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Sermon Study on Heb.12, 18-24

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radical departure from those now generally in use and read to them § 9 of Article X from the Formula of Concord; it can resolve that every District President instruct his respective Visitors to impress upon every pastor the second and third questions of the ordination vow, which read: "Dost thou hold and profess the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as laid down in the Book of Concord of 1580 to be the true doctrine of the Holy Scriptures?" to which the answer was given: "I do so hold and profess."

"Art thou determined to discharge faithfully the duties of the holy ministry in this congregation in full accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the said Symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church?" Answer: "I have so determined by the grace of God."

More than this Synod *cannot* do. Less it *ought* not to do.

St. Paul, Minn.

F. J. SELTZ

Sermon Study on Heb. 12, 18—24

Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity — Eisenach Selections

In keeping with the general purpose of this letter the author exhorts his readers to remain steadfast in spite of all temptations to disloyalty and apostasy and to strive after patience, brotherly love, and holiness lest like Esau they sell their birthright, only to rue it too late, chap. 12, 1—17. For the New Testament covenant into which they have entered far exceeds in excellency the Old Testament covenant, vv. 18—24. If, therefore, they reject this covenant, they shall repent too late on the day when the New Testament kingdom alone remains, while all other things, those things which they preferred to the immovable kingdom, shall be removed finally and forever, vv. 25—29. Hence our text, though thoroughly didactic, serves a very practical purpose. This practical viewpoint shall determine our treatment of this beautiful passage.

Vv. 18. 19. Very vividly the author describes the unique manifestation of God's majestic holiness on Mount Sinai. So thoroughly is his mind imbued with the phraseology of the Pentateuch that he reproduces the very words which Moses uses in his various records of this awesome scene, Ex. 19; Deut. 4, 10—13; 5, 4—27. Moses had been told to sanctify the people, so that they would be ready to meet the Lord on the third day. In the early morning of that day the manifestation of God's majesty began, Ex. 19, 16. That was the signal that Israel was to appear before God, Ex. 19, 13. Hence we read: Ex. 19, 17—19; Deut. 4, 11—13. Coming out of the camp into the open, Israel saw Mount Sinai towering before them, the whole mountain burning with fire, the flames shooting up to the very heart of heaven, Deut. 4, 11 (marginal reading). And

they saw "blackness and darkness," ominous clouds, foreboding evil, threatening destruction, casting their inky shadows and sober gloom over all the landscape and into the very hearts of all the people. Ever denser grew the darkness which covered mountain and plain, illuminated only by the ghastly glare of almost incessant flashes of lightning, leaping from crag to crag, from earth to sky, and from sky back to the earth, while incessantly peals of thunder rolled, reechoing from the mountainside. The people heard the howling of the tempest, the roaring of a great hurricane. To add to their consternation, there was heard the sound of a trumpet, a trumpet-call shrill, piercing, penetrating their very marrow. It ushers in an even more awe-inspiring manifestation of God's majesty. Far above the roaring of the flames of fire, the crashing of the thunder, above the din and the tumult of the shrieking tempest, above that dreadful sound of the trumpet, there was heard a voice surpassing in strength and volume the mighty roar of the unleashed elements. Nor was it merely an inarticulate voice, a shrieking or screaming as of some wild animal. It was a *voice of words*, of connected speech, each word carrying a distinct meaning, each word clearly intelligible to them and understood by them. The phrase "voice of words" is taken from the Septuagint version of Deut. 4, 12. From Deut. 4, 13 we learn that these words were God's declaration of His covenant unto Israel, which He commanded Israel to perform, even the Ten Commandments. Cp. also Ex. 34, 28. The contents of these words were indeed of a nature to strike fear and terror, abject fright, overwhelming panic, into hearts already cowed with fear because of the mighty manifestation of God's majesty in nature. The people heard the words of God, but far from rejoicing at His message, far from desiring to hear more, they rather pleaded *that the word should not be spoken to them any more*, literally, that not should be added to them a word, *for they could not endure that which was commanded*. The very promulgation of the Law showed the utter futility of any hope of obtaining salvation on the basis of the Law. The yoke imposed upon them seemed indeed unbearable for sinful, mortal beings. Cp. Acts 15, 10. We need but read the solemn words as proclaimed from the summit of Mount Sinai, especially the awful threats of death and eternal damnation pronounced against every transgressor of these words, and we shall realize that indeed it is impossible to obtain salvation through this covenant promulgated from Sinai, that it must strike fear, terror, despair, into the heart of every human being. The unrelenting sternness of the commandments of God, the universality of their obligation, the severity of punishment which would unfailingly follow every transgression of God's will, became especially apparent from the command which

is only partly quoted by the writer of this epistle, v. 20, which really included both man and beast. Cp. Ex. 19, 12, 13. On pain of death no one dared touch the mountain beyond the barrier erected. Whether that touching had been committed in open and flagrant violation of God's will or unintentionally, unwittingly, — inexorably he was to be put to death. Even if a beast, unreasoning animal though it was, would touch the mountain, death by stoning or shooting was to be its inescapable fate. If even beasts were held responsible, how could man escape his doom? If even so slight a mistake as touching the side of a mountain was to be visited by death, what awful penalties must be in store for those who failed to confirm the words of this Law to do them! And — so terrible was the sight — Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake," v. 21. This punctuation is said to have originated with Beza and obviates the necessity of supplying "that." The Old Testament does not tell us that Moses on this occasion feared and trembled. Yet the silence of Scripture on the fear and trembling of Moses on the occasion of the giving of the Law does not warrant the assumption that the author confused the two occasions related Ex. 19 and Deut. 9, 19. He may have gained the information by direct inspiration, or he may have followed a tradition, as Stephen, Acts 7, 32, undoubtedly did. In both instances the Holy Spirit stamps these traditions as true.

Such was the nature, the revelation, the effect, of the covenant to which Israel had come, into which it had entered at Mount Sinai. For though Israel had fled in terror, though the people had pleaded with Moses that they be excused from having anything further spoken to them, vv. 19, 20; cp. Ex. 20, 19; Deut. 5, 23-27; 18, 16, yet, encouraged by Moses, Ex. 20, 20, they finally pledged allegiance to this covenant, Ex. 24, 3, 7. Undoubtedly Moses had told them of God's promise that another Prophet, with a different message, would be sent, which promise God had given to Moses at this time, Deut. 18, 15-19. Emboldened by this Gospel promise, trusting in that blood of sprinkling, Ex. 24, 6-8, which typified the blood of the New Covenant to be shed by the promised Messiah and whose cleansing power was retroactive, they entered into the covenant established by God, Heb. 9, 15. Without this promise of a better covenant, Heb. 7, 19, 22; 8, 6 ff., the Old Covenant would have held forth no hope and comfort; for it demanded perfection from men that were not, and could not be, perfect.

The apostle tells his readers that they had *not come unto the mount that might be touched*, etc. Note that the word translated "that might be touched" *ψηλαφώμενος* (literally, "is being touched," hence touchable, tangible) is the present participle, while the word "burning" is the perfect participle. Sinai still is touchable, but it

is no longer burning with fire. Most manuscripts omit "mountain." In this case it would not be permissible to translate "to a touchable and burning fire," as some do; for the fire could not be touched, cp. Ex. 19, 12 ff.; but *καί* would be like in Deut. 4, 11, which passage is evidently in the mind of the writer, the instrumental dative and the correct translation would seem to be: Ye are not come to something tangible and burning with fire. Note the absence of the articles throughout the enumeration of the particulars in which the two covenants differ, vv. 18—24. The author evidently intends to stress the *qualitative*, descriptive, characterizing force of these nouns. They did not enter a covenant which has to do with tangible, visible, material, external matters; not to a covenant characterized by such terrifying manifestations of God's majesty as accompanied the establishment of Sinai's covenant; not to a covenant which demands, and threatens, and accuses, and condemns, and points out no hope of escaping its dreadful curse except by perfect obedience to its every detail; not to a covenant which gives neither strength nor willingness to fulfil its demands, which rouses only antagonism and despair. Such is not the nature of the covenant into which the believers of the New Testament have entered, as the writer now proceeds to show.

Vv. 22—24. The author enumerates a number of glorious prerogatives and assures his readers that they *are* come to a realization of every one of them. No longer are they looking forward to their arrival at Zion; they *have* arrived in the city of God. No longer does the enjoyment of these glories lie in the dim and distant future; they *are* come into the possession and fruition of all these privileges. *Unto Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God.* These two items (note the *καί*, which in this entire passage connects the various items) denote the Church of God on earth and in heaven, which consists of the "Church of the firstborn" and "the spirits of just men made perfect," v. 23. That Church is called Mount Zion since it is the place of God's revelation; it is called Jerusalem because there God lives with His own and they with Him. Very significantly the author places "Zion" before "mount," while in the 23 passages in the Septuagint whenever the two words are combined, the order is uniformly *ὄρος Σιών*. (Vaughan, cited in *Expositor's Greek New Testament*.) The writer did not wish to call attention to the fact that both Sinai and Zion were mountains, but that there was a radical difference in the symbolical nature of these two mountains, that they had not approached a Sinai but a Zion. Not Sinai but Zion determined the character of the covenant which they had entered. Sinai represents the covenant of the Law; cp. Gal. 4, 24, 25. Zion symbolizes the covenant of the Gospel. With its two summits it formed the eastern part of Jerusa-

lem. The southern, lower, summit was called the City of David, while the higher, northern peak, also called Moriah, was the site of the Temple. Because of this Temple, Zion and Jerusalem are called the dwelling of God, Ps. 9, 11; 135, 21. Out of Zion was to come salvation, Ps. 14, 7; Rom. 11, 26; out of Zion the Lord blesses, Ps. 128, 5; out of Zion shall go forth the Law and the Word of God out of Jerusalem, Is. 2, 3; cp. Luke 24, 47. On Zion, God revealed Himself in His Temple and graciously granted reconciliation and atonement by the sacrificial blood of animals, Lev. 1, 4, 9, typifying the blood of Jesus, 1 Pet. 1, 19. To such a Zion all Christians have come. Not to that physical, material Mount Zion forming a part of visible Jerusalem; no, they are come to a Zion mount which in contrast to Sinai brought them all those privileges and honors which Sinai promised to its covenant-keepers, but which it could not bestow since there were no perfect keepers of the covenant. They have come to a Zion mount which grants all those blessings flowing from Mount Zion of old, not, however, merely in hope of a future redemption, but in the knowledge of salvation accomplished and in a measure far exceeding the fondest hopes of the believer of the Old Testament. Moreover, καί, they are come to a city in which God, the living God, the Author and Fountainhead of life and salvation, dwells in the fulness of His glorious grace, Eph. 2, 21, 22; 1 Cor. 3, 17; Rev. 21, 3. They have approached, and are now residents of, that heavenly Jerusalem, that Jerusalem which is above, Gal. 4, 26. The author adds this remark to render impossible any misunderstanding, as though after all he had in mind the visible, physical Jerusalem. He speaks of that invisible, spiritual, Heaven-born Jerusalem, the Church of God, a heaven on earth, unseen by the eye of man, yet a reality, the true, abiding, everlasting home and Father's house of all believers; a heavenly city outlasting the earthly Jerusalem; its spiritual glory even on earth transcending that of Jerusalem in the acme of its splendor; reflecting that fulness of its perfection which shall be revealed on yonder day, Rev. 21, 1 ff. No need to wait for a millennium; no need to hope and pray for that day to come when we shall pass through the gates of a visible Jerusalem on earth. That day will never come; and, thank God, we need not long for such a day. We are recipients of far greater grace and glory. We are in Zion, in Jerusalem, in the city of the living God. All those promises connected in the word of prophecy with coming to Zion and Jerusalem are being fulfilled, literally fulfilled, in that spiritual Zion, in that heavenly Jerusalem, the Church of Christ, to which we have come, whose glories, though not yet revealed in their full perfection, we now and here on this earth taste and see and enjoy.

And to an innumerable company of angels, to the general as-

sembly. The construction of these words is disputed. The Authorized Version connects the last words (to the general assembly) with "and the Church," referring both *πανηγύρει* and *καὶ ἐκκλησίᾳ* to the congregation of saints. Since, however, *καὶ* in this entire passage serves to introduce a new particular and every new member is so introduced, it would seem better to place the comma after *πανηγύρει* and begin the new member with "and the Church," etc. Others regard v. 23 a as an apposition to *angels*, v. 22. But nowhere in Scripture are angels called first-born, nor are we ever told that their names are written in heaven. Still others place the comma after *πανηγύρει* and translate "to myriads of angels, a festal assembly" or to "Myriads, an innumerable host, of angels, a festal assembly." We prefer the latter construction. *Μυριάδες* is used in exactly the same manner in the Septuagint translation of Deut. 32, 2, where only in the next clause angels are mentioned: "The Lord came from Sinai . . . with myriads to Kadesh, to the right of Him angels with Him." This passage may have been in the mind of the author. Cp. also the Septuagint translation of Dan. 7, 10, where the word *myriads* is used without any determining addition. Angels had assisted at the establishment of the first covenant, cp. Deut. 33, 2, 3; Ps. 68, 18 (the coming of God to Zion and accompanied by myriads of angels, vv. 16, 17, is compared to His coming to Sinai, v. 18); Acts 7, 53; Gal. 3, 19; Heb. 2, 2. On Sinai these myriads added to the solemnity of the occasion, though invisible to Israel (or were those fiery flames and lightnings angels? Cp. Ps. 104, 4); they were witnesses praising the majesty of God, the Lawgiver, extolling His justice and righteousness. In Zion, the New Testament Church, these myriads are a festal assembly, jubilantly proclaiming the praises of the God of salvation. The mysteries of God's salvation, into which with holy rapture they desire to look, 1 Pet. 1, 12, furnish to them the ever-recurring theme of their glad hymns of praise. Cp. Luke 2, 13, 14; Rev. 5, 11, 12; 7, 11, 12; 11, 15; 12, 10. What a blessed privilege to have come to this festal assembly of angels! What an honor that, while still living on this earth, we are in the company of heaven's angels, surrounded by those spirits from the throne of God, voicing forth His praises, Ps. 103, 20, forever beholding His face, enjoying the bliss of His presence, praising God, who has made it possible for fallen mankind to share this bliss with them, gladly ministering to them during their sojourn on earth, rejoicingly carrying their redeemed souls to heaven. To the festal company of this innumerable host are we come. What an exalted dignity!

Having raised his eyes to heaven, the writer now scans the earth and there sees other myriads of highly honored creatures to whom we are come, *the Church of the first-born which are written*

in heaven. In the Old Testament covenant the children of God were minors, Gal. 4, 1—3; in the New Testament all believers are not only come of age, Gal. 4, 4—7, they are first-born, all of them. In the Old Testament the first-born received special privileges, Ex. 13, 2, being sanctified to the Lord for the reason given Ex. 13, 15; cp. Num. 3, 12, 13. While in the Old Testament covenant such a distinction was made by God Himself, in the New Testament all the members of the Church are first-born; there is none inferior as to power and government; all are kings before God, 1 Pet. 2, 9; 1 Cor. 3, 21 ff.; Gal. 3, 28; all have equal privileges; to all belong the keys, Matt. 18, 18; John 20, 23; all have received a double portion, immeasurable bounties of God's grace and loving-kindness, John 1, 16; cp. Eph. 3, 8, 16—20; 1 Cor. 1, 5; 2 Cor. 1, 5. Their names are "written in heaven," enrolled in the books of heaven as citizens of that kingdom which fadeth not away. Their citizenship is in heaven, though they are still on earth, Phil. 3, 20; cp. Ex. 32, 32; Is. 4, 3; Phil. 4, 3; Rev. 3, 5; 13, 8; 20, 15. What God tells the whole Church, Is. 49, 14—16, is here stated of every individual. How can He neglect, how can He forsake, those whose names He Himself has enrolled in heaven? What vistas of glory open before our astonished eyes as we read these words! Cp. Rom. 8, 28—39.

To God, the Judge of all, rather, to a Judge, the God of all. Since the apostle shows in this entire passage the prerogatives of the New Testament Christians, we regard this clause also as Gospel, not Law. They have come to a Judge, the God of all; who is not a mere man, wearing away like Moses under the heavy burden of judging all men, Ex. 18, 18; not a mere man, whose knowledge is limited, whose penetration may be dulled by overwork, whose judgment may not always be correct and fair. He is God, the omniscient Searcher of hearts, who can see that faith dwelling in the hearts of His own, which makes them His children in spite of all their failings. He is the God of all, of all men, to be sure, but especially of all believers, 1 Tim. 4, 10. How often does God promise that He will be the God of His people! Gen. 17, 8; Lev. 26, 11, 12; Jer. 24, 7; 31, 33; Ezek. 11, 20; 37, 27; Zech. 8, 8. That is to be the highest privilege of the redeemed in heaven, Rev. 21, 3; the object of the believers' fervent prayer, Ex. 33, 18; Ps. 63, 1, 2; 73, 25, 26. This God is their Judge, this God who is their God, who loves them all, who has found ways and means to remain the Just One and still to justify the ungodly. Why tremble at the thought of Judgment if our Judge is that God of all who has written our names in heaven? We are come to a Judge. Already we have appeared before Him, and, lo, the Judge is none other than He who has already from eternity chosen us, who has justified us through faith, whose Word, whose judgment, whose sentence,

shall not change nor pass away, Luke 22, 33; Rom. 8, 31 ff. Why doubt His Word since so many already have entered into His presence? For we are come to *the spirits of just men made perfect*. While the Old Covenant could not make perfect, Heb. 9, 6—10; 10, 1, 11, ours is a covenant that gives perfection and has already given it to untold thousands. There are just men who are already perfected. The writer is thinking of course of all the departed saints of the Old and New Testaments. While on earth, they were righteous, just, *δίκαιοι*, such as they ought to be, accepted by God as fulfillers of His Law, for Christ's sake (Is. 45, 24) of course. No longer are they in this world; they are spirits, their bodies decaying, perhaps long decayed. Yet they have lost nothing; they have only gained, Phil. 1, 21. Having departed in peace, Luke 2, 29, they are now with Christ, Phil. 1, 23, in perfection, their souls are enjoying that perfection of bliss which shall be granted to their bodies also on the day of resurrection, Rev. 14, 13. To these spirits the believers have come; for the Church of God is the communion of saints on earth and in heaven. Hymn 463. Believers are one body, one soul, and one spirit with the just men made perfect. Why should any doubt of their own ultimate salvation harass them? From the dust of the earth, from its temptations and vexations, lift up your eyes and behold the spirits of perfected ones. Like you they were flesh and blood, like you subject to the same trials. They have arrived at the place of perfection, Rev. 7, 14—17. Take courage. Remain faithful, Rom. 8, 35—37. Hymn 335. Cling to Him to whom they clung, on whose account they were adjudged righteous, by whose almighty grace they were perfected. To Him and to His blood the writer finally calls the attention of his readers in a fitting climax.

And to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of the sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel, v. 24. We shall follow the order of the Greek text. "Of a covenant." *Διαθήκη* means properly an arrangement, a disposition of any matter, used of the last disposition of one's affairs in his testament; so Gal. 3, 15. Then it is used of any covenant or compact, so of the Old Testament covenant about 280 times in the Septuagint in translation of *בְּרִית*. In Heb. 9, 15—17 these two meanings of the word are evidently combined, this passage showing how suitable the word *διαθήκη* is for the idea to be expressed, the covenant of God made with His people in the Old and New Testaments. It is a covenant resting on promises which would come into effect at the death of the Testator, Jesus Christ. Already the spiritual covenant of the Old Testament was based on this death, typified by the sacrifices slain at its establishment, Ex. 24, 3 ff.

Of a new covenant, νέας, not, as 8, 8, 13; 9, 15, καινῆς. In dis-

inction from *καινός*, which refers especially to quality, *νέος* refers to time, the more recent, the later, more recently established covenant, which naturally must be a better one; else why should the first be revoked?

Of a new covenant a Mediator, *μεσίτης*, a go-between, an arbitrator, one who endeavors to effect an agreement between two parties, to make or restore peace and good will between them. The Old Testament also had its mediator, Moses, the man of God, a man unique in the history of Israel, Deut. 34, 10. Cp. his call, Ex. 3; his close communion with God, Ex. 33, 11; Num. 12, 6, 8; his shining face, Ex. 34, 29. He was the greatest of all prophets, Deut. 18, 15 ff.; 34, 10; the deliverer of his people, Ex. 3—15; a man who dearly loved his people, who would rather be stricken out of the Book of Life than be saved without his people, Ex. 32, 32; cp. his fervent pleas throughout, Ex. 32—34. Yet, after all, Moses was a mere man, sinful, who because of his transgression was not permitted to enter the Promised Land. We have in the New Testament a better Mediator, *Jesus*, whose very name signifies that He is what Moses never could be, a Savior, Matt. 1, 21; Luke 2, 21; whose superiority to Moses and Aaron and even to the angels the author had so clearly and convincingly set forth in the opening chapters; who can save because He is the Son of God. This Mediator does not merely arrange the conditions on the basis of which God and man may come to an agreement; He does not merely by word and example teach man the most efficient manner of reconciling God. He establishes the covenant by *the blood of sprinkling*. Also the Old Covenant was established by blood, Heb. 9, 18; Ex. 24, 4—8; and during the entire period of the Old Covenant much blood was shed. And that was the blood of sprinkling, the blood being sprinkled or poured against the altar or on the Great Day of Atonement against the Ark of the Covenant. In many instances the blood was also sprinkled upon the sacrificing people or individual, Ex. 24. Through such sprinkling of sacrificial blood a union between God and man was effected, a union, however, not spiritual, but altogether external, ceremonial, ritual. The blood cleansed the Israelite from ceremonial defilement, which excluded from outward communion with God and participation in His worship; it pronounced him once more a member in good standing with that civic commonwealth, the people of Israel, to whom God had revealed Himself. Cp. Heb. 9, 13. In itself it could not effect a spiritual cleansing, Heb. 9, 9. That was possible only because this sacrificial blood was also a prefiguration, a type, of the blood to be shed by the Son of God. Hence only to the believing Israelite was the sprinkling of blood of any spiritual value, and since it was only typical, it had to be repeated time and again, Heb. 10, 1—4. 11. Not

to such a blood of sprinkling, ceremonial, ritual, typical, symbolic, have we come. We are come to a blood *that speaketh better things than Abel*. One would naturally expect the writer to continue, of far greater value than that of beasts. But another comparison occurs to the author. He had stated 11, 4 that Abel still spoke. Even after death the blood of Abel cried out to Him in whose sight the blood of His saints is precious, Ps. 72, 14; 116, 15; cf. Rev. 6, 9. 10. That, however, was a cry for vengeance, a cry that God heard, that brought down upon Cain that truly awful curse, Gen. 4, 10—12. Like Abel the Law of Sinai cries to God for vengeance against all who break it; and like Abel's voice the cry of the Law is heard by the Judge of the living and the dead. Yet even as He is getting ready to punish the evil-doer, there is heard the sound of another voice, speaking better things than Abel. Better, *καίριον*, more serviceable, more useful, more excellent. This blood cries not from the earth; its voice is heard in heaven. It is the blood of *sprinkling*, which our High Priest sprinkles to Godward, having entered into the Holy Place by and with His blood, thus humanly speaking, bringing it into closest proximity to God, holding it up before His very eyes as it cries for mercy, as it pleads for forgiveness for those whose sins it has atoned. On the basis of this crying blood of Jesus, God is reconciled to the world, 2 Cor. 5, 19. Though we daily sin, daily this blood intercedes for us, Heb. 7, 25; 9, 24; 1 John 2, 1 ff. Nor is this the only place where the blood of sprinkling speaks excellent things. The blood of sacrifice was sprinkled also upon the Israelite, attaching itself to his person. Similarly the blood of Abel attached itself to Cain, dogging his footsteps, accusing, threatening, tormenting his conscience, giving him no rest, no peace of conscience. The blood of sprinkling, Jesus' blood, attaches itself to us also, yet for a better purpose, to speak peace to our wounded conscience, to purge it from evil works, Heb. 9, 14. No matter how loudly the conscience cries out against us, this blood silences it because it speaks of, and applies to the wounded, outraged conscience, that righteousness which this blood has procured for all mankind, that perfection which satisfies all demands of conscience and sets it completely at rest and peace. This blood also speaks of that strength which Jesus supplies to all that are His, enabling the conscience to serve God in good works, Heb. 9, 14; this blood accompanies the Christian on his way through life, supplying all His spiritual needs; this blood is the garment in which he stands before the throne of Judgment, which opens to him the portals of heaven. One need but look up the references to the blood of Jesus in any concordance, and one will be convinced that indeed a union, spiritual, close, intimate, eternal, between God and the sinner is effected by

this blood of sprinkling to which we are come. Naturally the sprinkling of this blood, its appropriation to the individual, is effected by means of the Gospel, the audible and visible Word. The author himself refers to Baptism as a means of grace, a means whereby the blood is sprinkled upon our hearts, Heb. 10, 22. He speaks repeatedly of the Word of God as the means of attaining salvation, chap. 2, 1—4; 3, 7. 8; 4, 2. 12. In fact, the enumeration of the many prerogatives granted by the New Covenant serves merely to motivate effectively and efficaciously his admonition to "refuse not Him that speaketh," v. 25, implying very clearly the power of this Word to grant to all who believe all the rights and privileges enumerated. That the Lord's Supper appropriates to us this precious blood is self-evident, Matt. 26, 27. 28. Diligent use of the means of grace is the only and the efficacious means of becoming and remaining partakers of the manifold grace of God displayed in His kingdom on earth and in heaven.

Homiletical Hints. This passage contrasts the two covenants of God, the latter surpassing in glory the former. *God's Glory as Revealed in His Two Covenants.* 1. The great glory of the first; 2. the greater glory of the second. — Or one may speak on *The Greater Glory of the New Testament.* 1. It is not the fleeting shadow but the abiding reality. 2. It is not the terrifying revelation of God's justice, but a saving and perfecting manifestation of God's grace. — Millennialists speak of a visible coming to Jerusalem, etc. The author of Hebrews speaks of a present enjoyment of this privilege. *The Blessed Lot of Every Believer.* 1. He is come to God's city, vv. 22 a. 23 b. 2. He has round about him exalted companions (angels, first-born, perfected spirits). 3. He has Jesus and His blood. — *The Prerogative of Every Believer.* He is come unto Mount Zion, to an innumerable host of angels, to the Church of the first-born, the spirits perfected, to God the Judge, to Jesus and His blood. Each one of these parts could well be expanded into a sermon and the theme made the subject of the series. — Since the purpose of this description is hortatory, one may make v. 25 a one's theme: *See that Ye Refuse Not Him that Speaketh.* 1. For ye are not come to Mount Sinai. 2. Ye are come to Mount Zion. — Or one may on the basis of vv. 22—24 exhort: *Look Diligently lest You Fail of the Grace of God.* (V. 15.) 1. Would you cast away your exalted citizenship (Zion, city of the living God, v. 22, who is Judge, v. 23)? 2. Would you forsake your noble companions (angels, Church of the first-born, spirits made perfect)? 3. Would you spurn Jesus and His blood?

TH. LAETSCH