

12-1-1936

Outlines on the Eisenach Epistle Selections

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Recommended Citation

Arndt, W. (1936) "Outlines on the Eisenach Epistle Selections," *Concordia Theological Monthly*: Vol. 7 , Article 108.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol7/iss1/108>

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Tod und Verdammnis haben ihre Schrecken für uns und alle, die sich auf die Seligkeit verlassen, die in Jesu Christo ist, verloren. Zweck und Ziel des Lebens der Gläubigen ist nun nicht mehr die ewige Verdammnis, sondern ihr ganzes Sinnen und Trachten ist darauf gerichtet, das durch Jesum Christum erwerbene Heil zu besitzen, es sich anzueignen. Mit Absicht gebraucht der Apostel das Nomen σωτηριου, weil er betonen will, daß der Glaube allerdings eine Tätigkeit auf seiten des Menschen bedeutet, wenn er auch kein verdienstliches Tun sein kann, da nicht die Tätigkeit des Glaubens an sich, sondern das Objekt der Tätigkeit die Seligkeit bringt.

Dies wird noch besonders hervorgehoben durch den Relativsatz der für uns gestorben ist. Der Ausdruck *ὅτι ἡμῶν* erhebt die Tatsache des vollkommenen, stellvertretenden Verdienstes Christi wieder über allen Zweifel. Sein Tod war ein Tod an unserer Statt. Er hat erduldet, was wir hätten erdulden sollen; er ist gestorben, um uns das Leben zu bringen. Sind wir mit dieser Versicherung ausgerüstet, dann kann es uns nichts mehr ausmachen, ob wir wachen oder schlafen, ob wir noch weiter leben oder durch den Tod abgerufen werden. Eine Zusicherung haben wir, nämlich daß wir zusammen mit ihm leben. Durch seinen Tod ist uns das Leben in und mit ihm verbürgt, und dies Leben ist unser voller Besitz. Vgl. Röm. 14, 8. Weil wir durch Christi Stellvertretung von der ewigen Verdammnis erlöst sind, haben wir die selige Gewißheit, daß wir in ihm das Leben haben, hier zeitlich und dort ewiglich.

P. E. R.

Outlines on the Eisenach Epistle Selections.

Second Sunday in Advent.

2 PET. 1, 3—11.

Peter had nearly reached the end of his career, 2 Pet. 1, 14. Sees much in the world that disturbs him. Prevalence of false teaching, 2, 1. General corruption of society, vv. 10—12. Greater apostasy in days to come, vv. 20—22. Inspired by the Holy Ghost, 1, 21, he writes to his beloved Christians, of whom he says that they had obtained like precious faith with him, 1, 1, and issues to them a call to holiness, progressive holiness, and an admonition to stand by the Scriptures as the sure Word of Prophecy.

We are living in similar times. Much false teaching. Many sects. Some of them still retain part of Christian doctrine, while others, like Christian Scientists, merely retain name. Sad social conditions in world to-day. Lowering of moral standards in our country. Much crime, especially among young people. Divorce, drunkenness, dishonesty. World lieth in wickedness." Christians live in this wicked world. Constant danger of contamination. Call to holiness needed always, needed especially now. A call to reconsecration, a call to holiness, always in place. Therefore:—

A Call to Holiness.

1. *The basis for such a call.*
2. *The results the call is to obtain.*

1.

a. Context, 2 Pet. 1, 2. Here apostle prays for the Christians to whom he writes. Does not pray for prosperity for them, not for more honor, not for a better ranking in community, but for spiritual things, that grace and peace may be multiplied unto them. But he does not merely pray for increased holiness for those to whom his letter is addressed. He issues call to holiness, urges believers to make every effort to grow in sanctification, vv. 3, 4.

b. Peter bases his call to holiness on the call of God issued to them through the Gospel, v. 3. Same truth stated 1 Thess, 2, 12. Peter reminds Christians that everything they have in spiritual matters is a gift, pure and simple, from the Lord, v. 3a; cf. 2 Tim. 1, 9. This was true in days of apostle. Is true to-day. Is true in our own case. God's grace permitted us to be born in Christian homes. God's grace called us through the water of Baptism. God's grace called us in school, in confirmation instruction, in the church services. God called us to faith though He saw no merit or worthiness in us.

c. Peter's call to holiness, however, also based upon the exceedingly great and precious promises of God, v. 4a. The greatest promise of God is the promise of eternal life, John 3. 16; 1 John 2, 25. This promise and other promises of God strengthen our faith, remind us of the fact that we are new creatures in Christ Jesus, that we are really partakers of the divine nature, v. 4b. The wonderful promises of God do not only give us power to live unto Christ, to do that which is right, but also to fight sin, warding off that which is evil, v. 4c. Gratitude for the goodness of God, His creation, redemption, and sanctification, should move us to lead a better, a holier, a more God-pleasing life.

d. What is the situation in the average congregation? Many members are members of long standing. Many Christians nearly a lifetime. Many go to church more or less regularly. Many attend Holy Communion at least periodically. Still, how little actual increase in sanctification noticeable in so many, many members! Same old negligence in church attendance year after year. So often we see no improvement in giving. Same amount year after year in spite of added blessings, both spiritual and material. So often no improvement as to willingness to serve, in Sunday-school, choir, voters' assembly, societies. Lethargy and indifference regarding work of Kingdom, work of missions, is often appalling. Needed indeed the apostles' call to godliness, call to grow in grace, to practise one Christian virtue after the other. Second half of text shows just what the call to holiness, based upon call of God and His wonderful promises, should accomplish in life of individual Christian and in life of congregation.

2.

a. Vv. 5—7. Apostle describes growth and expansion of Christian life of sanctification as a gradual, but steady progress. Peter knows that Christians must begin in the kindergarten of the school of God; but he does expect them to advance from grade to grade, to grow. Parents are very eager to have their children advance step by step. Heavenly Father just as anxious to see us advance, to grow in holiness. Peter begins with faith. Peter knows that faith worketh by love, knows that faith is the root from which all virtues and all good works proceed, Rom. 14, 23b; Gal. 5, 6b; Jas. 2, 17. Where faith is, faith based upon Word, nourished by means of grace, frequent attendance at Lord's Table, there will be virtue. "Add to your faith virtue," v. 5. Virtue means here as much as manly courage, the attitude of mind which will seek to please God in all things, even in face of difficulties and hindrances.

b. V. 5c. Knowledge an additional virtue. Here not knowledge of God, not in particular knowledge of salvation, but rather the knowledge of that which pleases God. Christian insight, Christian discernment, Christian circumspection. A Christian, enlightened by God, will look at things altogether differently from a worldlying. A Christian looks at matters in the light of eternity.

c. V. 6. Temperance is another Christian virtue. This temperance is not merely moderate use of food and drink. Such temperance must of course be urged just in this post-Prohibition age, when drinking to excess has become fashionable, when even women frequent taverns and cocktail bars in large numbers. Temperance here urged goes much farther — temperance in all things. Temperance caused not by fear, fear of wrecked health, fear of punishment, but a deliberate ruling over body and mind and all their faculties and desires. Since this must be done constantly because of constant temptation, the apostle urges patience as another virtue. — And this whole serious striving after greater perfection in the virtues mentioned will result in godliness.

d. V. 7. The highest evidence of true godliness is love, love of the brethren, fellow-members of the church, love also of mankind in general, love of the lowly, love even of the enemy. Even among so-called Christians there is a sad lack of such love. Examples.

e. V. 8. Where these virtues exist, there can be no barrenness, no unfruitfulness. Where there is faith, there is sanctification, good works, growth, and life. Just a natural consequence. But where, v. 9, there are no virtues, there is no growing in grace; there is danger that such a person is spiritually blind, does not see things in light of heaven, yea, has forgotten what heavenly gifts he received in conversion, and is again on broad road of world. Serious matter. Examine yourself. Are you one of those barren trees? There is always danger

of reverting to unfruitfulness, especially if one cuts himself off from means of grace.

f. Therefore final appeal of apostle, vv. 10. 11. "Make sure your election." Election is sure on part of God, 1 Pet. 1, 5; John 10, 27—30. But it would be height of folly for Christian to argue that he can live just as he chooses in the world. Elect walk in paths of sanctification, Eph. 1, 4. When a Christian observes in own heart increased holiness, more love, greater liberality in giving, more sanctification, he is happy, strengthened in faith. Actually sees the gates of heaven open.—Whole matter important. Important to God. Important to Church. Important to individual. Strive therefore to grow, grow in grace and good works.

E. L. ROSCHKE.

Third Sunday in Advent.

2 TIM. 4, 5—8.

A part of this text of Holy Writ has frequently been taken as a basis for a funeral sermon.— And, tell me, is it not a glorious thing to be able at the close of a Christian's life to testify of such a Christian: He has fought a good fight, he has finished the course, he has kept the faith? Certainly, that is a triumphant paean of victory. Let me ask you, Could this be said of you when your funeral sermon will be preached? Would this text be applicable to you? Could we then say of you, He (or she) has fought a good fight, has finished the course, has kept the faith? I hope that every one of you will say, God grant that all this may be said of me when I have finished my course on earth!

In order to judge intelligently whether these words could properly be applied to us, let us to-day give attention to their meaning. We shall center our attention upon these pivotal words of our text:—

"I have Fought a Good Fight."

1. Who may truthfully say this?

a. Only those who have what Paul fought for—true faith. 1. Paul was a converted believer, 1 Tim. 1, 15. 16. 2. Without this faith there is nothing to fight for, Heb. 11, 6; Mark 16, 16; Acts 16, 31; 10, 43.

b. Only those who like Paul fight to keep this faith to the end, v. 7c; Rev. 2, 10b. 1. By watchfulness, v. 5a; Matt. 25, 13; 26, 41. 2. By enduring affliction, v. 5b; Acts 14, 22b; Heb. 11, 36—38; 12, 6—8. 3. By resisting the devil, 2 Cor. 12, 7; Eph. 6, 16; the world, Acts 16, 19—24; John 15, 18; the flesh, 1 Cor. 9, 26. 27; Gal. 5, 17. (Application.)

2. Of what glorious blessings is such a one assured?

a. Even for the present he is blessed beyond words. Just compare with these words of our text the words of unbelievers at the end of

their lives. Some have died cursing every one and have ended in despair. Saul, Judas, Ahithophel, Abimelech (Judg. 9, 53, 54), Julian the Apostate. On the other hand, Paul in text. Luther's last words.

b. But there is even a greater blessedness in store for them, v. 8. A crown of righteousness. Cf. 1 Pet. 1, 3, 4; 4, 13; Matt. 5, 12; 25, 34; Rom. 8, 18; Phil. 3, 21.

c. This glory and these rewards and blessings will be given not only to such great teachers of the Church as Paul or Timothy, but, according to our text, "unto all them also that love His appearing"; every humble Christian is to receive them. We also may joyfully say: Phil. 3, 8—10 and 1, 23. Hymn 559, 1. 5. 8. M. S. SOMMER.

Fourth Sunday in Advent.

1 JOHN 1, 1—4.

"Joy to the world, the Lord is come!" (Hymn 158, 1.) The Christian religion, contrary to the opinion of the world, is a religion of great joy. Says Jesus: "These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full," John 15, 11. Says Paul: "The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost," Rom. 14, 17. In our text John says: "And these things write we unto you that your joy may be full." (Whether we read *your* joy or, according to other manuscripts, *our* joy, the fact remains that the Gospel-message is to bring joy to the hearts of men.) Therefore, "let the children of Zion be joyful in their King," Ps. 149, 2. Cp. Phil. 4, 4.

Of all this we are reminded on this Sunday as we stand on the threshold of another Christmas season, during which the message concerning the Word of Life shall fill our hearts and lives with joy. Let us therefore consider:—

John's Threefold Statement Concerning the Word of Life Fills Our Hearts with Joy.

1. *The Word of Life was manifested.*

a. The need of life. When sin entered the world, life went out, and death came in, Gen. 2, 17; 3, 1 ff.; Rom. 4, 12.

b. God provided life. God promised to send the Savior that life might be given to men who were dead in trespasses and sins, Gen. 3, 15. This Savior is the only-begotten Son of God, v. 1; John 1, 1—3. The promise of God was fulfilled by the advent of Jesus. "The Word was made flesh," John 1, 14; Luke 2, 11. Jesus is the Word of Life, v. 1; John 1, 4; 6, 33—35; 11, 25; Rom. 5, 17. The entire visible sojourn of the Savior here on earth was a *manifestation* of the Word of Life. The angel's message was a message of "good tidings of great

joy." What joy the apostles who saw and heard and handled the Word of Life and believed must have experienced!

The Word of Life was manifested, the evidence is sufficient; but "how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Rom. 10, 14. Therefore—

2. *The Word of Life is declared*, vv. 2, 3.

a. Those who declare the Word of Life are reliable witnesses, vv. 1—3. They have been with Jesus, Acts 4, 13, heard Him preach, saw Him perform His miracles, handled Him, John 20, 24—29; saw His glory, John 1, 14; Matt. 17, 1—5; saw Him at various times after His resurrection, John 20. 21; Luke 24.

b. The apostles were sent as witnesses to the sinful world, Acts 1, 8. They were to be teachers whose inspired utterances and writings were to declare the Word of Life to a world dead in trespasses and sins, v. 2; Matt. 10, 1—20; 1 Cor. 2, 7—13; Gal. 1, 1, 6—12; Eph. 2, 20.

This witness-bearing is to continue unto the end of days. To the Church the Lord gave the command to preach the Gospel in all the world, Matt. 28, 18—20, even those truths which the apostles taught, Gal. 1, 6—9; 2 Tim. 2, 2; 4, 1—5; Rev. 23, 18, 19; Luke 10, 16.

What is the purpose of the declaration? Why can we truly sing, "Joy to the world!"? V. 3 gives the answer. It tells us the blessed fact that—

3. *The Word of Life brings about fellowship.*

The purpose of the apostolic declaration of the Word of Life is *fellowship*: fellowship with the apostles and fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, v. 3.

a. *Fellowship with the apostles.* This is the fellowship of believers. Christ prayed: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word, *that they all may be one*," John 17, 20, 21a. In these words Christ also says how the fellowship of believers is brought about, namely, *through the Word that is preached*. Having been brought to faith, believers are united in faith with all who have faith and together share the blessings of the Word of Life. Hence the spiritual *unity* of the Church. The words of Christ John 17, 21 are not to be misinterpreted to mean an *outward* union, although Scripture teaches even that to be the *ideal*, 1 Cor. 1, 10.

b. Through the declaration of the Word of Life men are called into the fellowship of the apostles and that of all believers by being called to the *greater fellowship with the Father and His Son*, Jesus Christ, v. 3; 1 Cor. 1, 9. Not a mere outward fellowship with the saints assures us our fellowship with the Father and the Son; but our inner fellowship with the saints, through faith, is a result of our fellowship with the Father and the Son and an indication of our possession of it.

This fellowship with the Father and the Son is the dwelling of God in the believers, 1 Cor. 3, 16; John 14, 23; being partakers of the divine nature (not of God's essence, but of God's holiness), 2 Pet. 1, 4; being the blessed sons of God, John 1, 12; Rom. 8, 15—17; having communion with God through prayer, John 15, 7; Gen. 32. 24 f.; being sanctified by the Spirit unto holiness of life, Rom. 8, 5—14; being members of God's holy temple, Eph. 2, 19—22, and of His body, which is the Church, 1 Cor. 12, 27; Col. 1, 18.

"And these things write we unto you that your joy may be full," v. 4. Where death reigned, life now reigns; where sin reigned unto death, now grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ, our Lord, Rom. 5, 17. Hymn 152, 1. J. H. C. FRITZ.

Christmas Day.

1 JOHN 3, 1—5.

"Behold what manner of love," etc. These are words of amazement. The thought suggested in the previous verse; again in 5, 1. It is such a magnificent thought that the apostle now dwells upon it. What is behind it? the cause of it? It is God's love. God's love has been given to us. Can you conceive it? Can you believe it? Here is the evidence. — It is a true Christmas text. Christmas is the festival of love, bringing us the greatest manifestation of God's love. Here the apostle shows what the incarnation of God's Son, God's gift of love, means to us. — It is all so amazing that we, too, must exclaim with the apostle:—

"Behold what Manner of Love the Father hath Bestowed upon Us!"

This love has made us—

1. *The sons of God;* 2. *The heirs of God;* 3. *The followers of God.*

1.

"That we should be called the sons of God." (Many codices add: "And we are"; as a matter of fact, that is the meaning; a mere name with no meaning would give John no cause for this eulogy. Augustine: „*Nam qui vocantur et non sunt, quid illis prodest nomen, ubi res non est?*" Besides, the next verse states it plainly.) To appreciate this, note the "now," v. 2. It was not always thus. We were sinners, rebels as such, sons of the devil, v. 4, children of wrath; helpless, for so we were born, and spiritual rebirth is as impossible to man as physical rebirth.

But God's love has remade us. We are now born of God, born a second time. That has been accomplished through the incarnation of the Son of God; He was manifested to take away our sin, v. 5; by

His active (Gal. 4, 5) and passive obedience (1 John 1, 7; Gal. 3, 13). We now become the sons of God through faith in Christ, receiving the adoption through regeneration, Gal. 3, 26; John 1, 12.

What manner of love — the sons of God! What dignity! What assurance!

2.

We are the sons of God; and if children, then heirs, Rom. 8, 17; Gal. 4, 7; but "it doth not yet appear what we shall be," 1 John 3, 2. Christians bear no visible marks of this inheritance. Hence the world regards their claim of sonship as arrogance and treats Christians accordingly. Our own heart feels disappointed, and our reason, comparing actual experience in life with this claim, protests and doubts. And the devil encourages such doubts and prompts return to the old flesh-pots.

Our inheritance is a hope, v. 3. We shall be like Him; we shall see Him as He is. That is a concise description of heaven: All sin abolished, and with it all the results of sin; the divine image restored, and with it all the faculties impaired or totally lost through sin; and an eternity of life in the presence of God and our Savior, a full understanding and appreciation of His ways, and full enjoyment of communion with Him. — Only a hope, but a sure hope; "we know," v. 2. And it is the Child born in Bethlehem who has purchased for us this sure hope.

What manner of love! To us such glory and bliss! Who would give more than a passing thought to the vicissitudes of life with such a hope in view?

3.

We are the sons of God; that involves certain consequences, v. 3. Note that the apostle does not designate this as a duty and an obligation, but as a natural result. Children partake of the nature and character of their parents; children of God partake of His nature and character. Whoever lacks that similarity is no son. And every child of God is by nature a follower of God and of Christ.

Not by his own nature; he is wicked as all others. But "what manner of love!" Being born again, Christians are endowed with a new nature, which is of God. Jesus, born in Bethlehem, has taken away our sins; He has freed us, not only of the guilt and punishment, but also of the domination of sin. He who has become a child of God through faith is pure, v. 3; his sins are forgiven; and he now purifies himself, crucifies the Old Adam, strives to run the way of God's commandments; and he can do so by virtue of God-given powers, not perfectly, but ever better.

What manner of love! Regard it penitently, gratefully, adoringly; and make sure that you appropriate it. THEO. HOYER.

Second Christmas Day.

HEB. 1, 1—6.

Reference to the second advent of Christ is justified by the text and by the festival season terminating with Christmas. As the prophets and kings desired to see the coming of Christ into the world, Luke 10, 24, so we who believe look forward in sure hope to the joy to come, v. 6a (when He shall have again brought in the First-begotten into the world). But the future bliss is based on the first appearance of Christ, the Father's first bringing in of the First-begotten. Thus the future and the past meet in the present to fill us with unspeakable joy to-day.

The First Bringing In of the First-Begotten.

It offers joy to the world; for—

1. *The Lord is come;* 2. *Christ, the Savior, is born.**

1.

a. The Lord is come. Note the Person brought in. 1. His divine essence, v. 3a. He is the effulgence of God's glory (Luther: *efflux*) and the exact image, expression, precise reproduction, the very character, of God's essence, John 12, 45; 14, 9. Man with his limited mind cannot describe or understand the great I AM. 2. His divine attributes: v. 5, eternal; v. 3, divine power. 3. His divine relation to the Father: vv. 2, 5, the Son of God; v. 6, the First-begotten. 4. His divine works: creation, v. 2; John 1, 1—14; preservation, v. 3; government, vv. 3, 4; judging the quick and the dead, v. 6. 5. His divine honor and glory, compared with prophets, v. 1, angels, vv. 4, 6, denoting not merely superiority, but supremacy. 6. Expressly called God, v. 8; John 20, 28; 1 John 5, 20; Rom. 9, 5; Jer. 23, 6; Ps. 45, 7, 8. — Indeed, the Lord is come!

b. How did the Father bring in the First-begotten? Where may He be found? Gal. 4, 4; Luke 1 and 2; "the Lord," Luke 2, 11; Is. 7, 14; 9, 6; 1 Tim. 3, 16; John 1, 14. In statements bold, but proved, in words of life majestically rolling, the text bears the Son of Man, who is the Son of God, through from the manger to His sitting on the right hand of the Majesty on high, from glory to shame and again to glory, and thus shows that the Lord is come.

c. Joy to the world! Luke 2, 10. God ushered in His Son for the joy of the world. But is the joy universal? How dark and cheerless so many hearts at Christmas! How foolish of proud man to be offended at the poverty and humility of the Son of God and to de-

* In a German sermon the parts may be announced in the words of the German hymnal No. 29, 1. 2.

prive himself through unbelief of the joy of greeting and worshipping the incarnate God! Sin against the First Table: *Is.* 42, 8; *Matt.* 4, 10; *John* 5, 23. Yet we ourselves would flee in fear and guilt from the brightness of His glory and from the express image of His Person or despise in pride the Virgin Mary's Son if this bringing in would be a judgment of the righteous God upon man. But: *John* 3, 16. Faith sings: Christ, the *Savior*, is born.

2.

a. V. 3. The bringing in of the First-begotten was God's official presentation and introduction of the Savior. The Son of God is the Christ, the Anointed One, anointed to be 1. our Prophet, *vv.* 1, 2a; *Heb.* 2, 1; *Deut.* 18, 15; *Matt.* 17, 5; *John* 1, 18; *Luke* 10, 16; 2. our Priest, *v.* 3; *Heb.* 7, 26. 27; 9, 12. 14. 26; 1 *Pet.* 2, 24; *Is.* 53; 3. our King, *vv.* 6. 2; *Matt.* 21, 5; 2 *Tim.* 4, 18. Indeed, Christ, the Savior, is born.

b. Now let us follow up the comparative "better," *v.* 4, throughout this epistle to see what God has wrought through Christ for us: 7, 19; 8, 6; 9, 11. 23; 10, 34; 11, 16. 35. 40; 12, 24. Christ, the Savior, is born!

c. Therefore joy to the world, the sinful, helpless, fallen race of man. Faith required, *John* 3, 16; *Heb.* 2, 1. — Since every heart is to prepare Him room, shall we whose souls are lighted etc., Hymn 474, 3.

G. H. SMUKAL.

Sunday after Christmas.
2 *Cor.* 5, 1—10.

We are hastening to the end of the year; soon 1936 will give place to 1937. Time flies, and its flight reminds us of the fact that the end of our earthly life is ever drawing nearer and with it the day when our bodies must be laid in the dark and somber grave. However, the green Christmas-tree under which we have gathered for worship, this symbol of life and immortality, brings comfort to our hearts as we think of death and the end of our earthly days; for it speaks to us of Him who came into the flesh to gain for us life and immortality. It tells us, as does to-day's epistle, of—

The Glorious Exchange of Dwellings that Awaits Us.

Our text assures us that—

1. *We are to exchange our earthly tent-dwelling for a heavenly home; and it brings home to us the fact that*
2. *The thought of this wonderful exchange should deeply affect us.*

1.

Our present dwelling; that is, the present dwelling of our soul, is earthly, v. 1, of this earth. And it is a flimsy, temporary habitation, comparable to a tent. It is easily dissolved, v. 1, torn down and destroyed. A gust of wind may blow over a tent and make it uninhabitable; so the slightest cause may destroy the body in which we now live; a breath of air, an invisible germ, the sting of an insect may bring about the collapse of the tent in which our soul now lives.

For this reason our present dwelling is most unsatisfactory, v. 2; we groan while occupying it, being burdened by its inconveniences, limitations, and uncertainties, by the downright hardships its occupancy entails in the way of pain, weakness, and illness.

b. This all fills the soul of the believer with the desire to be "absent from the body," v. 8, which is so unsatisfactory as a dwelling. However, this removal is connected with much that is unpleasant and with many undesirable circumstances. The desired removal is usually connected with violence. Who can therefore blame the believer for wishing, as did Paul, not for an "unclothing," but to be "clothed upon," v. 4; that is, for a sudden transmutation of the body, as Elijah experienced, and as will be the happy lot of those who remain till Christ's coming to Judgment, 1 Cor. 15, 51, 52?

c. But though the removal from the earthly body is connected with many undesirable circumstances, what a glorious change of habitation it will be for the soul of the believer! The soul will exchange the earthly, insecure, tottering tent for a heavenly, firm dwelling, — a real home, secure and permanent, v. 1.

All the inconveniences, shortcomings, and limitations of the earthly tent-dwelling will be past. Of the joy, satisfaction, and glory that will be ours, the believers, in this new dwelling of our soul we can of course have no proper conception; for after we have thought of all that is good and desirable and glorious, we shall be still far, far from having realized the actual bliss awaiting us when our soul will have entered its eternal home. The earth will have been exchanged for heaven, the company of sinners for that of the angels; and, above all, we shall be with God, our eternal Father and loving Savior, the Source of all real happiness and true satisfaction.

And while the removal from the earthly body was connected with much that was painful, the entrance of the soul into its heavenly dwelling and its reception at the gates of the eternal homeland will have for it only that which is desirable and gratifying. God Himself will receive the soul that has entered its eternal dwelling into His heavenly Jerusalem with words of sweetest welcome and assure the believer of the blessed fact that he shall ever be with Him, v. 8.

2.

The thought of this wonderful exchange of dwellings should deeply affect us believers.

a. First of all, it should lead us to earnest heart-searchings, since this exchange of dwellings involves our appearance before the judgment-seat of Christ, v. 10. We should not neglect honestly to examine our hearts as to whether our soul, now living in its earthly tabernacle, is taking the proper attitude toward Christ, its Savior. We should ask ourselves, Are we walking by faith? Are we, redeemed by His blood, really Christ's own through faith in His atoning merits? Do we walk as it becomes the heirs of the eternal home whose occupancy is promised us? Vv. 6—9. And we should not fail to give a frank answer to these questions.

b. Then, does a blessed certainty fill our hearts as to our future occupancy of this glorious and eternal dwelling? Can we say, "We have a building of God," etc.? v. 1. Are we sure of it, unseen though it be? V. 8b. Are we confident, as was Paul, vv. 6, 8, though we as yet walk "not by sight?" V. 7. Are we sure that God will bring us the full fruition of our hopes and desires? Phil. 1, 6.

c. And if this blessed certainty is in us, there will be present an earnest and continuous longing for the approach of the blessed moment of this glorious exchange of dwellings, v. 2. We groan in this mortal body and desire that soon mortality may be swallowed up by life, v. 4b. Hymn 509, 1—4.

d. Finally, the anticipatory thought of this desirable exchange of dwellings will fill the believer's soul with comfort, joy, and peace even already here. Though we walk by faith and not by sight, v. 7; though we know not what joys await us in "Jerusalem the golden," Hymn 556, 1, we rejoice and exult in blessed anticipation of what is in store for us according to God's sure promises. Hymn 556, 3.

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