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## Study of the Eisenach Epistle-Lesson for the Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity

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**Geltung:** „Lernet von mir!“ Die Apostel des Herrn zogen einst drei Jahre mit ihm, um zu lernen für ihren späteren Beruf, und noch heute geht jeder gute Prediger bei ihm in die Schule. Seine in der Schrift aufbewahrten Reden sind die beste Homiletik. Höhere Muster dafür, das Gesetz in aller Schärfe, das Evangelium in gewinnendster Lieblichkeit sowie deutlich, anschaulich, herzlich, zur Zeit und zur Unzeit zu predigen, gibt es nicht. Seinesgleichen war vor ihm nicht und wird auch nach ihm nicht aufkommen; er ist der Erzprophet. Wie oft lesen wir darum nicht auch in den Evangelien, daß er gewaltig predigte, daß sich seine Zuhörer der holdseligen Worte, die aus seinem Munde gingen, verwunderten u. dgl. Selbst seine Feinde mußten ihm das Zeugnis geben: „Es hat nie kein Mensch also geredet wie dieser Mensch“, Joh. 7, 46.

Und wie das Predigen an sich, so dient einem rechten Prediger auch die Kreuze, mit der Jesus sein Lehramt verwaltete, zum Vorbild. Wohl lief oft viel Volks herbei und hing sozusagen an seinen Lippen; aber es war nicht immer so. Oft mußte er auch viel Feindschaft und Widerrede erfahren. Auch solche, die längere Zeit als seine Jünger gegolten hatten, verließen ihn zuweilen wieder, weil seine Rede ihnen zu hart erschien, Joh. 6. Doch er blieb unentwegt seinem Amte treu; auch als Prediger blieb er gehorsam bis zum Tode am Kreuz. An diesem Vorbild richtet sich ein guter Prediger immer wieder auf, wenn er ähnliche betäubende Erfahrungen machen muß. Er beherzigt, was der Schreiber des Hebräerbriefes sagt: „Gedenket an den, der ein solches Widersprechen von den Sündern wider sich erduldet hat, daß ihr nicht in eurem Mute matt werdet und ablasset“, Hebr. 12, 3. Ja, ein guter Prediger hat stets Jesus vor Augen, und zwar sowohl als seinen Helfer wie auch als sein Vorbild.

Bort Hope, Mich.

E. Berner.

## Study of the Eisenach Epistle-Lesson for the Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Jas. 2, 10—17.

James, in his epistle to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, does not teach salvation by works, nor does he proclaim a different way to heaven from that preached by Paul, Rom. 3, 24, and John, John 1, 12, 13, and Peter, Acts 15, 7—11, and Jesus, Mark 16, 16. James, a servant of Jesus Christ, chap. 1, 1, teaches salvation by grace through faith. Chap. 1, 17, 18 he speaks of regeneration through the Word by the grace of God. V. 21 he speaks of the Word as being able to save, which Word must be received, or believed. His object is to show that the faith that justifies is also sanctifying faith and that a faith which does not sanctify does not and cannot justify. As Paul,



Rom. 6; Gal. 5, 13, and Peter, 1 Pet. 2, 16, and John, 1 John 3, 1—10, warned against an abuse of the doctrine of justification by faith, so James raises his voice in protest against the same fatal error, that smug self-satisfaction that constantly harps on the fact that one has faith while he is unwilling to follow after that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord, Heb. 12, 14. He has in mind conditions similar to those existing in the congregation at Sardis and Laodicea, Rev. 2, 3, conditions which undoubtedly threatened the very life of the congregation to which he addressed his letter. James had shown that true faith will show its life and power by conquering tribulation, chap. 1, 2—18, by being satisfied not with merely hearing the Word, but constantly active in doing the work, 1, 19—25. He had shown that only such a religion is acceptable to God as keeps itself unspotted from the world and does works of charity, 1, 26—2, 13. In the following paragraph the apostle shows that faith which has no works is not, and cannot be, saving, justifying faith, 2, 14—26. The passage now under consideration is taken from the closing verses of the one and the opening verses of the other paragraph.

The apostle had warned against having respect to persons, chap. 2, 9, since by doing so "ye commit sin and are convinced of the Law as transgressors." The apostle had used the word *παράβατης*. This word signifies one who goes past, or passes by, a thing without touching or coming in contact with it; here metaphorically of one who passes by the Law without touching it; one whose life and conversation is not within, but outside the Law; therefore a lawless fellow, a transgressor, a lawbreaker. That term might seem to some almost too harsh; the apostle might seem to be putting it rather strongly. Why should partiality, respect of person, constitute a man a lawless person? The apostle therefore proves his verdict by calling the attention of his readers to a general, indisputable principle.

V. 10: *For whosoever shall keep the whole Law, yet offend in one [point], he is become guilty of all.* The apostle does not mean to teach the possibility of perfection in holiness; see chap. 3, 2. He is about to prove that by partiality one becomes a lawless person; and he proves that by pointing out that by breaking one commandment, one has become guilty of all and is now in a state of guilt with regard to all. *Ἐνοχος* describes one who is held in anything so that he cannot escape, who is bound, under obligation, liable, to some person or object; here held by his offense, so that he cannot escape the guilt nor its punishment. And the offender against one commandment is by this one offense held fast in the clutches of all commandments. Why? The apostle himself states the reason in v. 11: *For He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the Law.* "Hear, O Israel," says the Lord, "the Lord,



our God, is *one* Lord," Deut. 6, 4. This one God has given the Law and every single commandment in the Law. Every commandment is therefore an integral unit in that one perfect code promulgated by the one Ruler of the universe as the one and only standard for the life of His subjects. And in this one Law the one Lawgiver commands and requires but one thing—*love*. Cf. Deut. 6, 5; 10, 12, etc. Offending against any one commandment, one offends against that law which is required by the whole Law. Whether you break the arm or the leg or a round of a chair, you have broken not merely that arm or that round, but the *chair* of which the arm or round is an integral part. The Ten Commandments are not ten different ways to heaven, on any of which one may arrive at perfection and attain eternal life, even if all the others were ignored. That is an error which is ingrained in the heart of man, an error which meets us at every occasion, in conversation with our fellow-men, in literature, ancient and modern. There is so much good in the worst of man that after all no one is hopelessly depraved, hopelessly lost! In almost every novel we meet with characters whose code of honor may permit them to kill, to cheat, to gamble, to seek revenge, to break almost every law of God and man, yet requires him to be faithful to his friends or to keep his promise or to love little children, and this one trait, this one deed, will atone for all his misdeeds. That is not God's code, God's Law, but man's distortion, Satan's caricature, of the holy Law of God. The Ten Commandments are the ten links in that chain of perfect law demanded from us by our Maker. If this chain is kept intact, if it remains unbroken, it is a chain which draws us safely over the abyss of eternal damnation into life eternal. "This do, and thou shalt live," says Jesus, Luke 10, 28. However to break a chain on which a person hangs suspended over an abyss it is not necessary to cut all the links or to cut at least five or at the very least two. If only *one* link is cut, the whole chain is broken, and the person is doomed. If only one commandment in that divine chain of God's Law is broken, the whole chain, the whole Law, is broken, and the man breaking it is a lawbreaker, transgressor, held in the clutches of the Law of his guilt, subject to eternal damnation. Naturally the man that unscrupulously breaks every commandment, the man that is steeped in vice and crime, is a lawbreaker, a transgressor, in a greater degree, of a worse sort, than he who has transgressed only one commandment; yet one as well as the other is a lawbreaker; the difference is in degree only, not in kind. Not the number of sins, but the fact of having sinned, stamps one a sinner, a transgressor. Nor need the sin be done in a wilful, malicious spirit, with the intent and purpose of transgressing. The apostle uses the word offend, *πταίω*, stumble, in order to show that also unintentional, accidental sins are included. While he has in mind chiefly the sin of partiality, yet he



states here a general principle, applicable to the whole realm of Christian life. In a chain every individual link is of equal importance. Whether you cut the first or the fourth or the ninth, the result will be the same; the chain will be severed and the person relying on the chain is doomed. Whether you transgress the Third or the Seventh, the First or the Second Commandment, you have transgressed a divine commandment, an integral part of the Law, each part, each commandment, of which is of equal authority and equal obligation. "For," says James, "He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the Law." So the apostle has proved conclusively his statement in v. 9. Every sin, be it great or small, be it accidental or malicious, be it committed time and again or only once, every offense, constitutes the offender a transgressor, a lawbreaker, no matter how many "good works" he may have done.

V. 12: *So speak ye and so do as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.* Note the manner in which James stresses deeds, works. Chap. 1, 22: doers of the Word, not hearers only. Here he speaks of words, of our speech; but in order to forestall any possible misconception as though words were sufficient, he at once adds: "and so *do*." His intention is to eradicate as thoroughly as possible every trace of hypocrisy, which is satisfied with words, without doing the will of the Lord. Cf. Matt. 7, 21; Rom. 2, 17—29.—Speech and action, words and deeds, of the Christian should be governed by the norm whereby he intends, has in mind, thinks, expects, *μillovrec*, to be judged, *the law of liberty*. What a strange expression! The law's business is to demand, to constrain, to force, to condemn. Here is a law that liberates, sets free. That is the same law of which the apostle had spoken chap. 1, 22 as bringing blessing to the doer. That is the law of faith, as Paul calls it, Rom. 3, 27, the law of Jesus Christ, Gal. 6, 2; the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, Jas. 2, 1. That is the norm of the Gospel which proclaims the glorious fact of John 3, 16. It is that law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus which has made us free from the law of sin and death, Rom. 8, 2. This law, this norm, makes us free from the Law of Moses; for Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth, Rom. 10, 4. This law, or norm, makes us free from sin; for it tells us of Him who, though He knew no sin, was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, 2 Cor. 5, 21, on whom the Lord laid the iniquity of us all, Is. 53, 6. This law frees us from death and all other penalties of sin, Is. 53, 4, 5; Rom. 5, 6—10. This law of liberty accomplishes what the Law of Sinai could not do, Rom. 8, 3. When the commandment came, forbidding wrong, demanding holiness, it roused only opposition and wrath and worked damna-



tion, Rom. 4, 15; 7, 8—11. The law of liberty breaks the power of canceled sin; it makes it possible for the righteousness of the Law to be fulfilled in us, Rom. 8, 4, who by nature are carnal, sold under sin, Rom. 7, 14, yet who through the law of liberty, the Gospel of the grace of God in Jesus, have been liberated, so that we walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. No longer are we urged to activity by the lash of the Law, by the hope of reward or fear of punishment, while all the time we are longing for freedom to do as we please according to the flesh. No, we are free children of our reconciled Father in heaven, whom we love, whose will is our will. According to our new man we have liberty to do as we please and still are in perfect agreement with the holy will of God, for our will, our pleasure, is one with that of our Maker. Such is the wonderful law of liberty to which the apostle calls the attention of his readers, a law which accomplishes the justification of man, his sanctification, his final and everlasting salvation. By this law, Christians hope to be judged. Far be it from them therefore to perform good works in a spirit of legalism, to expect of God so much reward for so many works, an increased compensation for every increase in the sum total of deeds. That would neither be a fulfilling of the Mosaic Law, which requires *love*, nor would it be in keeping with the spirit of the law of liberty under which the Christian lives, a spirit not of bargaining with God, but of willing, joyous, unselfish service, flowing spontaneously from the pure, living well-spring of love and gratitude toward his heavenly Father.— It is not, however, this aspect which the apostle stresses in this connection. It warns rather against an *abuse* of the law of liberty, the same abuse against which Paul and Peter voice their protests, that abuse which uses liberty for an occasion to the flesh, Gal. 5, 13; for a cloak of maliciousness, 1 Pet. 2, 18. Christians hope to be judged by the law of liberty. There can be therefore but one conclusion: "So speak ye and so do as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." Having received not only forgiveness, but liberty from sin, the power and willingness to lead a life of holiness, so *speak* that all your words are pleasing to God, so *do* that all your deeds show that you are regenerate children of God, walking in newness of life. Whatsoever things are true, etc., think on these things, speak these things, do these things, and the God of peace shall be with you, Phil. 4, 8, 9.

V. 13: *For he shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.* The apostle connects this verse with the preceding one by "for," *γάρ*. James points out the necessity of being guided in one's speech and action by the law of liberty; for, negatively, lack of mercy provokes judgment, while, positively, mercy rejoiceth against judgment. If any one will not walk according to the law of liberty, if one will not show mercy, then merciless judgment will overtake him. James here uses the expression



*Also*, mercy, kindness, good will, directed especially toward the needy, the miserable, the helpless. The Fountainhead of mercy is God, who is Mercy. From His heart flow those streams of mercy which bring salvation to fallen mankind. Mercy constrained God to send His Son, the Dayspring from on high, Luke 1, 78. It is due to the mercy of God that, being justified by His grace, we have been made heirs according to the hope of life eternal, Titus 3, 5. 7. In the waters of Baptism the streams of mercy engulfed us, regenerating us, Eph. 2, 4; Titus 3, 5, washing away our sin. God's mercy engenders in us like mercy toward our needy fellow-men. To be merciful is a characteristic of the children of God, Luke 6, 36. Any one lacking mercy evidently is not a child of the Father of mercy. The saving, regenerating, sanctifying mercy of God has in his instance not yet accomplished its purpose. On the contrary, such a person is not under the law of liberty, he is still under the law of obligation, of stern justice and unrelenting retribution, that law which knows of mercy only for such as do mercy, that law according to which unmerciful judgment will come upon every one that shows no mercy, Ex. 21, 23—25; Matt. 18, 33—35.

"Mercy rejoiceth against judgment," *κατακαυχᾶται*, exults, boasts, triumphs, over. The Law of God demands mercy. It can condemn only such as cannot show mercy recognized as such by the Judge of the living and dead. Wherever this mercy is in evidence, it will triumph over judgment; there is no condemnation, no punishment, for mercy; mercy is the fulfilment of the Law. Why, then, should not Christians, who have by the grace of God been begotten unto the adoption of sons, who alone of all men have been given the power and strength to perform deeds of mercy, why should they not with all their power strive after mercy, which fulfils the Law and triumphs over judgment? If they strive not after this mercy, their boast of Christianity is basest hypocrisy, their glorying in their faith an utterly useless one, because a faith which has no mercy is not living faith, it is dead in itself. That is the next point taken up by the apostle in his argumentation.

V. 14: *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith and have not works? Can faith save him?* The apostle takes up a new thought, that faith without works is dead, and expands on this thought, vv. 14—26. The word *faith* is not to be limited to a mere "belief in the unity of God" (*Exp. Gr. N. T.* and others). In the entire context the word is used of the Christian faith in its entirety, of which faith the belief in the unity of God is naturally a part. The apostle has in mind such members of the Christian congregation as claimed to have saving faith in Christ and His work and Word, yet were lacking in good works. Their faith was a faith of mouth and lips only, not the true living faith, which worketh by



love, Gal. 5, 16. Boasting of justification through faith, one of the effects of saving faith, they neglected sanctification of life, also an essential effect of this selfsame faith. The apostle asks, Can faith save such a man? *Mj* indicates that the writer expects an answer in the negative; cp. Jas. 3, 11, 12. The emphasis is not so much on any particular word as equally on all four. Can *faith* save a man if it be a faith without works, hence, as the apostle shows immediately, v. 17, a dead faith? Can faith *save* if it be dead? Can faith save *him* who has only a workless, dead faith? Can faith save him? It is utterly impossible that a man, though he say he has faith and has not works, be saved.

Vv. 15, 16: *If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?* "In accordance with the very practical nature of the writer he now proceeds to give an illustration of his thesis which is bound to appeal; he must have been a telling preacher." (*Exp. Gr. Test.*) James presents to us a case of charity rich in words, but lacking works. Of what profit is such a charity? What does it accomplish? Will mere words clothe the naked or mere oratory feed the hungry? What is needed to allay suffering is not a feast of words, but a square meal, not an array of glittering phrases which cover neither the nakedness of the neighbor nor even the lack of one's charity, but a trip to the clothes-closet and the willingness to share one's possession with the needy neighbor. True charity not only utters words of sympathy, it does more. It gets busy to alleviate the sorrow and suffering by practical self-sacrificing service. Such charity is profitable to the needy neighbor and profitable to its owner, whom it stamps a truly Christian man. On the other hand, charity consisting only in words and knowing no deeds, what does it profit? It benefits neither the needy one nor the dispenser of such charity. It is useless, it is worthless, it is dead, a caricature of charity, an empty shell without soul and life.

And now the apostle draws the conclusion, v. 17: *Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.* Just as a charity consisting only in words and having no deeds is profitless, dead, so faith, that so-called faith which has no works, is dead, absolutely useless, without profit. A man possessing such faith may be persuaded that he has true, living faith, he may know and understand all doctrines of the Bible, accept them as true, defend them against gainsayers, speak beautifully of Christ as the only Savior, yet if he has no works to show as a result of his faith, his faith is dead, lifeless, and therefore without power to save. True faith is spiritual life, a life engendered and implanted by God Himself. Says Luther: "Faith is the work of God in us that changes us and divinely regenerates us, John 1, 13.



It mortifies the Old Adam and makes us changed men in heart and mind and inclination and all powers and grants us the Holy Spirit. Faith is something living, busy, active, powerful. It is impossible that it should not without ceasing work that which is good. Neither does faith ask whether good works are to be done. Before one asks, faith has done them and is constantly at doing them. Whoever does not do such works is a wicked man, gropes and looks round about for faith and good works and knows neither what faith nor good works are."

That is faith: life, power, energy, justifying not only, but sanctifying, purifying, cleansing. Unless it sanctifies, unless it urges all to good works, faith is not the God-given faith, not spiritual life, but merely another form of spiritual death, a faith in name only, without efficiency, without strength to justify, without power to save. The words translated "being alone," *καθ' ἑαυτήν*, really mean with relation to itself, as far as it is concerned. St. James means to say that faith in itself is dead if it has not works. Faith failing to produce works is dead not only in as far as it does not bring forth proper fruit, while in another respect it might still be alive and active; no, faith without works is dead as far as faith is concerned. Works do not *make* faith a living faith. Works do not give life to faith, supplying to it, or strengthening, or at least adding to, its justifying quality. Good works, according to Scripture, are the fruit and product of faith. On the other hand, if faith does not produce works, if it has not the power to sanctify, it is in itself, as far as its essence is concerned, dead and consequently neither has the power to justify. What, then, is the profit of such faith?

A few outlines suggested by the above study.—I. In the introduction point out that Christians will never attain perfection in this life. Yet Christians must follow after holiness. Theme: *Christians Must Strive after Perfection*; for 1. God requires nothing less than perfection, vv. 10. 11. 13; 2. without such striving faith is dead, vv. 14—17.—II. *The Folly of Dead Orthodoxy*. 1. It brings upon us judgment without mercy, v. 13, because of the facts brought out in vv. 10. 11. 2. It destroys true faith, vv. 14—17.—III. Faith justifies, faith sanctifies; yet justifying faith does not differ from sanctifying faith. Theme: *Justifying Faith Is Sanctifying Faith*. 1. Only justifying faith sanctifies; 2. only sanctifying faith justifies.—IV. *"What doth It Profit though a Man Say He Hath Faith and Have Not Works?"* 1. His faith will not sanctify him; 2. his faith will not justify him.—V. It is frequently claimed that James contradicts Paul. Yet both teach the same way to heaven. Theme: *James Teaches Salvation Not by Law, but by the Gospel*. 1. Not the Law, but the Gospel, justifies. The Law condemns, vv. 10. 11, since no one



can perfectly keep it. Cp. chap. 3, 2. The law of liberty alone frees from the guilt and penalty of sin, justifies. James acknowledges that faith saves, v. 14, of course only living faith. 2. Not the Law, but the Gospel, sanctifies. The Law demands perfection, v. 10; condemns imperfection, v. 13; but supplies no strength for attaining such perfection. Again, only the law of liberty, v. 12, whereby God begot us of His own will, without our works, chap. 1, 17, 18, makes us willing and able to do good works. If one does not strive after perfection, he proves that his faith is not the faith engendered by the Gospel, but a man-made substitute. — VI. *Two Fatal Errors*: 1. Trusting in faithless works; 2. being satisfied with workless faith.

TH. LAETSCH.

## Dispositionen über die zweite von der Synodalkonferenz angenommene Evangelienreihe.

### Fünfzehnter Sonntag nach Trinitatis.

Luk. 14, 12—15.

Manches Wort, ohne Überlegung, vielleicht gar in spöttischer, feindseliger Absicht gesprochen, enthält köstliche Wahrheiten. Wir denken an das feindselige Wort des Kaiphas, Joh. 11, 49 ff., an das spöttische Wort der Pharisäer, Luk. 15, 2. In unserm Text findet sich ein Wort, von dem es sich schwer entscheiden läßt, ob es in aufrichtiger Überzeugung oder einfach gedankenlos geredet worden ist. Aber es enthält Wahrheiten, die der Herr Jesus dann im Gleichnis vom großen Abendmahl weiter ausführt. Und auch in unserm Text wird auf diese Wahrheiten Bezug genommen, daß die Gliedschaft im Reich Gottes das größte Glück ist und daß man sich durch nichts vom Eintritt in das Reich Gottes abhalten lassen soll.

**Selig ist, der das Brot isset im Reich Gottes.**

1. Selig in der Gemeinschaft Gottes;
2. selig im Dienst des Mitmenschen;
3. selig in der Hoffnung des ewigen Lebens.

1.

V. 15. Was es heißt das Brot essen im Reich Gottes, zeigt Jesus im Gleichnis vom großen Abendmahl. (Ausführen, welche herrlichen Güter Gott uns dort anbietet in seiner Gemeinschaft.) Diese Gemeinschaft genießen wir im Hören und Lesen des Wortes Gottes, wozu gerade wir reichlich Gelegenheit haben. Da iudt Gott, Jes. 55, 1 ff. Hüten wir uns, dies Glück zu verschmerzen dadurch, daß wir die Einladung nicht annehmen! Vgl. Amos 8, 11—13. Wenn wir die reichen Güter des Hauses Gottes, Ps. 36, 8 ff., genießen, so hüten wir uns vor irdischem Sinn, wodurch wir gewiß dieser Güter verlustig gehen werden, Hebr. 10, 26—31. Torheit, die Seligkeit der Gottesgemeinschaft durch Weltliebe und Leichtfertigkeit zu verlieren.