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Sermon Study on Phil. 1, 12-21

Theo. Laetsch

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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als eine präexistierende dargestellt wird. Mit dem ewigen Gottessohn, der in die Welt gesandt wurde, trat eine neue, erlösende Kraft in die Menschheit ein. Denn das Verbum weist darauf hin, daß der Sohn Gottes nicht nur einen Beruf als Abgesandter Gottes hatte, sondern daß er ein integrierender Bestandteil der Menschheit, selbst wahrer Mensch, wurde. So weit ging damals der Liebesratschluß Gottes, daß er seinen Sohn in Ähnlichkeit oder Gestalt des Fleisches der Sünde sandte. Er wurde der sündigen Menschheit nicht wesensgleich, aber seine äußere Existenzform war der mit Sünde behafteten Menschennatur in jedem andern Stücke ähnlich. Vgl. Phil. 2, 7. 8. Gott hat den, der von keiner Sünde wußte, für uns zur Sünde gemacht, 2 Kor. 5, 21. Vgl. Hebr. 4, 15. Christus nahm bei seiner Menschwerdung die Gestalt und Natur an, die sonst mit der sündlichen Natur der Menschen identifiziert wird; denn *σαρκ* bedeutet die ganze menschliche Natur. Und der Zweck der Sendung Christi wird sogleich ausgedrückt in den Worten und um der Sünde willen, betreffs der Sünde oder, wie auch richtig umschrieben worden ist, als ein Opfer für die Sünde. Die Meinung ist klar, besonders wenn man die paulinische Redeweise an andern Orten in Betracht zieht. Gott hat Christum gesandt, um durch seinen Opfertod für die Sünden der Menschen genugsutun. „Christus sollte durch sein menschliches Leben, Leiden und Sterben die Sünde der Menschen sühnen und tilgen und hat es auch getan.“ (Stöckhardt.) Trotz der Einsprache solcher Ausleger wie Weiss sagt der Text ganz klar, was im *Expositor's Greek Testament* dargestellt ist: „The apostle's doctrine is that the power of sin cannot be broken *except by expiating it.*“ Eben dies hat Gott durch Christum bewirkt; eben dies hat Christus selber getan durch sein Veröhnungsleiden, durch seinen Veröhnungstod. So ist die Sünde im Fleisch verurteilt und ihre Macht auf ewig gebrochen. Das ist die Frucht der *satisfactio vicaria*. (Fortsetzung folgt.) P. E. R.

Sermon Study on Phil. 1, 12—21.

Eisenach Epistle-lesson for Sexagesima Sunday.

The letter to the Philippians is addressed to a congregation to which the apostle was especially attached. Philippi had been the first city in Europe in which the apostle had magnified his Lord Jesus by preaching the Gospel, Acts 16, 12. 13; by establishing a congregation, vv. 14. 33. 40; by suffering for the cause of the Gospel, vv. 19—24. In the dark, dreary dungeon of this city he and Silas at midnight burst forth in a song of praise for the content of which we may compare Acts 5, 41; 14, 27. To these Philippians the letter is addressed. Again Paul is in prison; again he is deprived of his liberty, this time not only for a few hours, but for many years. For several

years he had not been able to do full justice to that mission for which his Savior had singled him out, that work so dear to him and always uppermost in his mind, Acts 9, 15; 22, 21; 26, 16—20. But again he does not hold forth in long lamentations. Though bound with chains, Acts 28, 20; Eph. 6, 20; Philemon 10. 13, he writes in his prison a letter of enchanting beauty, bubbling forth from a heart filled with almost rapturous joy and gratitude, a joy which cannot be suppressed, which will not be held in restraint, which time and again bursts forth with irresistible force; joy over material boons, rejoicings over spiritual blessings; gratitude for mercies granted to him, thankfulness for favors bestowed upon his readers. His manifest purpose is to kindle like joy and gratitude in their hearts, chap. 3, 1; 4, 4. He had struck the key-note of joyful gratitude in the opening words of his letter, vv. 1—6; assuring them of his love and longing desire to be with them, 7, 8, and of his unceasing prayer, vv. 9—11. And now he hastens to relieve them of another anxiety which had worried their minds and had been the source of some concern to him also.

"But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel," v. 12. "I would," it is my purpose, my deliberate will and intention, cf. 1 Tim. 2, 8; 5, 14; "ye should understand," come to know, perceive clearly, understand without uncertainty or doubt. "Brethren," he calls them. Since they are saints in Christ Jesus, v. 1, united with Christ, to whom Paul also is united; since they have fellowshiped with him in suffering, chap. 1, 29. 30, they are his brethren indeed, whom he has in his heart, v. 7. As they were anxious to know how his affairs had fallen out, so he is anxious to let them know his present status. Just what had happened we cannot tell. Epaphroditus supplied the details, unknown to us, to the Philippians, chap. 2, 25—29. If we combine 1, 13 with the hope of reunion with the Philippians expressed throughout the letter, we may be sure that his affairs had taken a favorable turn. Perhaps after years of waiting, Acts 28, 30, he had been summoned to his trial, during which it had become evident that the charges of sedition and rebellion preferred against him, Acts 24, 4, were false, that his judges were inclined to release him, as former judges had been, Acts 25, 27; 26, 32. Yet, though events had taken so favorable a turn, though liberty seemed to be within his grasp, it is not the personal advantages that are uppermost in his mind. So completely does his life revolve about Christ and His Gospel that, though the prospects of release from prison fill his heart with exuberant joy, the chief reason for his rejoicing is "the furtherance of the Gospel" resulting from the change in his affairs. "Furtherance," literally, a hammering out in order to lengthen, as the smith hammers away at the metal; progress, increase,

advancement. To such an advancement of the Gospel his affairs have "fallen out," have come to, have arrived at, and for the time being are continuing in this state. This progress, this success of the Good Tidings, is to the apostle the paramount issue. No matter what may happen to him personally, whether he is freed or will remain in prison or must die the death of a martyr, if only the Gospel, the cause of his Lord, is advanced, he will be satisfied. His chief worry evidently had been that his imprisonment, the charges against him, the cloud hovering over his reputation, might prove an obstacle to the success of the Gospel. The Lord had removed this anxiety from his mind, and he now hastens to remove all worry from the hearts of his beloved Philippians. It seems that he was quite sure of his release. Yet lest they make the hope of reunion with the beloved teacher the primary cause of their joy, he like a faithful father and *Seelsorger* teaches them to put first things first. Independently of whether they shall see him again or not, let them with him and like him above all rejoice that all that has happened to him has now arrived at a stage that is conducive to the spreading of the Gospel "rather" than to the detriment of Christ's kingdom. At the same time, just as he himself rejoices at the prospect of regaining his liberty and being reunited with his brethren in the faith, he prepares them for this piece of good news also, though continually with a view to keeping them from exaggerating the importance of the news. Already in v. 8 he had spoken of his longing to see them, barely suggesting the hope of the realization of his desire. In v. 20 he intimates the possibility, we might even say the probability, of his release from prison. V. 22 speaks of his being undecided as to whether life or death is to be preferred, while v. 24 voices his conviction that it were better for their sake if he were to live. Vv. 24, 25 he makes the positive statement that he knows that he shall abide and continue with them all; and chap. 2, 24 he writes that he himself shall come *shortly*. We can almost feel the heart of the apostle throb with joy as he pens these words, and we can well imagine the rapturous joy called forth by his letter in the congregation at Philippi. But this joyful expectation of a reunion with him in the near future, of their seeing him after years of separation, of again exchanging words of love and affection, must not overshadow the chief cause for rejoicing, the fact that the Gospel so far has not been hindered in its victorious march, that it has rather been aided even by the imprisonment of its apostle. Nor dare this joy, permissible as it is, be permitted to obscure or diminish the importance of magnifying Christ, no matter what the consequence of such efforts may be as far as their own personal affairs are concerned. Therefore the apostle does not place the hope of reunion in the foreground, but rather the manner in which the Gospel has been furthered by recent events and the importance of continuing the furtherance of the Gospel.

Christians rejoice, and have a right to rejoice, in the possession of temporal, material gifts and blessings, and it is their duty to thank God for them. Only let them retain the proper perspective, the proper sense of proportion. First things first. The only thing that really matters, the thing that therefore should at all times be uppermost in the minds and thoughts of the Christians, is the furtherance of the Gospel. All other matters, be they life or death, are of secondary importance.

"So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places," v. 13. The furtherance of the Gospel was not a matter of comparative insignificance, but one of greatest importance. His bonds had become manifest, evident, in Christ, in the sphere of Christ, a manifestation "which had its distinctive characteristic quality in the *ἐν Χριστῷ*" (Meyer), as being bonds "by virtue of spiritual fellowship or union with Christ" (Thayer, who refers to Eph. 5, 8; Phil. 1, 1; 4, 2 and many other passages for this use of *ἐν*). The true nature of his bonds, usually the signs of crime and wickedness, had become manifest. They always had been bonds which he had to suffer because of his union with Christ and of faithful service in his divine office. Yet, while Christ knew that and the apostle and his faithful followers also knew it, there were many who did not know this all-important fact; there were many who regarded his bonds as evidence of his being a criminal and hence his message as a dangerous one, proclaiming sedition and rebellion. Cf. Acts 28, 17—22. Now this has been changed. "In all the palace," *πραιτώριον*, originally the tent of the commander-in-chief; then the residences of the Roman governors in the provinces. It was Roman custom to use the palaces of the former kings for this purpose. The word was never used to designate the imperial palace at Rome, though many translators have taken it in this sense here. The pretorium at Rome is either the camp, the barracks of the Pretorian guard, or the guard itself. "The Pretorian guard consisted of a picked body of men, 10,000 in number, and all of Italian birth, especially attached to the emperor as his body-guard, first organized by Augustus, and usually called *praetoriae cohortes*. . . . Not the entire guard was always stationed in Rome, certain divisions being posted at times in adjacent towns. Because of its numbers and position the Pretorian guard wielded a powerful influence in the state." (Lenski, *Eisenach Epistle Selections*, p. 340 f.) Having appealed to Caesar, Paul, at his arrival in Rome, was undoubtedly delivered at once into the custody of this guard, perhaps handcuffed to one of the soldiers; cp. *ἀλυσίς*, Eph. 4, 20; Acts 12, 6; 21, 33; 28, 16. 20. Though bound in chains, Paul had found opportunity to preach the Gospel to the Jews, Acts 28, 17—28. Undoubtedly he had made use of the opportunity offered to preach the Word to his guard. This prisoner, so utterly different from all

others, became the object of interest and conversation among the guards. His trial, so long delayed, had served to spread the news of this prisoner and his strange message throughout all the camp. A prisoner for the sake of a crucified Jew; a prisoner apparently innocent of the charges preferred against him; a prisoner proclaiming Jesus of Nazareth as the Savior of the world, not a political Savior, but the Redeemer of men's souls; the hope of the resurrection of the body and eternal life! What a man and what a message! The whole camp buzzed with the strange news. Not only in the pretorium had Paul and his Gospel created a stir, even into the emperor's palace, Phil. 4, 22, had this Gospel penetrated and borne fruit, whether among the servants or the members of the imperial family we cannot tell. "And in all other places." There was hardly a group of people in Rome that had not heard of this new religion. All this came about through his imprisonment and trial. Men had thought evil against Paul and his Gospel; but God meant it unto good to bring to pass, as was then the case, to save much people, Gen. 50, 20. So manifestly had the cause of the Gospel been furthered.

"And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing more confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear." V. 14. Another gain resulted to the Gospel from Paul's bonds. "Many," the greater number, the majority, "of the brethren in the Lord." This phrase, so common in our day, occurs only here in the New Testament; the similar expression, *brethren in Christ*, occurs only in Col. 1, 2. Meyer connects *in the Lord* with *waxing confident*. That seems rather a harsh construction, and we shall see that its connection with brethren is not superfluous, as Meyer asserts. Paul and the Christians at Rome are brethren, and brethren in the Lord. Christ, and Christ alone, has established this relationship and preserves it in spite of all obstacles. Though the one is a prisoner, while the others are at liberty; though the prisoner boldly proclaims Christ at every opportunity, while the others were afraid to confess Him; though the one is troubled only by doubts and fears as to the effects of his imprisonment on the cause of the Gospel, while the others are harassed by worries and fears for their own safety, — still they are one and all brethren in the Lord. The same Lord who watches over that prisoner, imbuing him with the strength needed for bold confession and preaching, watches also over the weaker brethren, helping them to gain strength out of the very bonds of Paul, which had caused them to waver in their loyalty. Their common Lord and Savior lovingly keeps His own, so that they are able, so that they remain brethren, and brethren in the Lord, united with Him, their one and only Savior, and in Him united with one another. "Waxing confident," having gained confidence and now reposing in firm trust. "By my bonds," τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου, the dative of the person or thing in

which the confidence reposes. The selfsame bonds which had caused their fear and silence, now were to them the basis of fearless proclamation. His patient suffering for the Gospel made such a deep impression on them that they cast off their lethargy and manifested new enthusiasm. "Are much more bold," in a larger measure than ever before, more abundantly and earnestly; they are "bold," they dare to preach without fear. Preaching the Word was still fraught with danger. The favorable outcome of Paul's trial was by no means fully assured. It still required courage to speak the Word of God. *Alalēiv* is used frequently of teaching. But this word does not compel us to think here only of the called preachers, although they also are included. The apostle is speaking of the brethren in the Lord, of all Christians. Every speaking of the Word is not only an act of confession, but at the same time a teaching of others. What a marvelous furtherance of the Gospel unto which the things that had happened to Paul had fallen out! God rules. Christ sees to the growth of His Church. Preaching His Word boldly wherever occasion offers, creating such opportunities whenever possible, boldly suffering imprisonment, even death if it must be, will not hinder the cause of the Gospel; it will, it must, redound to the promotion of the Kingdom.

While some preached boldly, others evidently, like Nicodemus and Joseph, John 19, 38. 39, still were afraid to confess and proclaim their faith. Cp. 1 Kings 19, 10. 18. Alas, how many thousands of such "brethren in the Lord" are there found in the churches of to-day! Still others preached indeed, but from an utterly wrong, sinful motive.

"Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of good will. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds; but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the Gospel," vv. 15—17. The preachers of v. 15a and 16, according to Meyer and others, are "the anti-Pauline party, Judaizing preachers, who must have pursued their practises in Rome in the same manner as in Asia and Greece and exercised an immoral, hostile opposition to the apostle and his Gospel." (Meyer *in loco*.) This is an impossible interpretation. The double "some, some," v. 15, and "the one, the other," vv. 16. 17, manifestly point to two classes of the brethren spoken of in v. 14. Furthermore, there is not the slightest indication that Judaizing preachers at that time had disturbed the congregation at Rome; rather: Acts 28, 21. Finally, these men are not termed false teachers, but preachers of Christ; not their doctrine, but their motive is censured. Hence it is an abuse of this passage if it is quoted in favor of a policy of unionism and fraternizing with false teachers as long as they preach Christ. These men preached the pure Gospel,

preached Christ, but "of envy," jealousy. They were jealous of the apostle's influence, success, prominence. They preached the Gospel in order to show the brethren that they were preachers just as powerful and successful and influential, as that prisoner, that stranger, in Rome. "And strife." They were animated not by that spirit of love and peace which enabled Paul to regard even these mean, ignoble spirits as brethren, v. 14; no, they were intent on causing strife and dissension in order to gain prestige, to be exalted over and above Paul. Cp. 1 Cor. 1, 11 ff. "Some also of good will," kindly intention; they were favorably inclined toward the apostle, whom they honored as the great herald of Christ. "The one," the first class, "preach Christ of contention," *ἐριθρία*, properly, working for hire, intriguing for office, putting oneself forward; a partisan spirit, not disdaining trickery to gain one's end. Hence the apostle charges them with preaching Christ "not sincerely," faultlessly, not with proper veneration. They forgot the sacred character of the Gospel; forgot that they were ambassadors of Christ, preaching a message made possible only by the death of the Son of God. They used the glorious Gospel of Jesus for their own selfish ends, to further their own mean, sinful schemes, the advancement of their own honor and glory; and to such depths of meanness did these brethren in the Lord actually descend, that by their preaching they "supposed to add," to raise up, "affliction to my bonds." What shamefully small, mean men they were! While there was danger in confessing, they cowardly kept silence and permitted Paul to testify. Because of Paul's fearless proclamation, preaching Christ seemed to be safer, and they came forth from their hiding-places and broke their silence, supposing that now they had a chance to put that man Paul in his proper place and cause him to chafe and smart for fear that his own influence would suffer because of these marvelous preachers of the Gospel. Their small souls could not grasp the nobility of Paul's spirit, that fine magnanimity which he had learned from his Master, which raised his soul above petty envies and jealousies, enabled him to overlook all these shameful outcroppings of the Old Adam, to forgive their mean efforts, and to regard them still as his brethren in the Lord. O God, give us more preachers, unselfish, noble men, like Paul! Keep us all from preaching Thy Gospel in a spirit "of envy, of strife, of contention." Thank God, not all preachers were moved by so mean a purpose. "But the other of love," love for the cause of Christ and therefore love for the chief champion of this cause, "knowing that I am set for the defense of the Gospel," v. 17. "Set, *καίμαι*, never used in the sense of imprisonment, unless some word indicating this is added, but always in the sense of *being set*, destined, appointed, cp. Luke 2, 34; 1 Thess. 3, 3; etc. The apostle indeed was appointed to be the apostle of the heathen, Acts 9, 15; 22, 21; etc. "Defense," *ἀπολογία*, not

apology in the modern connotation of asking pardon, admitting fault, or guilt, but rather talking off a charge, so to speak as to free oneself from a charge and from guilt. Paul is placed, appointed, not only to proclaim the Gospel, but to clear it from all false charges made against it by the opponents. For this reason he was so well beloved of all sincere Christians.

"What then? Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice," v. 18. The only matter of importance to Paul is that Christ is preached. What if some do it to hurt his feelings; what if their motive is wrong, sinful; what if his heart is torn with anguish at the thought that preachers of the Gospel, brethren in the Lord, can stoop so low, can so completely forget their high calling; what matters it? As long as Christ, *my* Christ, *my* Redeemer, is preached, as long as His name is glorified, I rejoice, I am glad; yea, and nothing shall keep me from such joy. Nipping in the bud every contrary thought, he repeats emphatically, "*I will rejoice.*" Noble Paul! Bondslave to Christ, united with Him by bonds of fervent, ardent, all-engrossing love. How utterly did the jealous preachers misread his character! Can so unselfish a preacher be charged with personal vengeance, personal animosity, if in holy indignation he pronounces the curse upon all false teachers as Paul does in Gal. 1? It is the same loyalty to his Lord and Christ which motivates him here and there.

Why should I not rejoice? For I know that all this shall turn out to my welfare and to the magnifying of my Savior, vv. 19. 20.

I know, I perceive clearly, *that this*, his present state of affairs, the final outcome of which is still not assured, *shall turn*, turn out, *to my salvation*. The apostle clothes his thoughts in the words of the Septuagint translation of Job 13, 16. Salvation cannot mean his deliverance from prison because he still considers the possibility of his present state's terminating in death, v. 20. Hence *salvation* is used here in the sense of spiritual welfare. For the thought expressed cp. Rom. 8, 28. *Through your prayer*. Though the Philippians prayed earnestly and sincerely for Paul's release from prison, yet they had learned, they had been taught, to pray at all times with complete submission to God's will and to put spiritual welfare before the temporal (cp. Phil. 1, 28. 29, where suffering for Christ's sake is described as a gift of God and as proof of spiritual welfare). If all Christians would in their daily prayers place first things first, the spiritual above the temporal, how much more effective would their prayers be! Nor would they lose things material; cp. Matt. 6, 33. Such prayer the apostle asks for repeatedly, Rom. 15, 30; Col. 4, 3; 1 Thess. 5, 25; 2 Thess. 3, 1. The fact that the Philippians offer up such God-pleasing prayer strengthens him in his conviction that

whatever the final outcome may be, all must work together for his good. The expectation is due to *the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ*. Supply, *ἐπιχορηγία*, the leading of a chorus; fully equipping a chorus at one's own expense; hence, in general, to equip fully. The apostle is confident that the Spirit of Jesus Christ will supply him with all things for his spiritual welfare, no matter whether the final issue will be life and liberty or continued imprisonment and even death. The Spirit is able to do this; for He is the Spirit Almighty, Gen. 1, 2; omnipresent, Ps. 139, 7; omniscient, 1 Cor. 2, 10. He is willing to do this; for He is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, sent by the God-appointed Savior to be the Advocate of the believers, John 14—16, and hence willing to place all His powers into the service of Christ and His Christians. He, together with the Father and Son, rules all things for the welfare of God's children. He creates and strengthens in the hearts of the believers that firm conviction of which the apostle now speaks in v. 20, *according to*, in keeping with, *my earnest expectation*. *Ἀποκατάδοxia* is found only here and in Rom. 8, 19. It connotes the eagerness of expectation, looking forward as with outstretched head, fervently looking for the object of one's desire. This longing, this eager expectation, is further described as *hope*, that Christian hope which is based not on human promises, conjectures, and surmises; the hope engendered by the Holy Spirit and based on the infallible promises of God's own Gospel; a hope that cannot make ashamed, Rom. 5, 5; Is. 43, 1—3. And what is the object toward which his expectation and hope and the supply of the Holy Spirit and the prayers of his fellow-Christians converge? *"That in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death."* He knows that the Holy Spirit has hitherto at all times used his body as His instrument (cp. Acts 9, 15) for courageous testimony, that he was undaunted by persecution or any other tribulation, 2 Cor. 11, 23 ff.; a testimony not of his own prowess, but one that had no other purpose than the magnifying of Christ. Hence his firm expectation that in this present crisis also, by the manifestation of the same Spirit and in fulfilment of the prayers of his fellow-Christians, Christ will be magnified. Christ indeed is One and All to the apostle, the Alpha and Omega of his life. What matters, the apostle would say, my life, my death? It is only I that live, only I that die, a poor mortal, a sinful creature. What really matters is not what happens to me, but that, whether I live or whether I die, Christ be magnified, that my Redeemer be glorified, my Savior-God be exalted in my body. Such magnifying of Christ should not take place in a small and inconspicuous manner, but *with all boldness*. The apostle asks God to give him courage that, irrespective of what happens to him, Christ through him may be glorified; and that not

once only nor only occasionally, but as it has taken place at all times, so also now. Let this present crisis be no exception to the general rule. Let there be no moment of hesitation, no second of wavering; but as at all times, so *now*, be the circumstances what they may, *now* may Christ be magnified. If I be granted life and liberty, then may that life through the manifestation of the Holy Spirit be devoted entirely to the service of Christ, to the courageous proclamation of that name which is above all other names. If death shall be the issue, then may that selfsame Holy Spirit abundantly supply me with courage to oppose even the last enemy and again use my body even in death as an instrument for the glorification of Christ, who gives to all of His own peace and joy even if they are sentenced to suffer a cruel and painful death. If only I shall not be ashamed in this my trust, then the present situation, no matter what its outcome may be, must conduce to my welfare, my good.

For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain, v. 21. *To live* and *Christ* are placed side by side, coordinated. The apostle's life is summed up in one word — Christ. Christ is the contents, the aim and the object, of a Christian's hidden life. As physically we live and move and have our being in God, so spiritually we live and move and have our being in Christ. Take Christ away, and the Christian no longer lives. The man, the person, may still continue; but the Christian has died, disappeared. And so completely was Paul united with Christ, so completely did Christ rule and dominate his heart, that at the very moment of his conversion he asked, Acts 9, 6: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and twenty-five years later, Acts 20, 19, 24; 21, 13. Cf. also Gal. 2, 20; Col. 3, 3; 2 Tim. 2, 8—12. *To die is gain*. An unbeliever loses all he has in death. Gone are his riches, gone is his influence, gone his opportunity to come to Christ. Before long gone is his very memory, and in eternity there awaits him judgment and condemnation and torment without ceasing. A Christian may say, *To die is gain*. (Cp. Simeon's hymn, Luke 2, 29 ff.) *To a Christian death is a deliverance from every evil work*, 2 Tim. 4, 18; the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. 1, 14. It is the entering upon that inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, the receiving of the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls, 1 Pet. 1, 4, 9, where we shall be forever with the Lord, 1 Thess. 4, 17. What we lose is the sin and worries and the sorrows and the temptations of this life and world. What we gain is heaven and the closest possible communion with our Lord and Savior Jesus. What a glorious gain! — a gain so great that we can well understand the indecision of the apostle as to his choice, vv. 22 b—24. Hence, since to the apostle to live is Christ and to die is gain, he can confidently look into the future; for neither life nor death can separate him from Him for whose magnification he was spending his entire life.

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Paul opens to us his inmost heart and soul, revealing the keenest desire of one of God's noblemen. Let us learn from the apostle. *The Chief Desire of Every Christian.* 1. That the Gospel may progress in spite of all obstacles and difficulties; 2. that Christ's name may be magnified by our life and our death. — *Christ Magnifying Himself.* 1. in spreading His Gospel in spite of the opposition of His enemies; 2. in building His Church in spite of the glaring failings of its members (cowardice, petty jealousies, factions); 3. in preserving the faith of His Christians in spite of all temptations. — *All Things must Work Together for Our Good.* 1. The enmity of the opponents; 2. the petty jealousies of our fellow-Christians; 3. our life and our death. — *For Me to Live Is Christ.* 1. Him I gladly serve to magnify His name. 2. In such service I gladly endure all tribulations. 3. With Him even death is gain. — *In Nothing Shall We be Ashamed.* 1. That is our earnest expectation and hope. 2. That is the object of the prayers of our fellow-Christians. 3. For this purpose the Spirit of Jesus Christ supplies us plentifully. — *The Real Issue of the Day: that Christ be Magnified.* 1. All the forces of evil unite against Christ and His kingdom. 2. All the forces of God work together to that end.

THEO. LAETSCH.

Dispositionen über die erste von der Synodalkonferenz
angenommene Evangelienreihe.

Vierter Sonntag nach Epiphaniën.

Matth. 14, 22—33.

„Gott lebet noch; Seele, was verzagst du doch?“ (Lied 359.) Wenn wir Christen so singen, verlacht uns die Welt. Solange es den Kindern der Welt wohl geht, meinen sie, daß es töricht sei, so etwas zu glauben. Daher verzagen sie und verzweifeln wohl, wenn sie selbst in Not geraten. Nicht nur aber sagt uns Gottes Wort, daß wir auf Gottes Hilfe vertrauen dürfen (vgl. Ps. 42, 12; 118, 8. 9), sondern es gibt auch genügend Beispiele, die dies bestätigen. Die fesselnde Geschichte unsers Textes bietet ein solches Beispiel.

Warum habe ich allen Grund, meinem Heiland in der Not zu vertrauen?

1. Weil er meine Not genau kennt;
2. weil er mit seiner Allmachtshilfe zu mir kommt.

1.

Jesus hatte die Fünftausend gespeist. Das hatte auf das Volk solch einen Eindruck gemacht, daß sie ihn greifen und zum König machen wollten, Joh. 6, 15. Daß sie einen solchen „Brotkönig“ haben wollten, daß sie eine solch materielle Vorstellung vom Reiche Christi hatten und Christi Predigt von einem Sünderheiland gar nicht recht fassen konnten,