

3-1-1931

Study on the Eisenach Epistle-lesson for the Third Sunday in Lent

Th. Laetsch

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Laetsch, Th. (1931) "Study on the Eisenach Epistle-lesson for the Third Sunday in Lent," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 2 , Article 24.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol2/iss1/24>

This Homiletical Help is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

more truly central than we do when we make the program center in our own imperfect notions as to what the pupil is. We can analyze the nature of the pupil and guess at some of his needs, but the Great Teacher knows His needs." _____

Many more quotations from various writers in the field of Christian education could be added; for men like Athearn, Shaver, Stout, and others have expressed themselves time and again on the principles involved, and though their solution is often inadequate and incorrect, we may well rejoice that our position finds such excellent support in the educational literature of the present day. P. E. KRETZMANN.



Study on the Eisenach Epistle-Lesson for the Third Sunday in Lent.

1 PET. 1, 13—16.

In glowing language the apostle had pointed out to his troubled and sorrowing fellow-pilgrims through a dark and dreary world the bright and shining star of Christian hope, every word throbbing with intense longing for the realization of his glorious vision. He had spoken of a hope which is not content with the fleeting joys and pleasures of this world, with the passing honors and glories of this time. No, Christian hope raises its eye to the world to come and expectantly looks forward to eternity for the realization of its desires. It looks forward to "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away," v. 4. It is a hope for a salvation so great that prophets have inquired and diligently searched into its nature, v. 10; yea, so glorious that even angels, though they always behold the face of the Father, desire to look into the things, v. 12, to be revealed on that day of praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, v. 7. It is, moreover, a hope not based on human reflections and conclusions, but on the abundant mercy of God and the resurrection of Christ from the dead; a hope implanted in the hearts of the believers by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, v. 3; a sure hope of an inheritance of which even hell cannot rob them, for it is reserved in heaven for them, v. 4, while their faith, which grasps this gracious gift, and their hope, which confidently looks forward to final salvation, is kept and preserved in their hearts by the selfsame almighty power of God that engendered it, v. 5. From every viewpoint Christian hope is perfect hope, a hope so flawless, so immaculate, so complete, as God alone can conceive and create and grant. This is the hope begotten in the heart of every Christian.

Having described the perfection of Christian hope, the apostle at once draws the conclusion, v. 13: "*Therefore, being girt up as to*

the loins of your mind, being sober, hope perfectly for the grace that is being brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." The admonition is: *τελειως ἐλπιστατε*. The English translation "to the end" does not do justice to the word used by the apostle. The adjective *τέλειος*, wherever it occurs in the New Testament, means perfect, complete, not only as to duration, but as to its nature, and there is no reason why the adverb, although occurring only here, should be used in any other sense. The apostle means to tell his fellow-Christians: "God has given you a perfect hope. Now hope perfectly. Let nothing deprive you even momentarily, let nothing disturb or cloud, not even in the slightest degree, the perfection of your God-created hope." "Hope perfectly," says the apostle, "for the grace that is being brought you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Some commentators interpret "the revelation of Jesus Christ" as referring to the revelation of Christ in the Word of the Gospel. Place your hope perfectly on that grace which is being continually offered to you in the Gospel revelation. While this interpretation expresses a very important truth, a truth, moreover, not altogether unsuitable in this connection, yet the context demands that we think of the revelation of Jesus Christ on the Last Day. It is true that, contrary to Keil, the phrase "revelation of Jesus Christ" is not restricted in Biblical usage to the final revelation in glory. Gal. 1, 12 and Rev. 1, 1 disprove this assertion. Yet three reasons seem to make it imperative to think here of Christ's revelation at the Last Day. 1) The entire context speaks of this future revelation. 2) The word *grace* in our phrase is also used in v. 10 and there clearly refers to the everlasting salvation, the "end of our faith," v. 9, the "glory that should follow," v. 11. 3) The term *revelation of Jesus Christ*, *ἐν ἀποκαλύψει Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*, is the same used v. 7 of the future revelation of Christ; cp. also "to be revealed in the last time," v. 5. Therefore we take it that the apostle here is speaking of the revelation which shall take place when Christ appears in His glory. The inheritance that is to be given to us on that day is called "grace" by the apostle. It was grace and mercy that in eternity moved God to plan our salvation, our inheritance as joint heirs with Christ of the glory and bliss which was God's before the world began. It was grace that appeared in Jesus Christ to procure for us our inheritance. It was grace that caused God to beget us unto this hope. It is grace that keeps this faith and hope alive in our hearts, and so it is grace which finally opens the gates of heaven on yonder day and gives us as the most magnificent manifestation of the grace of God, as a free gift of undeserved love and kindness of our heavenly Father, the full and everlasting realization of all our hopes. This grace, this free gift of grace, is to be brought, rather, "is being brought," *φερομένη*, at the revelation of Christ. Contemporaneous with the day of revelation of Jesus is the bringing to you

Laetsch: Study on the Eisenach Epistle-lesson for the Third Sunday in Lent of your gift of grace. On that day your inheritance, which was all the time reserved for you in heaven, shall be carried to you, given to you, by the loving hand of your Savior, John 17, 24; 1 John 3, 2; 1 Cor. 15, 51 f.; Phil. 3, 20. 21; 1 Thess. 4, 16. 17; Matt. 25, 34. Is not this inheritance worthy of our perfect hope? And since it is a gift of grace, even the feeling of our own unworthiness should not keep us from perfect hope, should not cause fear and doubt to dwell where only hope and joy and bliss should rule. All that ought to be necessary for perfect hope is the realization of our wonderful gift of grace awaiting us on that day. Yet we Christians are too prone to forget, to lose sight of, the glories which our hope holds out to our longing hearts. Therefore the apostle does not merely admonish to perfect hope; in two participial clauses he teaches us what perfect hope involves.

"Girt up with regard to the loins of your mind." "A metaphor derived from the practise of Orientals, who, in order to be unimpeded in their movements, were accustomed, when about to start on a journey or engage in any work, to bind their long and flowing garments closely around their bodies and fasten them with a leather girdle." (Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*; *sub verbo*.) Clothes were a necessity. They must be worn; yet they should not be permitted to become a hindrance. — Christians as strangers, v. 1, are journeying onward to their glorious goal, the salvation of their souls, v. 9. And they are to journey in sanctification of the Holy Spirit, v. 2. On this journey they have duties to perform, a work to do; yea, they experience many a season of heaviness through manifold temptations, v. 6, for the trial of their faith, v. 7. This journey, this strenuous, toilsome pilgrimage, requires preparedness, lest they weary before their goal is reached. Therefore, with the glorious hope shining forth before them, they should walk, having the loins of their mind girt up. *Διάνοια*, the faculty of understanding and feeling, that faculty of the soul which influences and motivates our will, guides our actions, rules our conversation, v. 15. With regard to this faculty, our mind, we should be once for all girt up. Being on the lookout for possible obstacles and hindrances, it shall be once for all our energetic and whole-hearted resolve to gather them up and put them out of the way where they can do no harm, where they cannot impede our progress or interfere with the work which is given us to do on our blessed journey of hope. There are many things without which a Christian cannot get along in the world and which are perfectly proper and permissible. A Christian must have food and drink, house and home. He has a perfect right to earn money, to enjoy the gifts of God to His children on earth; yet never should any of these things be permitted to hinder him in his journey or dim the hope which is held out to him in the revelation of Jesus Christ. From the realization of

this hope nothing dare keep, nothing dare stop or even impede him. The apostle is thinking here not so much of the sin (that should not be girt up, but laid aside, Heb. 12, 1) as of the necessities and permissible enjoyments of life. From the very beginning put these in their proper place and position. Let them be a help, a comfort, a convenience, a joy, yet never a hindrance. For that very reason Christians must be sober, *νήφοντες*. This word occurs six times in the New Testament: 1 Thess. 5, 6, in contrast to physical drunkenness; v. 8, in connection with preparedness for fighting the enemy; 2 Tim. 4, 5, over against public sentiment and opinion; 1 Pet. 5, 8, in connection with watchfulness with regard to surrounding dangers; chap. 4, 7, combined with sane-minded. In every instance it indicates that clear, calm sober-mindedness which in a dispassioned, unbiased, objective manner views and judges all things, uninfluenced by passing whims and notions, the latest theories and isms, the fashions and customs of the day, the spirit of the times, the voice of the people, or the desires of the Christian's own depraved flesh. The perfect hope towards which he is journeying is the motive which he applies to all matters of this life. In the light of unending glory, to be manifested at the revelation of Jesus Christ, he views all the joys, and advantages, and comforts, and honors of this world. This hope will keep him sober-minded, will preserve him from the mistake so frequently made of unduly stressing non-essentials while losing sight of, or neglecting, things really worth while. At all times he will have the loins of his mind girt up, so that the boons of this life may not become a bane. This blessed hope permeates, elevates, sanctifies, and brings nearer to perfection, the performance of his daily duties.

Vv. 14—16. *As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves to the former lusts in your ignorance, but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.* Christians are to hope as obedient children, rather, as children of obedience, *ὡς τέκνα ὑπακοῆς*, whose very nature is obedience, who are characterized by full conformity with God's will. Formerly they were enemies of God, children of disobedience, Eph. 2, 3; now they are, by the power of God, children of obedience. Cp. v. 3 and John 1, 12, 13. Since they are children of God, since they have been born again unto that lively hope of eternal life, where the divine image shall be fully and perfectly restored, Ps. 17, 15, they should even now walk in conformity to this future glory, their daily walk should be characterized by obedience to God. Such obedience involves, negatively, their not being conformed to former sins, and, positively, being holy as God is holy. "Not fashioning yourselves," "not conforming yourselves to the pattern of the lusts formerly in your ignorance," according to which you formerly, in your ignorance, fashioned your lives. Before they had been regener-

Laetsch: Study on the Eisenach Epistle-lesson for the Third Sunday in Lent
 ated unto hope, they were ignorant. Jews as well as Gentiles, learned as well as unlearned, wise men as well as fools, except they be born again of God, are in a state of ignorance, 1 Cor. 1, 21. Not knowing Christ, they are without the true knowledge of God, Eph. 2, 12; yea, without hope. Though hope may rise eternally in the hearts of men, it is a hope not worthy of the name; a hope not based on God, whom they do not know; not based on Christ, of whom they are ignorant; not founded on the Word of God, which they have not heard or which, if they have heard it, is foolishness to them; a hope therefore resting on ignorance, destined to sure disappointment, without knowledge of their relation to God in this life, without knowledge of their fate after death, of their life in the world to come. Ignorance, — no Christ, no God, no hope, bleak, cheerless, barren ignorance, — can anything more awful be conceived? Shall the children of God, begotten unto radiant hope, conform again to the lusts and desires of these children of ignorance? The poor, ignorant, deluded people of this world, not knowing the joys of the future world, cling with heart and soul to the fleeting pleasures of a fleeting world; not knowing the bliss of serving God and obeying His holy will, they look for happiness in the fulfilment of their own selfish desires, their own depraved lusts and passions; not knowing the joys of everlasting righteousness, innocence, and holiness, they find enjoyment in sin, and vice, and shame, and wickedness. Shall Christians conform to these lusts and desires of ignorant unbelievers? Formerly they did so. Cp. Titus 3, 3; Eph. 2, 2, 3; 1 Pet. 4, 3. No, regenerated unto hope, hoping for an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, they hope perfectly, like obedient children, not fashioning themselves according to the former lusts in their former ignorance.

Far from conforming to former lusts, the hope that is within them should rather urge Christians to holiness, vv. 15. 16. He that has "called" you; cp. "begotten again," v. 3. Vv. 10—12 the means of regeneration had been alluded to, the Gospel as preached by the messengers of God. Here we are told that through this message God Himself called, effectively called, the Christians from ignorance to knowledge, from despair to hope, from lusts to holiness. This latter thought is now developed. "He which hath called you is holy." And God says, v. 16, "I am holy." The Hebrew word קָדוֹשׁ means separate, in a class for itself. The holiness of God consists in this, that there is none like unto Him, that He is the one God, the infinitely Exalted One, who alone is to be honored and worshiped. This word is used with respect to God for the first time in Ex. 15, 11. See also Is. 6, 1 f.; 40, 12—18. 22—26; Rev. 4 and 5. The holiness of God includes still more. It is also a moral concept. As God is separate from all other things, so especially from all sin and iniquity. Cp. Heb. 7, 26; Ps. 145, 17; Is. 5, 16; Acts 3, 14; Rev. 16, 5. In this sense the word is

usually found in the Bible, and in this sense the apostle uses it here, holiness in contrast to lusts and passions, the state of ignorance. True, in the Old Testament "Ye shall be holy" refers also to the external separation of Israel from all other nations, because of their peculiar customs and ceremonies. Cp. Lev. 11, 44; 20, 26 with the preceding context. Yet there can be no doubt that Lev. 19, 2; 20, 7 refer exclusively to moral separation, to that holiness and perfection which should characterize Israel in contradistinction to the abominations and sinful depravities of the surrounding heathen. The apostle therefore does not do violence to the words of Scripture in applying them to the purity and holiness of moral perfection.

Since God is holy, and since He is the unchangeable God, Jas. 1, 17, unalterably holy, the demand is: Ye, whom God, the Holy One, called, be ye holy in every manner of conversation. That is God's will. He cannot be satisfied with less. He cannot permit His children to love, and indulge in, sin and unholiness. Permitting such a thing would mean giving up His holiness, allowing toleration of sin to enter into His heart, ceasing to be the unalterably Holy One and therefore ceasing to be God and becoming like unto sin-tolerating, sin-loving man. Since God is holy, He cannot but demand that His children be holy, spotless, immaculately pure and holy, in every conversation, in every possible and conceivable mode of their lives, with respect to every desire, thought, word, and deed—holy; pure and sinless at home, without spot and stain in public, holy in church and immaculate in business, sinless in the gatherings of Christians and blameless in the company of unbelievers. As God is holy, unvaryingly holy, unchangeably holy, so we likewise must be holy at all times if we would be His children, for we have hope, we are begotten again unto a lively hope, and as children of this hope we should hope perfectly. Let no sin mar the perfection of Christian hope.

The apostle had already called attention to the fact that He who called, He who regenerated, is also He by whose power we are kept through faith unto salvation, that our inheritance for which we hope is ours, not because of any possible perfection in holiness on our part, but that it is a free gift of grace, that He who demands holiness also freely forgives all our shortcomings. To Him the children of God turn in heartfelt prayer, and Him they implore for pardon and forgiveness wherever they have failed in their efforts toward perfection, for grace and mercy to keep them in true faith and hope, for strength and power to become more like unto Him, the Spotless, Holy One. May He hasten the day of the consummation of our hope at the revelation of Christ Jesus!

In conclusion we submit a few outlines.—*Ye have been Regenerated unto a Lively Hope.* 1. Therefore be perfect in hope. 2. Therefore be unwavering in holiness.—*Be Perfect in Hope:*

Laetsch: Study on the Eisenach Epistle—lesson for the Third Sunday in Lent
 1. in sober-minded preparedness; 2. in childlike obedience. — *Be Ye Holy!* 1. That is God's unalterable will. 2. For this purpose He has regenerated you unto a lively hope. — *The Christian in His Relation to This World.* 1. He will not conform to its lusts. 2. He will not permit its permissible joys to impede his way. — *Beware of Lukewarmness!* 1. Lukewarmness sets aside God's holy will; 2. it endangers the realization of your hope. — *Christians Need Both Law and Gospel:* 1. the Law, to show them the need of holiness; 2. the Gospel, to enable them to walk the way of holiness. TH. LAETSCH.

Dispositionen über die von der Synodalkonferenz angenommene Serie alttestamentlicher Texte.

Reminisccere.

1 Mos. 22, 1—19.

Wir Kinder Gottes geraten oft in große Anfechtung. Gottes Handlungsweise ist uns häufig ein Rätsel. Er scheint sich schnurstracks zu widersprechen. Erst gibt er uns eine Verheißung, und dann tut er scheinbar gerade das Gegenteil. (Beispiele.) Schließlich kommt es uns vor, als habe er seine Verheißungen ganz und gar vergessen. Wenn es so bei uns geht, werden wir hart angefochten.

In unserm Texte sehen wir Abraham in schwerer Anfechtung. Aber er erweist sich als Glaubensheld und bringt siegreich hindurch, Hebr. 11, 17—19.

So lernen wir denn von ihm,

Wie ein Kind Gottes sich in der Anfechtung zu verhalten hat.

1. Es muß sich fest an die Verheißung klammern.
2. Es muß sich dem Willen Gottes in allen Stücken fügen.

1.

Gott stellt Abrahams Glaube auf die Probe, B. 1. 2; Hebr. 11, 17. Er hatte ihm verheißen, daß er ihm mit Isaak einen ewigen Bund aufrichten würde, 1 Mos. 17, 19. 21; 21, 12. Das glaubte Abraham. Nun befiehlt ihm aber Gott, diesen Sohn der Verheißung zu opfern. Welch ein Widerspruch! Ohne Zweifel dachte Abraham bei sich selbst: „Wie kann denn die Verheißung in Erfüllung gehen, wenn ich Isaak opfere?“ Eine außerordentliche Versuchung! Man sollte meinen, er wäre an Gott irret geworden und hätte seinen Glauben verloren.

Aber er klammert sich an die Verheißung. Er weiß, daß Gott getreu ist. Was er versprochen hat, das kann und wird er halten. Er wird Mittel und Wege finden, seine Verheißung zu er-