of his victory over Brutus and Cassius near this city. See Acts 16, 21. Now a Roman citizen, Acts 16, 37—40, reminds Roman citizens of a still greater honor which had been granted them, of their citizenship in God's kingdom of heaven, Phil. 3, 20, *πολίτευμα* and urges them to behave as citizens of this kingdom. Only in the letter to the Philippians, of all his epistles, does Paul use these two words.

The word "only" at the head of the sentence clearly expresses the apostle's mind. This is the one thing that counts. The Gospel of Christ is not a law. It does not give precept and command and threaten punishment if the command is disobeyed. The Gospel of Christ is a strong, compelling motive, and it produces right living. A life "as it becometh the Gospel of Christ" is a life that is moved and actuated by the Gospel, the glad tidings of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. A person who has heard the glad news that he has inherited a great fortune will comport himself in many ways in accordance with, "as it becometh," this good news. He who believes the Gospel, the news that he is saved from hell and saved for heaven, will be moved by this glad news to lead a godly life in righteousness and good works. Paul's presence or absence should make no difference to the Philippians in this matter. The Christian conduct and activity of the members of a congregation should not depend upon the presence of this or that pastor. It sometimes occurs that one minister will build up a congregation, and people will cling to him. His successor may find that some who were very ardent members before become lukewarm or drop away altogether. Christians should not be faithful

to their church for the sake of their pastor, but for the sake of their Savior. Pastors may be present or absent; the Savior is always with us. Perhaps the thought expressed here by the apostle will give a grain of comfort to a pastor who is away from his flock on a necessary vacation to build up his body and mind. God will keep the congregation in righteous ways and good works even in his absence.

The apostle might have mentioned many ways in which this righteous life that becometh the Gospel of Christ should reveal itself. Indeed, his writings are replete with suggestions and directions and admonitions; he describes every item of a godly life and adduces many examples of good works. In the present passage he confines himself to one item in the Christians' godly life. He urges the Christians at Philippi that they "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel." By "standing fast in one spirit" he means that they are to show themselves firm and unyielding in maintaining their faith, with unity of conviction, mind, and will. He wants this congregation to be a group of people who are united in spirit by the firm conviction that their common faith is absolutely true and who stand by this faith without wavering. The expression "in one spirit" does not refer to the Holy Spirit. Christians should feel themselves bound together by their faith and should be unwavering in the declaration of their faith. They should consider such matters as concern their faith as settled once for all between themselves and God. There should be no more questioning or quibbling or argument concerning the fundamental articles of their faith than there is about the facts of common arithmetic. These things are settled for all times and are beyond question. The apostle furthermore writes that he wishes to hear that the Philippians are "with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel." The word *striving* was taken from the language of sports; it is the word from which our English word "athletics" is derived. The Philippians are to strive, to exert themselves, to work hard, in order to uphold the faith of the Gospel. They have received the faith of the Gospel as a precious possession; they are to put forth every effort to keep their faith and to frustrate any attacks upon it, to drive back all enmity against it. Christians should go to great lengths in maintaining and defending their faith. They should contend for the faith of the Gospel as earnestly, as fervently, as vehemently, as those contend who are engaged in athletic combat. Defending our faith, maintaining it, propagating it, are earnest and serious matters for the Christian. The unity with which this should be done is evident from the expression "with one mind" and from the preposition used in the original of the expression "striving together." Great tasks require united efforts, and there is comfort in numbers. The Philippians are to strive for the faith of the Gospel, not each one for himself, but

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with combined efforts. And in doing so they are to act as if one mind, one soul, pervaded them, controlled them. Games are won in athletic contests, not through individual and separate activity, but by team-work, controlled by one mind. Christian activity for the faith of the Gospel has greatest force if Christians stand united as if they were all of one soul.

It is a characteristic of the Lutheran Church that its members are firm and steadfast in confessing their faith and that they are of one mind in striving for their faith. This unity in our Church is a blessing of God and a result of our splendid educational system, through which the minds of our members are early molded by the Word of God and merged into one spirit and one mind in matters of faith.

The apostle recognizes that he is not asking something easy. There will be difficulties to surmount. There are adversaries. He mentions them in v. 28. There are false teachers who attack the faith of the Gospel, who try to break the faith and trust of the Christian, and who attempt to subvert the true Church. There are also enemies who persecute and work harm and mischief to the Church. The Philippians had to contend with such adversaries; and there was danger for them. But the apostle admonishes them not to be terrified. The word in the original for *terrified* referred to the shying of frightened horses. The Philippians should not get into a panicky condition because of their adversaries, not lose their head and heart. It was at Philippi that Paul had been thrust into prison by his adversaries; the Christians at Philippi knew how he had acquitted himself. It is a lesson for our own times. The Church has its adversaries: the unbelieving world, carping critics, the unbelieving scientists and their blind followers, false teachers, and dangerous disturbers. But we are not to lose our assurance of faith when we encounter such enemies. Our faith is anchored upon the eternal Rock. The modern attacks against our faith are not modern; they are old weapons, thrust back by the Church in times past, but newly burnished. Let nothing terrify the Christian; he has God on his side. We must be prepared for these attacks lest we shy at them like horses at a piece of paper in the road. We must prepare our young people to expect, and defend themselves against, such attacks.

While the apostle has these adversaries in mind, whose violent attacks should in no wise terrify the Christians, he adds a remark that affords consolation to Christians, v. 28. There is comfort in the thought that the staunch and unterrified valor of Christians, when attacked by adversaries, is evidence of the futility of the attacks and of the final ruin and perdition of the adversaries and at the same time an evidence of the final victory and salvation of the Christians. There is danger that the Christians, often weak in numbers and

strength, may be led to believe that the strength, the courage, and the adroitness of their enemies are an indication that there must be something to the argument and statements of the adversaries. If it is a high dignitary of a Church who makes a statement contrary to the doctrines of the Bible or a well-known scientist or anybody else of high standing in the world, many people sit up and take notice and believe the statement or argument must have force simply because of the source from which it comes. Many will bow in mental submission to a great name without an understanding of the argument set forth. The apostle assures the Christians that they need not think the enmity against them is evidence of the weakness of their own position. When any one attacks the Church of Christ and its doctrines, he is beating against a stone wall with bare fists. On the other hand, the very fact that the Church is suffering attacks and persecutions, the very fact that a Christian has to submit to the attacks of unbelievers, is evidence of divine favor. Of course, this is true only of those who contend for the true faith of the Gospel. Errorists have also had to suffer. But there is no comfort for them here. We may think of the sufferings of Pharaoh, Korah, and Herod, sufferings sent as punishment. The adversity suffered by children of God is an assurance of final victory and the salvation which God will give them.

While the apostle has in mind the sufferings which Christians may have to bear on account of the persecution of their adversaries, he adds another remark (vv. 29. 30) to show the right attitude a Christian should take toward the sufferings of this life. The persecution and sufferings endured by Christians are really gracious gifts of God. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake," Matt. 5, 10. God gives the Christians faith and then sends them suffering to strengthen their faith. The expression "not only, but also" lifts the gift of suffering to a place of distinction and importance in the Christian's life. Without faith there is no blessing in suffering; without suffering there is no endurance of faith. All who follow Jesus must take up His cross. The sufferings of the wicked are punishment; the sufferings of the children of God bring blessings. David's trouble brought repentance; Joseph's troubles brought him honor and glory. The word used in the original for "it is given" indicates the mercy of God in sending us trouble. And we are to look upon our suffering as endured for the sake of Christ. The expression "in behalf of Christ" must not be connected with "it is given." Suffering for the sake of Christ is a privilege given by God. And as it was comforting for the Philippians to know that their own Apostle Paul was also suffering in prison, so Christians are comforted by the thought that they are not alone in their suffering. The Philippians knew of Paul's imprisonment in their own city and

of his present imprisonment in Rome. The messenger who brought them the epistle from Rome, Epaphroditus, no doubt made a full report to them. We are comforted when we know of the sufferings of others; others are comforted when they know of our sufferings. Sufferings make companions in the Church of Christ.

Chapter 2, although separated from chapter one by a chapter heading, is really a continuation of the same thought that has been followed so far. The first verse of the second chapter presents a difficulty respecting its interpretation. One of the solutions offered is to make the verse read: If there is any consolation, then it is in Christ, etc. Thus the fourfold conditions in v. 1 would stand alone, and v. 2 would be independent, beginning a new thought. Probably most of our readers will feel that such an arrangement takes v. 1 too far away from the continuity of thought in the text. The interpretation usually followed in our literature will be most satisfactory and does not violate the logical arrangement of the text. Accordingly, we hear the apostle saying: If the doctrine of Christ which I brought you affords any consolation to you at all, if there is anything in Christ's doctrine that can serve as an exhortation to you (for the Greek word is best understood here as meaning exhortation), then make my heart glad (v. 2) by harmony and concord among yourselves. The apostle is thinking of the evangelical exhortation he has given the Philippians and of the exhortations that Christians give each other. The translation *consolation* is justifiable for the reason that Christian exhortation, when successful, turns out to be real consolation. David was exhorted by Nathan, and through the exhortation he received great consolation. Likewise the apostle says: If the love springing from your faith has any power to urge you, and if through the Holy Ghost there is any feeling of fellowship and brotherly relation among you, or if there is among you any mercy, feeling of benevolence and kindness emanating from your hearts (the expression "if any bowels and mercies" indicates kindness and its source), then you are to do as I have asked you to do in v. 2. The apostle makes his statements conditional; but he knows that in the minds of his readers the answer will be an emphatic affirmative: Certainly there is exhortation in the doctrine that we have heard, etc.

The apostle is therefore assured that the Christians at Philippi will heed his request that they make him glad (v. 2) by being of the same mind. The congregation at Philippi had always brought joy to the apostle's heart. The Epistle to the Philippians begins and ends with an acknowledgment that this congregation has caused him joy, 1, 3, 4; 4, 15. He now asks that the Philippians increase his joy over them. Every Christian pastor is happy at the progress made by his congregation. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth," 3 John 4. The apostle asks the Philippians to be like-

minded. The Greek expresses it thus: "that ye think the same." He asks for harmonious thinking among the Christians as a prerequisite for harmonious action. Thinking the same thing, their thoughts in spiritual matters running in the same channel, they will have the same love in their hearts. It will not be said of them that one loves the world and the other the Savior. This common love of the common Savior will unite their hearts in mutual love. The expression "being of one accord, of one mind," means as much as having their souls united, and it is simply a further emphasis of the expression "like-minded." In thought and soul, in mind and heart, there is to be complete accord.

To achieve such complete accord, all peace-disturbing elements must be subjugated. Therefore the apostle counsels the congregation as in v. 3. The writer's omission of the verb in his sentence makes it emphatic. The word strife or faction has an original connotation of "serving for hire" and is used in the sense of seeking advantage by trickery. Certainly, if there is to be harmony and concord in the congregation, there must be no factions, no party strife, no small groups opposing one another; and there must be no desire among the members to push themselves to the front at the expense of others, no ardent quest for honor and glory in the work of the church. Strife and jealousy are the ruin of congregational life; and strife and jealousy are the results of factions and desire for honor and glory. The translation *through* strife and vainglory should be understood as meaning "with strife and vainglory as a motive." The preposition employed frequently has this meaning. The best cure for these evils is to minimize one's own achievements and deserts and to think highly of others. And this is the apostle's counsel in vv. 3 and 4. This is the exact opposite of the way of the world. It is characteristic of worldly people to esteem their own things, talents, achievements, successes, everything that is their own, very highly, and to disdain the accomplishments of others. As every one has a certain amount of pride or self-esteem in his bosom, this frequently leads to faction and friction. Nothing else can be expected of people in this world; but Christians, intent on keeping harmony among themselves, will heed the apostle's counsel; they will, in lowliness of mind, in humility, delight in the good they observe in others and gladly acknowledge it. They will willingly let another's reputation become greater than theirs. Jonathan acknowledged David's excellence and gladly permitted him to forge ahead. John the Baptist was very willing that Jesus should outstrip him. The Christian looks for excellence and superiority in others, not in himself. But such a state of mind is found only where there is true humility before God, where there is an understanding of sin and grace.

The material in this text may be grouped under any theme which expresses the central thought of the text, the "standing fast in one spirit, with one mind striving for the faith of the Gospel." It might be: *Let Us Stand Steadfast in the Confession of Our Faith*, despite all that adversaries may say or do, and not permit strife and factions to weaken our confession; and let us not be hindered in our confession by the prospect of suffering. — Or we may phrase our theme: *Paul's Plea to the Christians at Philippi*. 1. That they remain steadfast in the faith of the Gospel. Their adversaries must not shake them. There is great value and blessing in the faith and doctrine of the Gospel (2, 1), which makes it worth while to remain steadfast. 2. That they strive for harmony and concord in the congregation. 3. That they endure suffering willingly, esteeming it a God-given privilege. — Another theme: *Characteristics of a True Christian Congregation*.

St. Charles, Mo.

FREDERIC NIEDNER.

Dispositionen über die Eisenacher Evangelienreihe.

Vierter Sonntag nach Epiphania.

Joh. 4, 31—42.

Heutzutage ist fast jedermann bereit anzunehmen, daß Jesus Christus einer der größten, wenn nicht der größte, Lehrer der Menschheit gewesen sei. In unserm Lande bekennen die Liberalen in allen Kirchengemeinschaften, auch unter den Juden, sich zu diesem Satz. Sogar gelehrte Heiden in den Heidenländern äußern solche Ansichten. Man nennt den Herrn gern Rabbi, B. 31. Aber Jesus als eingebornen Sohn Gottes und Heiland der Welt anzuerkennen, dagegen sträubt man sich mit aller Macht, ebensosehr wie früher die Arianer, Sozinianer und Rationalisten.

Doch ist gerade ein solches Bekenntnis nötig, wenn ein Mensch ein wahrer Christ sein will. Unser Heiland hörte es wohl gerne, daß ihm seine Jünger den Titel Rabbi gaben, Joh. 13, 13; aber dennoch erwieß er sich klar und deutlich als Sohn Gottes und Seligmacher der Sünder und freute sich über solche Anerkennung, Matth. 16, 16; Joh. 20, 28; 3, 16; 1, 12 ff.; Matth. 3, 17.

Im Evangelium des heutigen Sonntags haben wir

Eine Offenbarung der Herrlichkeit Jesu als des Heilandes der Welt.

Der Herr zeigt uns

1. sein herrliches Missionsfeld,
2. seinen herrlichen Missionsauftrag,
3. seine herrliche Missionsverheißung.