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Sermon Study on 1 Pet. 1:17-25

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Weisheit messen können und wird Moses im Besitz des prophetischen Geistes nahekommen. Er wird die Menschheit hier auf dieser Erde erlösen, nicht wie der christliche Messias, der die Menschheit von dem Schicksal der zukünftigen Welt erlösen will. Ein messianischer Gedanke, der in der christlichen Theologie betont wird, ist die stellvertretende und erlösende Kraft des Heilandes. In der hebräischen Auffassung ist dieser Gedanke gänzlich abwesend. Es wird erwartet, daß der Messias einen großen politischen und geistlichen Dienst verrichten wird. Aber seine einzigartigen Vorzüge werden nicht die Erlösung Israels oder der Menschheit von ihrem gegenwärtigen Schuldbestand bewirken. Die Menschen müssen durch ihre eigenen Anstrengungen die Unschuld und die Belohnungen der messianischen Ära gewinnen." (S. 309.)

Wie überaus traurig! Das klare Wort Gottes wird beiseitegesetzt, das ganze Neue Testament, selbst in seinen rein geschichtlichen Teilen, einfach ignoriert. Die messianischen Ideen der jüdischen Rabbiner sind, schon allein auf Grund des Alten Testaments, völlig ungenügend. Die chiliastischen Träume sind gänzlich unhaltbar. Und dabei dieser traurige Zustand der Selbstgerechtigkeit, des Verlassens auf eigenes Tun! Wollte doch Gott diesen blinden Juden und allen, die ihre Anschauungsweise teilen, die Augen öffnen, so daß diejenigen unter ihnen, die zu seinen Auserwählten gehören, den Weg des Friedens durch Jesum Christum kennenlernen! Wir aber wollen, auch wieder in der diesjährigen Passionszeit, mit dem Evangelisten des Alten Testaments in seinem 53. Kapitel unter das Kreuz auf Golgatha treten und uns der stellvertretenden Genugtuung unsers Heilandes trösten, damit wir werden in ihm die Gerechtigkeit, die vor Gott gilt.

P. E. F r e s m a n n

Sermon Study on 1 Pet. 1:17-25

Eisenach Epistle for the Fifth Sunday in Lent, Judica

The lively hope for an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away was the theme of Peter's hymn of thanksgiving to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in chap. 1:1-12. Hard upon its joyous tones follows the sterner strain of an urgent exhortation to holy living appropriate to heirs of that salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. The passage before us is part of this admonition. Here, besides the ever-recurrent key-note of hope, the apostle strikes other keys in his endeavor to make his hearers able and willing to sanctify themselves. He touches upon the fatherhood of God, His judgment, the redemption of Christ, the regeneration by the Holy Ghost through the abiding Word of God. May this masterpiece of heaven-born music stir up the hearts of all who are privileged to hear its wondrous melodies and fill our souls with hope and gratitude and love toward God and man!

And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear, v. 17. "If ye call on the Father," rather, if ye invoke as Father. The absence of the article before "Father" stresses the character of God as Father; cp. Ps. 103:13; Luke 11:11; John 6:39; 16:27. God is indeed a Father. His Son has procured for all believers the precious right to call Him by that comforting name, John 1:12-14; 14:6; 20:17; He has taught, yea, commanded us, to call Him Father, Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:2 (two different occasions); and for this purpose has sent His Spirit, Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6. There is no believing child of God who will not obey the will of his Savior and make use of his right to call God "Abba, Father," 1 John 3:1. Yet the Father is not a father in the sense of the Modernists, a father who is all love and nothing more, a father who like Eli of old will barely frown upon his disobedient children, will not think of punishing them, least of all of damning them forever. He is a Father "who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work." Note the present participle, is judging. God is not a judge in name only nor a judge who takes an occasional vacation nor a judge only for such as openly reject His authority, whereas His children need not fear His judgment. Though He is to us a Father, He is at the same time continually, unceasingly judging; for He is at all times the Holy One, vv. 15, 16, evermore hating sin, always rendering His opinion, pronouncing judgment, condemning all that is sinful. And He does that "without respect of persons." God is not a respecter of persons, Jas. 2:1, 9; Rom. 2:11; Col. 3:25. That is the lesson which He Himself taught Peter, Acts 10:10-28, 34, a truth which, however, Peter nevertheless temporarily forgot, Gal. 2:11 ff.; a truth, simple and self-evident though it is, must be preached to every child of God time and again lest he forget or disregard it or fail to apply it to himself. Sin is no less sin when committed by a child of God than when it is done by an unbeliever. Sin is no less displeasing to the heavenly Father when His Christians become guilty of it than it is offensive to the Judge of all mankind when a wicked person is the culprit. Sin in any form and from any source is hateful to God, Rom. 2:1-29. God is indeed a loving Father to His children, but a Father who looks for obedience in His children, who has called them for the very purpose that they be holy, vv. 14, 15, and who is no respecter of persons, judging "according to every man's work." The singular denotes one's entire life-work, the work we are building up day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute; that work which consists of innumerable single acts, words, thoughts, each one either the fruit of the Spirit, the work of the new man or the product of the flesh, the outgrowth of that sinful depravity

which rules natural man, which still seeks to maintain its dominion over the child of God. Does the Christian's work show that he is growing in faith, in love, in sanctification, and in holiness? Or does his life-work bear the marks of indifference, of an easy-going, half-hearted, self-satisfied Christianity, to which Prov. 24:33 applies? God judges, is judging, the work of His children now and will judge it on that Day.

Therefore "pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." Pass, ἀναστράφητε, to turn hither and thither, to wend one's way, to walk, to conduct, deport oneself. Παροικία, a dwelling alongside of, used in the New Testament in the sense of living in a strange country, a sojourning. Though we are the Father's children, we are not yet in the Father's home; we are still on the way, pilgrims, strangers in this world; cp. 1:1; 2:11; John 17:11, 14, 15; Heb. 13:14. This journey may seem a long one, a tedious one; yet it is a sojourning in *time*. Even in point of duration it is not to be compared with that eternity of dwelling in our true home yonder, 1:3-12. Yet there is constant danger of doing something in this time of sojourning that may make it impossible to arrive at the goal, something contrary to the will of the Father, something that may cause one's feet to stray from the narrow path, that may cause the Father to judge, to pass the sentence of condemnation upon, the wayward pilgrim. Therefore walk *in fear* all the days of your pilgrimage, fearing to rouse your Father's displeasure, dreading to call forth your Judge's sentence of death, Phil. 2:12. Yet, lest this fear become a slavish fear, driving you away from God, filling your heart with enmity and hatred toward God and unwillingness to do His will, it should at all times be mingled with fervent love of Him who is ever your Father. The Father, your Judge, — fear Him and do not sin. The Judge, your Father, — love Him and do His will. Ps. 2:11, 12 applies not only to the kings of the earth, but to all children of God as well. Peter is a faithful pastor, an experienced *Seelsorger*, understanding rightly to divide the Word of Truth, preaching and applying both Law and Gospel effectively.

In order to exhort his readers and enable them to practise willing obedience, Peter adds another powerful motive for true, unceasing sanctification and at the same time answers a question that might come to us, namely, how it is possible that God can be Father and Judge or Judge and Father at the same time. *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in*

God, that raised Him up from the dead and gave Him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God, vv. 18-21. This is one of the most precious gems in the Bible, worthy to be inscribed in letters of gold in the homes of all Christians, even as they are written indelibly in their hearts and souls. "Forasmuch as ye know," knowing, εἰδότες. The Christian religion is not a matter of conjecture; it is knowledge, certainty. Εἰδέναι means "to see with the mind's eye." God has opened and enlightened the eyes of their understanding; cp. Acts 26:18; Eph. 1:18; 2 Cor. 4:4, 6; Heb. 11:1. "Ye were redeemed," that is the blessed fact of which the apostle reminds his readers in order to make them willing and able to lead that life of holiness which is the object of his admonition in vv. 13-17. For that reason he is not satisfied with merely reminding them of their redemption. He takes occasion to enlarge upon this fundamental doctrine of Christianity by recalling to them the state from which they were ransomed, the price paid for their ransom, the decree on which this ransom rests, the revelation of this ransom for their salvation, the blessed result of this ransom, the infallible certainty of the sufficiency of the ransom, — all in order to lend force to his admonition unto sanctification. And where is there a child of God that can harden his heart against the cumulative power of this wonderful message, that can withstand its appeal, that will not now gain new strength, new inspiration, new joyous willingness to lead a life of holiness?

Let us look a little more closely at the various items enumerated by Peter in his description of our redemption. Ye were *redeemed*. Αὐτόσω (from λύω, to loose, to release), in New Testament usage means to loose or deliver by means of a ransom. In our passage the idea of ransom is brought out very clearly also in the context, the ransom-price being described both negatively and positively. Deliverance by a ransom presupposes imprisonment, captivity, bondage. And a hopeless slavery indeed it was from which we were redeemed. Ye were redeemed "from," ἐκ, out of, "your vain conversation." All readers were redeemed, hence all were at one time in bondage. Conversation here in its archaic usage of deportment, conduct, behavior, is the *conversatio* of the Vulgate, literally a turning about; hence a literal translation of the Greek word. See remarks on v. 17. The noun is found 13 times in the New Testament, three times in Paul's epistles, once each in Hebrews and James, eight times in Peter's epistles. It denotes the conduct as based on certain principles, either good or evil, the outer manifestation of the inner holiness, 1 Pet. 1:15; the visible evidence, 2:12, that Christians are indeed a holy nation, 2:9; the manner in which the hidden man of the heart reveals its presence and influence, 3:1-4. Used of the unbeliever, it describes a manner

of life determined, ruled, governed, by the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, Eph. 4, 22. The term *conversation* therefore is limited neither to the innate depravity nor to its outward expression. While stressing the outward conduct, it denotes conduct as flowing from an inner source. In our passage it designates the old man, the Old Adam, sinful depravity in its totality, comprising the tree and its fruit, original and actual lust, evil desires, depraved inclinations, sinful words, wicked deeds. It denotes that conduct of natural man of which Paul paints so gruesome a picture, both as to its manifestations and as to its hidden well-springs, in Rom. 1:18-32. Cp. also Eph. 2:1-3 (note ἀνεστράφημεν, v. 3); Titus 3:3.

Peter calls this conversation "vain," ματαιία, empty, hollow, "devoid of force, truth, success, result," as Thayer puts it. The LXX uses the noun ματαιότης in its translation of Eccl. 1:1, Vanity of vanities. Our conversation by nature is devoid of force, truth. It is a manner of life that is not worthy of the name of life. It is not life in its reality, not life in the sense in which man became a living soul, Gen. 2:7. Ever since man ate of that forbidden tree, life from its very beginnings has had in it the germ of death, Gen. 2:17 b. "*Der Wurm sass drin!*" Ps. 39:4-6. Delitzsch translates vv. 5 b, 6 a: "Only a mere breath is every man, however firm he may stand. Only as a shadow does man wander to and fro. Only for a breath do they make an uproar." The life of natural man is a conversation without Christ, without God, Eph. 2:12, and is therefore *eo ipso* opposed to God, enmity against God; a conversation whose very joys and pleasures are hollow, empty, promising happiness, yet never fulfilling their promises, surfeiting, nauseating, never satisfying the soul. And its sorrows, without Christ, without God, without hope, lead to despair, insanity, suicide. If man has spent his allotted threescore years and ten of this vain conversation called life, if by reason of strength he has reached or even surpassed fourscore years, then, looking back, all, all, is labor and sorrow, and, looking forward, all, all, is hopeless, vain. The result of his conversation? An eternity of vanities! An eternity over the portals of which is inscribed in letters of fire "All hope abandon, ye who enter here." An eternity, where they shall be consumed by the wrath of God and be troubled by His anger, Ps. 90:7. And while here their days were passed away and spent as a tale that is told and finally ended, there shall be no passing away, no ending of days, no finishing of that tale that they wish had never been told. Vain conversation, empty manner of life, vanity of vanities!

This vain conversation, says Peter, was "received by tradition from your fathers," πατροπαράδοτου, delivered by fathers. That is the sad gift which every father hands to his every offspring at the

moment of conception, Ps. 51:5; John 3:6; Rom. 7:18. Man has no choice in this matter. By his very nature the only manner of life possible to him is one of vanity, emptiness. This "conversation" is a cruel tyrant from whose rule no one can escape. Man may change his language, his country, his customs, his fashions. We ride in Pullmans and aeroplanes, whereas our fathers walked or rode horseback or in ox-carts. We speak over the telephone, send messages by telegraph, flash the news by radio, whereas our fathers had to wait weary hours, days, months, before the anxiously expected message reached them. Yet the vain conversation received by tradition from the fathers remains ever vain, void of truth. Its joys remain just as hollow, its sorrows just as comfortless, and its end is just as hopeless as ever, no matter what the outer circumstances may be. Its sinfulness, its guilt, its hollowness, its godlessness, its hopelessness, its cruel, tyrannical rule, cannot be changed, nor — and that is the supreme vanity of man's vain conversation — does man desire to change it. So completely has it permeated his entire nature, so absolutely does it govern his mind and heart and soul, that he loves his bondage, hugs his chains, wilfully, purposely, sets all his faculties in opposition to God, wilfully makes of his life, which might have been filled with joy and beauty and God, an empty shell from which the kernel has been thrown out, a corpse, from which the spirit, the soul, has flown. Vanities of vanities!

From this vain conversation ye were redeemed, ransomed, "not with corruptible things, as silver and gold." Impossible to ransom from vanities by vanities, by corruptible things, which, though they be ever so highly prized by men, are mere baubles in the sight of God. One soul is more valuable than all the silver and gold, than all the world, Mark 8:36,37; cp. Ps. 50:7-13; Micah 6:6. The ransom-price paid for lost and condemned souls could not be anything corruptible; it had to be something more precious. And so it is. Ye were redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." Αἷματι is to be connected with Χριστοῦ, and the phrase "as of a Lamb," etc., is in apposition to "Christ." We were ransomed by the blood of Christ. As there is no forgiveness, Heb. 9:22, so there is no redemption, without the shedding of blood. Cp. Col. 1:14; Eph. 1:7. Christ's blood is indeed a precious τίμιον, blood, not only because it is held in such high esteem by all His followers, but because it is in itself of inestimable value and because it has so blessed an effect. It is *the blood of Christ*, the Messiah, the Savior promised and appointed by God Himself. It is the blood "as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." These terms remind every reader of the rite of sacrifice, which prescribed that a spotless, immaculate lamb be

slain in the place of the sinner, Lev. 1:2-13; 22:19-25; Is. 53:6,7. Theirs was corruptible, vain blood, unable to take away sin, Heb. 10:4. Christ's blood, precious, valuable, could be offered in our place because He, as the Holy One born of Mary, Luke 1:35, knew no sin. This spotless Lamb shed His blood, which is the seat of life, Lev. 17:11, 14; Deut. 12:23, and thus laid down His life for man, who had forfeited his life because of his vain conversation. Being sinless, without blemish and without spot, in His nature and person, He was sinless also in all His actions, in His conduct, His conversation, and thereby broke the rule of the vain conversation delivered by the fathers to their offspring. And since He was that Christ of whom Peter had confessed that He was the Son of the living God, Matt. 16:16; John 6:69; 1 Pet. 1:2, 3, 11; 2 Pet. 1:1, His blood and His holy life was a ransom sufficient to buy back all men from the guilt, the penalty, the power, and the dominion of sin, 1 John 2:2.

The sufficiency of this ransom is further evidenced by the fact that "He verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world," v. 20. The redemption of Christ was not a work undertaken at haphazard, on the spur of the moment, on His own initiative only. It was the outcome of an eternal decree of the Triune God. Before the foundation of the world, Ps. 90:1, in timeless eternity, God had foreknown this Christ as the Lamb to ransom mankind. Προεγνωσμένου, not merely foreseen, but foreknown. Keil: "The redemption of mankind was decreed in the loving counsel of God before the foundation of the world, that is, in premundane eternity; and in this decree God did not only recognize Christ as Him who would by His manifestation in the world redeem fallen mankind, but He made Him also as such the object of His affectionate knowledge, His love." Already in eternity Christ was foreknown, lovingly chosen, foreordained, to be what He actually became by His manifestation in the flesh. "But was manifest." Φανερωθέντος; receives its color from the contrast to foreknown, hence is not to be taken in the sense of "revealed by the preaching of the Gospel," but manifested as the Lamb of God by His appearance in the world in order to carry out the divine decree of redemption. The same Christ who was in eternity the object of God's loving knowledge was manifested as such "in these last times," a standing designation of the New Testament times. Hence the word *manifest* involves the preexistence of Christ. Our Redeemer is the eternal God, who with His Father and the Holy Spirit determined upon the decree of redemption through His blood, 1 John 1:7. Can there be any doubt as to the validity of His ransom to obtain for us an eternal redemption? Heb. 9:12. Here is not vanity, not corruption; here is reality, eternal, infinite value. Precious blood shed for our ransom!

For you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God, v. 21. "For you." Christ was manifested as the Redeemer of all men; but since unbelief rejects the ransom of Christ, it is of no profit to the children of unbelief. Only faith grasps Christ and His ransom, His work of redemption; only faith obtains the blessed fruit of the labors of the Redeemer; and so in a particular manner Christ was manifested for them, for their eternal welfare. You "do believe," are believers, have come to saving faith, are in possession of the ransoming blood, partake of all its blessings. You are no longer guilty sinners; for your Redeemer, the spotless Son of God, has taken your guilt upon Himself and paid every penny of your debt. You are no longer subject to punishment; for Christ has shed His blood for you, suffered your penalty in full. You are no longer slaves of sin and Satan, doing the will of God's arch-enemy; you are ransomed from their dread power, delivered from their dominion; you are free, loving, beloved children of God. You are believers in the precious blood of the Lamb, blessed in time and eternity.

This faith is not of the believers' own making, they have come to saving faith not on their own initiative; they owe their faith, as they owe their redemption, alone to grace, alone to Christ. They are believers "by Him," δι' αὐτοῦ, through Him. Christ alone has made their faith possible. Without His ransom there would be no possibility of saving faith, no occasion for it, no ground on which it could stand safe and sure. All around there would be nothing but sinking sand, treacherous bogs, vanities. Not satisfied with having furnished a safe foundation for their faith, Christ Himself wrought faith in them, since they could never have come to Him by their own power, Eph. 2:1-10. Christ is in every sense of the word the Author of faith, Heb. 12:2. They believe "in God," εἰς, toward God, the true God revealed in Jesus Christ as their reconciled Father. The goal of faith is God, toward whom faith is constantly reaching out its arms, whom it embraces ever the more closely, with whom it becomes ever the more intimately united.

Moreover, the believers need not harbor the slightest fear that their faith will be doomed to disappointment. That faith which Christ has wrought, which rests on the firm foundation of His ransom, is a faith in God, "who has raised Him up from the dead and gave Him glory," who by His exaltation of Christ has placed the stamp of His approval on the work of redemption of His Son, proclaiming His ransom an all-sufficient one and admitting into the fulness of His glory Him who came as the Representative and Forerunner of all who would follow Him in faith. God's exaltation of His Son was the fulfilment of Christ's request in John 17:20-24. All this for the

purpose "that your faith and hope might be in God," toward God. Again the apostle calls attention to the fact that God is the aim and object of the Christians' faith. And to what lengths did God go in order to accomplish that purpose! In order that our faith and hope be in God, there was God's eternal decree of redemption, there was the manifestation of Christ as our Ransom, there was the shedding of His precious blood, there was the engendering of our faith by Christ Himself. In addition to all this there was the exaltation and glorification of Christ by the Father — all for us; all, in order that we might with all boldness and confidence come to Him and ask Him as dear children ask their dear father; all, in order that our faith and hope might not be the vague, uncertain, fruitless belief of a heathen in his idols, in that which is not God, which is vanity, Deut. 32:21; Ps. 115:4-8, but that it might be faith, certainty, trust, reliance on the true God, the Father of Jesus Christ; all, in order that our hope might not be like a beautiful *mirage*, rousing high expectations, but just as surely dashing them to the ground, ending in disappointment and despair, but a hope which maketh not ashamed, a hope based on the immovable Rock, the Rock of Ages, the Rock of our salvation through the blood of Christ, Rom. 8:29-39; 2 Tim. 1:12; Job 19:25-27. All this "ye know," v.18. Shall you, then, not pass the time of your sojourning here in fear, v.17, lest you lose these precious promises? "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Heb. 2:3.

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently, v. 22. The apostle continues his admonition, urging them to prove their sonship by brotherly love. We prefer to regard the participial clause "having purified," etc., as a motive for, not as a part of, the admonition. "Having purified your souls." An act of purification has set in, a cleansing of their souls from every fault, a sweeping out of all that was impure and unclean. This purification is described as an act performed by the Christians, as an act in the past. When and how did this cleansing occur? The apostle says "in obeying the truth," in obedience to the truth. Whether we take *év* in the sense of "in the sphere of" or as the instrumental *év* does not materially change the sense, as we shall see. The truth of which Peter speaks is that precious truth described in vv. 18-21. To this message of truth they had become obedient, they no longer opposed it, resisted it, Rom. 2:8; 8:7; 1 Pet. 4:17, no longer regarded it as foolishness, 1 Cor. 1:23; 2:14; they accepted it, believed it by the almighty power of their Redeemer, v. 21. Having entered the sphere of obedience of truth, of faith in the Gospel, of trust in Christ, they at once through, by means of, this faith purified their souls. This faith, rather Christ,

whose ransom they had accepted, who granted to them through faith deliverance from the power of sin, thereby gave them the power to purify themselves, so that for the first time their soul, their inner life, brought forth clean, pure, Christ-centered, God-directed thoughts and desires, something utterly impossible in their former conversation.

The perfect ἡγνικότες does not denote that this cleansing has been done once for all. The first purification has been finished, that is a thing of the past; but the state of purification still continued. Robertson speaks of the punctiliar, durative perfect, "where the completed act is followed by a state of greater or less duration" (*Grammar*, first ed., p. 895). As a house needs not only the first sweeping, but continued cleansing, so the house of our heart must be cleansed daily lest it again become a cesspool of iniquity. This is done "through the Spirit," the Holy Ghost, shed into our hearts by Christ. Though these words are omitted in most manuscripts, they express a truth taught elsewhere, 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Thess. 2:13. This was and is a purification "unto unfeigned love of the brethren." Being children of God, loving Him as their Father, Christians will naturally take an interest in all the children of God, their brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, become attached to them in a brotherly love that is unfeigned, not simulated, not hypocritical. The ὑποκρίτης was the actor, the stage-player, who often voiced sentiments foreign to his convictions, whose love was often mere stage-play. Christians have purified their hearts. Hypocrisy, simulation, they abhor. In obedience to truth they have become truthful and strive to be truthful, unfeigned also in their brotherly love. Now, if they have purified their souls with such love in view, they should reach out toward their goal, "see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." Do not only theorize, do not waste time by pronouncing brilliant eulogies on the beauty of brotherly love. Practise what you preach, reduce your purpose to action, come down to realities, love one another, with, ἐκ, out of, a pure heart. Let your love flow from a clean heart, purified by faith from all selfishness, from all respect of persons, Jas. 2:1-9. Let it be a love that loves the brother because he is a brother, irrespective of his station in life and society; a love like unto that of your God, whose children, of your Savior, whose brethren, you have become. Neither let your brotherly love be like a brush-fire, a fire of thorns burning fiercely for a little while, but dying out completely almost as quickly as it has burst into flame. Love rather fervently, ἐκτενωῶς, stretched out; love intently, assiduously, persistently. Let it remain pure love, fervent affection despite all provocations, irrespective of the peculiarities of the brother, his shortcomings, his annoying habits and customs, over-

looking all his failings and seeing in him only the brother, the child of God.

But Peter adds still more reasons for such "continuous intensity of love," as Luther calls it; rather, he elaborates what was briefly indicated before. He had already called attention to the regeneration of his readers in v. 3, to their resultant sonship, vv. 14, 17; to their faith, their obedience to the truth, vv. 21, 22, implying regeneration. Now he expatiates on this thought, bringing out in particular the incorruptible means of regeneration in startling contrast to the vanities the world can offer. *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever*, v. 23. The apostle contrasts the natural birth, the first birth of man, with the spiritual birth, his second birth, the regeneration which every Christian has experienced. Natural birth is brought about by *corruptible seed*. Man is flesh, sinful, mortal, and his seed is sinful, corruptible, mortal seed, unable to produce life in its perfection. All it can do is to bring forth men doomed to a vain conversation, ending finally in everlasting death and damnation. Regeneration, whereby man is made a child of God, endowed with spiritual life, an heir of eternal life, this birth can impossibly be produced by corruptible seed, John 1:12, 13; 3:3, 5, 6. This second birth requires an incorruptible seed, such as the Word of God is. Some interpreters translate: "the Word of the living and abiding God." We prefer the translation of Luther and the Authorized Version. The contrast is between perishable and imperishable seed; and the seed is not God but the Word. Moreover, in the passage quoted from Isaiah the living and abiding qualities of the Word are stressed. The Word of God, unlike the word of man, is a living, enduring, abiding Word. And this Word is not the personal Word of John 1; it is a word which is preached, proclaimed, in the form of glad tidings, v. 25, the Gospel. Being the Word of God, it partakes of divine qualities, John 6:63. It is imbued with life and power. One need only think of those majestic words spoken in the days of creation, by the power of which heaven and earth were brought forth and by whose almighty, enduring, abiding power they are conserved and enabled to function properly to this day. What marvelous changes impossible to man has the Word of God which is preached to us as Gospel wrought! Saul was transformed by this Word in a brief moment from a persecutor to an obedient child of God. Untold millions of Christians throughout the ages, children of God in the New and the Old Testament, bear witness to its life-giving, life-preserving, comforting, sustaining power. Says Luther: "God sends forth His Word, the Gospel, and lets the seed fall into the heart of man. Wherever that enters the heart, the Holy Spirit is present and

makes a new man. There an altogether different man comes into existence, different thoughts, different words and deeds. Thus you are completely transformed. All that you have formerly fled you now seek, and what you formerly had sought you now flee. In natural birth the seed received is changed, so that it no longer is seed; but this is a seed that cannot be changed, that endures forever. But it changes me, so that I am transformed into it, and whatever is evil in me by nature disappears altogether. Therefore it is indeed a miraculous birth and a strange seed." (St. L., IX, 1003.) This power the Word of God will retain until the end of time. As the means of our redemption was incorruptible, so the means of our regeneration is imperishable. To the end of time it will regenerate, sanctify, purify, preserve, bring to eternal salvation poor, lost, condemned sinners. **Marvelous!**

Only the Word of God can produce this marvelous change, the regeneration of man. *For all flesh is as grass and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the Word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you,* vv. 24, 25. The apostle quotes Is. 40:6, 8. All flesh, all mankind, every offspring of Adam, all are as grass, weak, corruptible, perishing, unstable, Job 14:1, 2; Ps. 90:5, 6; 103:15, 16. And all its glory, all that flesh boasts of, its mighty works, its pride of life, its righteousness, its pleasures and gaieties, all that flesh holds in so high an esteem that it willingly sacrifices for it the imperishable gifts of divine grace, all is as "the flower of grass," often falling away before the grass withers, and follows its flower to the inexorable grave. Stoeckhardt quotes Fronmueller: "The flesh also has a glory of its own, its flower. It clothes itself in forms of beauty, of wisdom, of nobility, of patriotism, even of holiness. It develops forms of government, art, and science, philosophic systems and religious schools, in so far as they are not permeated by the Spirit of God. For that reason they wither so fast, even faster than they came into blossom." Again we exclaim, **Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!**

Thank God, *the Word of the Lord*, that Word which is proclaimed to us as good tidings of great joy, εὐαγγελισθέν, this Word of God *endureth*, abideth (same word as v. 23) *forever*. It endures as long as the world endures; yes, it outlasts time, it remains unchanged in eternity, Matt. 24:35. **Precious Word!** This is the imperishable Word of Truth by which you have been regenerated. This is the Word into whose nature you have been changed. Ought your love not to be true, unfeigned, even as this Word is truth? Ought you not to be enduring in your love, even as this Word endures forever?

The imperishable hope, v. 21; cf. 2-12; the imperishable ransom, vv. 18-20; the imperishable Word, vv. 23-25, three imperishable, ever efficacious motives for true sanctification of life! What a contrast between these imperishables and the vanities the world can offer: perishable flesh, vv. 23, 24; perishable conversation, v. 18; perishable glory, v. 24. What will we choose? Whom will we serve?

Judica Sunday is named for the opening word of the introitus, Ps. 43:1, an appeal to God to judge us and plead our cause and send out His light and His truth. The epistle falls in with the thoughts of this psalm, reminding us both of His judgment and His light that they might bring us to His holy hill, the goal of our Christian hope. The underlying thought is found in v. 17 b, brotherly love in v. 22 being but an evidence of such fear of God. Hence the theme might be chosen: "*Pass the Time of Your Sojourning Here in Fear.*"

1) Remember that the Father is the Judge. 2) Remember that you were ransomed by the precious blood of Christ. 3) Remember that you were born again of incorruptible seed. — This epistle offers opportunity to refute the false conception of the fatherhood of God current in our day. *The True Conception of the Fatherhood of God.* 1) He is a Father who is also our Judge. 2) He is our Father only because of the ransom paid by His Son. 3) He is the Father only of such as have been regenerated through the Gospel. — Proceeding from 1 Cor. 2:6-10, speak on *The Mysterious Miracles of the Gospel.* 1) It teaches a God who is our Judge and Father. 2) It offers a redemption from our vain conversation. 3) It regenerates us and makes us children of God (works faith, justifies, purifies, engenders hope, preserves to eternal life). — *The Almighty Power of the Word of God.* 1) It works faith in the atoning work of Christ. 2) It gives us power to purify our souls (vv. 17, 22 ff.). — *The Word of God Alone Offers Us True Values.* 1) Over against the vanities of sin it offers us a perfect ransom and fear of God. 2) Over against the vanity of the material world it offers us the everlasting Gospel. — In order to encourage believing Israel to remain loyal to their God, Moses sets before them life and death that they might choose life, Deut. 30:15-20. A similar choice is laid before us by our heavenly Father. Only His children have the power to make the choice. *What Shall We as Children of God Choose?* 1) Perishable flesh or the imperishable Gospel? 2) Perishable conversation or the imperishable ransom? 3) Perishable glory or the imperishable hope?

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