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Sermon Study on 2 Tim. 4:5-8**Eisenach Epistle-Lesson**

Together with Timothy, his beloved disciple, Paul stands before the judgment-throne of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, charging his beloved disciple to preach the Word, chap. 4:1. Such insistence on the true doctrine would become increasingly difficult since men in ever-increasing measure would become intolerant of the preaching of God's Word and, rather than heed its truths, so utterly foolish to man's reason, so hateful to his carnal desires, would satisfy the itching of their ears by turning to fables, vv. 3, 4. Here we have a candid-camera view of conditions within the Christian Church and the world at large of our day. Much of what is called science and religion and Christianity is nothing but fables. There is the fable of atheistic or deistic or theistic evolution, the fable of salvation by character, the fable of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, the fable of the Elohist and Yahvist and the great unknown Deutero-Isaiah,—fables, all of them, without the slightest foundation in fact in spite of the extravagant claims of scientific accuracy or infallible truth. These are the fables preached within Christendom from thousands of pulpits and published in hundreds of periodicals under the guise of scientific Christianity. These are the fables that people without and within the visible Church delight to hear and demand from their teachers and preachers. What shall be the attitude of the pastor toward this ever-increasing tendency and what shall the members of the congregation expect of their pastor in view of these conditions? The answer is found in the Epistle-lesson for the Third Sunday in Advent.

But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry, v. 5. Note the emphatic position of "thou" in the original. No matter what others do and expect of you, *thou*, however, watch, $\nu\eta\varphi\epsilon$. The word designates that watchfulness which is opposed to the drowsiness and lethargy of drunkenness, the avoidance of any form of intoxication depriving one of that calm and sober judgment, of that clear prudence and foresight in thought and action which ought to characterize every Christian and especially every Christian pastor. The apostle has in mind not so much an intoxication caused by excessive use of wine and strong drink, although the pastor must guard against that danger also; Paul is here thinking chiefly of spiritual intoxication. The pastor should not permit his judgment to be swayed by the popularity of an opinion, or by the outward success of a sinful or dangerous practise or by the reasonableness of a false doctrine or its appeal to his own inclina-

tions; or by any other influence or power in opposition to the Word of his God. True sober-mindedness demands that "in all things" the pastor make the Word and will of Him who has called him into His service the norm and rule of all his activities, the infallible and trustworthy guide throughout his private and pastoral life. The present imperative denotes the need of continuous, habitual sober-mindedness in all matters. No matter what question may come up for decision, no matter what may be the situation confronting him, never must the pastor allow his own emotions or the flatteries or threats of man or the opinions or fashions of the world to becloud his mind or warp his judgment. Calmly and dispassionately he must view all problems in the light of the Word of his God, let God decide the matter for him, and stand unflinchingly on his Lord's decision, irrespective of what the consequences may be.

This sober-mindedness is illustrated, and the fulness of its contents unfolded to some extent, by the three aorist imperatives following the imperative present. The imperative aorists in each instance "treat the action as a single whole, entirely irrespective of the parts or tense involved" (Robertson). The first particular in which the pastor is to remain calm and unmoved is the endurance of afflictions, demanded by the aorist imperative *κακοπάθησον*. If evil days come to the pastor, there is but one course of action — suffer, endure. The days in which Timothy and Paul lived were evil. Afflictions and persecution were part of the daily bread of every Christian, especially of the teachers and pastors. Hence the oft-repeated admonitions to endure these hardships. Cf. 1:8-15; 2:3-5, 10-12; 3:10-12; 4:10-17. No matter what the nature of the evil, whether it be ridicule or threats or persecutions from those without or basest ingratitude on the part of the pastors' own members, whether it be physical ailment or mental anguish, whether it be of short or long duration, true sober-mindedness will not forget that a Christian, and especially a Christian pastor, cannot look for days of continuous sunshine, that he must expect to meet with misunderstandings, opposition, heartaches, hardships. Why, then, should he permit these afflictions to affect his loyalty to his God and Savior? Why pity himself whenever clouds appear on the horizon? Why deplore the choice of the ministry as his life's calling? Why neglect his duty because faithfulness spells trouble and hardship? As a preacher of the Word there is but one course open for him — endure afflictions.

"Do the work of an evangelist." The word *εὐαγγελιστής*, originally designating a messenger bringing good news, a bearer of glad tidings, was also used in a narrower sense, that of a missionary. The evangelists are named as a separate office, Eph. 4:11; Philip,

the former deacon, became an evangelist, Acts 6:5; 8:5-40; 21:8. Eusebius in his *Church History* informs us that the evangelists preached the Gospel to such as had never heard it and, after congregations were founded and pastors placed over them, went on to preach the Gospel to other heathen, 3:37; 5:10. Yet Paul does not here use the term in this special sense. Of course, Timothy should still grasp every opportunity to do mission-work, and every pastor, no matter how small or large his field, must indefatigably endeavor not only to strengthen and edify those already gained but also to win others who are still aliens and strangers. Yet it is doubtful whether Timothy was still an evangelist in this particular sense, and the context favors, we might say obliges us to accept, the wider sense here. Paul had spoken of such teachers as were preaching fables. Timothy was not to follow the example of these men; rather was he to manifest his soberness by doing the work of an evangelist. He should remember that he was indeed a bearer of glad tidings. In season and out of season he should preach the old and ever new Gospel announced by God in Paradise to Adam and Eve, proclaimed by the prophets in the Old Testament, by the angel on the fields of Bethlehem, by Christ Himself and the apostles, the one and only safe way to heaven. Even if people dislike or refuse to hear this Gospel and flock in great masses to preachers satisfying their itch for something new, while the faithful pastors are preaching to only a handful, no true pastor will permit the seeming success of false teachers nor his own seeming failure to befog his mind or make him doubtful as to his duty. His is the work of an evangelist. That is the calling, the profession unto which God has called him, the business that God wants him to perform faithfully, whether as a missionary in heathen countries he is preaching this Gospel for the first time to people that have never heard it before, or whether he is proclaiming these tidings to Christians who have heard it a thousand times, or whether he is speaking over the radio or instructing his confirmation class or writing a sermon for publication in the newspaper. At all times he must be sober-minded; he must not permit the heady wine of human wisdom or popular favor or temporal success cause him to become intoxicated and forget that his plain and simple duty is to do the work of an evangelist, to preach the Gospel of Christ, and Him crucified.

Nor is that all that is required of a faithful pastor. True sober-mindedness implies still more: "make full proof of thy ministry." *Διακονία* here is used not of the special office of deacons, Acts 6:1 ff.; 11:29; etc., but in a wider sense, comprising the entire work of a Christian pastor, 1 Tim. 1:12, that office which is the ministry

of the Spirit, 2 Cor. 3:8, of righteousness, v. 9, of reconciliation, 2 Cor. 5:11. It includes besides the ministry of the Word and prayer that of charity, Acts 6:3, 4; the various ministrations enumerated 1 Cor. 12:4 ff. It comprises also holiness of life, 1 Pet. 5:3, without which the preaching of the Word will to a great extent be frustrated. Cf. 2 Cor. 4:1, 2, where besides the preaching of the Gospel sincerity and holiness are named as necessary requisites for this ministry. Read the whole chapter, which is a practical commentary on the meaning of the sober-mindedness which is so essential in order to endure affliction, to do the work of an evangelist, and to fulfil the ministry. Cf. also 2 Cor. 6:3-10.

Of this ministry Timothy is to make full proof. Πληροφόρησον means carry to completion; pack every duty required into the bundle and then carry the whole burden; fulfil every duty; leave no loose ends but complete every task of every day. Paul asks much of Timothy, of every pastor, yet no more than what he himself has done, v. 7; Phil. 3:17; what is the plain duty of every Christian pastor; for the fulfilment of which we rely on the grace of God in Christ Jesus, 1 Tim. 1:15, 16; 1 Cor. 15:10; Phil. 4:12, 13. "The dangers to the Church as referred to in vv. 3, 4 are pressing and instant; they can only be met by watchfulness, self-sacrifice, and devotion to duty on the part of the leaders of the Church." (*Expositor's Greek Testament.*) See Paul at Ephesus, Acts 20:18-21, 30-35; at Thessalonica, 1 Thess. 2:1-12. Read Rom. 1:9-15; 15:15-33 (see v. 19, "fully preached"). Read 2 Cor. 11:23-29, and you will have the best commentary on fulfilling one's ministry. May God make us faithful pastors!

For I am now ready to be offered, v. 6 a. "Paul points to his approaching death in order to strengthen his exhortation to Timothy to fulfil his duties faithfully. As he himself cannot any longer contend against the increasing disorder, Timothy must be all the more careful to prove himself faithful." (Huther in *Meyer's Commentary.*) Hence the emphatic position of ἐγὼ γάρ. "As for me, I have done my best. My King is calling me from the field of action to wait for my reward; thou canst no longer look to me to take initiative in action." (*Expositor's Greek Testament.*) "Ready to be offered." On the meaning of the phrase we quote Lenski: "The English does not have a word that corresponds with σπένδομαι; we must paraphrase, to pour out a libation, a drink offering of wine. Paul does not say θύομαι, "I am already being sacrificed," as though he likened his anticipated martyrdom to a burnt offering, going up in smoke. The figure he employs is much finer. His bloody death he compares only to the pouring out of a drink offering (Num. 15:1-10), the libation of wine which was added to the sacrifice proper and formed the last act of the

sacrificial ceremony. We have the same figure and the same word in Phil. 2:17. In connection with the Jewish sacrifices the wine was poured out beside the altar, in the case of pagan sacrifices upon the sacrifice itself. Since he is writing to Timothy, it is probable that Paul thought of the former. Rom. 15:16 shows that he looked upon his entire ministry as an offering to God. This offering his bloody death is now completing. The present tense and "already" imply that Paul's imprisonment and first hearing are beginning his libation. "Whether in connection with libation we think of the pouring out of Paul's blood or his life makes no difference, for the life is in the blood." (*Lenski Commentary*, p. 869 f.)

The time of my departure is at hand, v. 6 b. 'Ανάλωσις, unloosing, is used to designate the breaking up of a camp, also the releasing of a ship from its moorings preparatory to sailing; hence leaving a place, departing. Both noun and verb are also in profane literature used as a euphemism for death and dying; just as the English *depart*, the German *abscheiden*. Καρὸς is a measure of time, a fixed and definite time. Whether the Lord had revealed to Paul that now his end had come, as Christ had revealed other impending events to His faithful servant, Acts 16:9; 18:9, 10; 20:23; 21:11; 27:24, or whether the trend of events forced that conclusion upon him, we cannot tell. He states it as a fact of which he is fully convinced. The time of my departure is at hand. 'Εφέστημεν, has been approaching, coming closer, for some time and is now standing, as it were, at my side. The possibility, or probability, of Phil. 2:17 has now become certainty, an assured fact. He sees, as it were, death standing at his side, finally having caught up with him after having dogged his footsteps for decades, ready to lay his hand upon Paul and take him out of the land of the living. Yet as the possibility of death had caused him to break forth into that jubilant confession Phil. 1:20-23, so the actual touch of death's hand does not fill him with dismay and terror, but with holy joy and confident exultation. Death is no longer the prince of terrors, Heb. 2:14; rather so fully conquered, so utterly vanquished, so completely deprived of his venomous sting, that Paul regards him as his servant, aiding him to depart from this world, to loosen him from his moorings and set out on his journey to his everlasting home.

I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. We hear the victor's exulting shout who, after a long and weary battle in the arena, a nerve-racking race, is about to grasp the crown of victory.

"The excellent fight I have fought." The definite article points to a definite, well-known battle, that battle which every Christian

and every Christian pastor must wage during his lifetime. That is indeed a battle, a fight. Ἀγών denotes the athletic contests so popular in Greece—boxing, wrestling, racing, etc. In Heb. 12:1 the race to be run by the believer is called the ἀγών. Here the race is specially mentioned in the second clause, hence *fight* is best referred to that of the boxer or wrestler. The whole life of the apostle from the moment that he had asked the Lord, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" had been a continuous battle. It was a real fight, not a sham battle, not shadow boxing, but a battle against real enemies, enemies bent on his destruction, Eph. 6:12; Rom. 7:15-24. Some of its phases are brought out in such passages as 2 Tim. 1:8, 15, 16; 2:3-10; 3:10-12; 4:10-13; 1 Cor. 9:26, 27; Phil. 1:29, 30; Col. 1:28, 29; 2:1; 4:12; 1 Thess. 2:2. Compare also the passages listed under v. 5. A strenuous battle indeed, yet a good, excellent battle, excellent in itself and adapted to its purpose, as the word καλός implies. It was a fight excellent in itself; not a fight for the enthronement of sin and wickedness, not for self-aggrandizement, but a fight on the side of his Lord and King against all the forces of evil within and without himself. It was a battle adapted to its ends, the salvation of his own and other men's souls; for it was a battle fought not with carnal weapons, 2 Cor. 4:3-5, but with the sword of the Word of the Almighty God, the Gospel of Christ Crucified. For that very reason it was not a losing battle but one in which he was sure of victory through Him who loved him. This battle has been fought; the few days still intervening really no longer count as far as the outcome is concerned. Only a few more attacks to ward off, a few more blows to endure; the battle is as good as finished, the fight over, won.

"The race I have finished." Paul compares his life to a race for the goal, in which he presses for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, Phil. 3:12-17; in the course of this race he had fled the lusts of the flesh and followed after righteousness, 2 Tim. 2:22, 23. Years before he had expressed his determination to finish his course, Acts 20:24; now he had arrived at its end. I have finished! Τετέλεσται cried Jesus at the end of his course; John 19:30; τετέλεκα cried the servant of Jesus at the end of his life. Here we have a fulfilment of Is. 53:10-12. Here is a man who, justified by the righteous Servant and following in the footsteps of his Savior, has like Him fought the fight and run the course. As the redeeming Servant cried out, "It is finished!" so His redeemed servant by virtue of what preceded that cry of the righteous Servant, Jesus Christ, can cry out, "I have finished!" Christ Jesus had finished the work given to Him by His Father; He had freed man from the guilt, the punishment, the dominion of sin. Just because of that finished work of his Master, Paul, the

servant, could finish his course, fulfil his ministry. What joy and satisfaction to Paul, the lowly servant, 1 Tim. 1:15; 1 Cor. 15:9, made more than conqueror through Him that loved him, Rom. 8:37! What joy and satisfaction to the Master Servant, the Lord Jesus, to see this one time persecutor now finishing his course as a faithful minister of the Church of God, a loyal servant of his Lord and King.

"I have kept the faith." Τηρέω, to guard, to keep safely, against all danger of loss. "The faith," that saving faith which clings to Christ crucified; that faith which is the only way of appropriating to oneself Christ and the blessings procured by Him for all men and offered by Him to all through the means of grace; that faith the possession of which saves, the lack or loss of which damns; that faith which God alone can work in man by His almighty grace, Eph. 1:19; that faith which is next to Christ the most precious and important gift of God to man; this faith Paul has kept. Though Paul had this treasure in an earthen vessel, though mighty enemies had conspired to rob him of this prize, yet by the excellency of the power and grace of God he was still in possession of that boon. At the end of his Christian course he knew of no other name, no other way, than Jesus, who had called him out of darkness to His marvelous light. He had not preached to others and himself become a castaway. He had kept the faith.

There is no need and no valid reason to take πίστις in the objective sense, the creed. In the moment of death not that is the all-important factor that he has carefully preserved the true doctrine and defended it against all error and errorists. Every Christian, every pastor, must do that. That is God's will and command. Yet the all-important thing in the hour of death is personal faith. This personal faith alone, which united him with Jesus, enabled Paul to fight the good fight, to finish his course. There can be no reasonable doubt that he had this personal faith in mind when he penned these majestic words of triumph and victory.

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only but unto all them that love His appearing, v. 8. Henceforth, λοιπόν, what remains, as far as the future is concerned, "there is laid up," laid away, reserved. The same word is used Heb. 9:27 and Col. 1:5. It denotes the certainty of the act. "For me." Paul is sure of his personal salvation; he practises what he spoke as preacher for so many years. He applies the Gospel of universal and complete redemption through the atoning blood of Christ to himself; cf. v. 18; 1:12. "The crown." Στέφανος was the garland or wreath given to a victor or that given as a token

of esteem or at festival banquets; in the LXX it is used also of the emblem of royalty, 2 Sam. 12:30; Ps. 21:4. In our passage it denotes the garland given to the winning athlete as a token of victory, as an honorable reward for his successful struggle. The crown "of righteousness." The genitive is not the genitive of apposition as in "crown of life," Rev. 2:10; "of glory," 1 Pet. 5:4. The context demands the genitive to be taken as the possessive genitive, the crown which belongs to righteousness. Paul had described the battle that he, being justified by faith, had fought in order to keep his righteousness of faith and of life. Now he speaks of the glorious outcome of this battle, the crown given to righteousness as its reward. In Christ's Kingdom of Grace there is indeed a crown, a reward, the crown prepared and reserved by the King Himself. This crown consists, above all, in the final and complete removal of all sin and imperfection, which causes so many a sigh and bitter heartache to the Christian while living on this earth, Rom. 7:13-24. There at last he will be satisfied, when he awakes, with the likeness of his God, Ps. 17:15. There his hungering and thirsting after righteousness shall end; he shall be filled with the fulness of perfection, Matt. 5:6. And there is the new heaven and the new earth, for which he longingly looked and wherein dwelleth righteousness, 2 Pet. 3:13; cf. Rev. 7:15. This crown consists in the beatific vision of the Triune God, the concomitant of that righteousness, Ps. 17:15; Matt. 5:8; 1 John 3:2. This crown consists of the enjoyment of the riches of the Father's house, in drinking of the rivers of God's pleasures, issuing forth from Him with whom is the fountain of life and in whose light we shall see light forevermore, Ps. 36:8, 9; Is. 35:10; Rev. 21 and 22.

This crown, says Paul, is already laid aside for him, safe and secure, 1 Pet. 1:4, 5, to be placed on his head by the "righteous Judge." His Lord Jesus Christ, the gracious Savior, who has procured this crown for him by His own blood, is at the same time the Judge, to whom the Father has given authority to exercise judgment also, just because He is the Son of Man, the God-man and Redeemer of mankind, Gen. 5:27; Acts 10:42; 17:31. With this righteous Judge there is no respect of persons, Is. 11:3, 4. Must not this righteous, unbiased Judge condemn him who stands self-confessed as the chief of sinners? No; this Judge, the Lord and King of Grace, has promised to all that believe in Him eternal life, and has pledged His word of honor that He will reward graciously and beyond all merit and expectation even the imperfect works of His believing subjects, the feeble efforts of His followers to serve their Lord, Mark 9:41; 10:28-30; Luke 14:14; 22:28-30. That is the *δίκη*, the right and law, in His Kingdom of Grace, and according to this right He can and will give to Paul,

who has righteousness in his possession (cf. Phil. 3:8-14), who has fought the fight and kept the faith, the crown promised to such faith, the reward belonging by divine pledge to such righteousness.

Paul does not look for this reward for himself alone; but it will be "given unto all them also that love His appearing." Fighting the fight, running the course, keeping the faith, is here described as loving His appearance, His epiphany, on the Last Day, Titus 2:13. That appearance of the righteous Judge is to all who reject Him as their Savior a day of dread and fear, Rev. 6:12-17. Not so to those who love His appearing. Ἀγαπάω designates a love by choice. From the vanity of this world, from its sins and wickedness, they by the grace of God have turned away and deliberately have directed their affection toward that glorious day when Christ, who once was offered to bear their sins, shall appear the second time unto salvation, Heb. 9:28; Luke 21:28. To all who shall be on that day such as have loved His appearing (note perfect participle), have endured in this love in spite of trials and sorrows, there shall be given the crown of righteousness. Paul is not thinking of the greater glory awaiting him as the chief among the apostles, who has worked more than they all. There is not a spark of self-exaltation, of carnal pride, in his own accomplishments. He is supremely satisfied and divinely happy in the thought that the salvation prepared for all sinners is his also and shall be given to him also by the righteous Judge "at that Day." The apostle is well aware of what lies between the present moment and that Day. He knows that a shameful, painful death awaits him; he knows that his body will soon be food for worms. Yet that does not affect his unwavering confidence at the moment of his writing. He sees not the unfairness of his opponents, the agonies and ridicule still awaiting him; he looks beyond suffering and death and the grave. As it were, he sees the heavens opened and Jesus the righteous Judge standing at the right hand of God, ready to give him the crown of victory. Forgotten the hardships of the battle—the fight has been fought. Past the agonized straining of every muscle and fiber in order to reach the goal—the course has been finished. Forgotten the strenuous efforts to keep the faith—he is more than conqueror through Him that loved him, Christ Jesus. Henceforth only the crown, the victory, the life and bliss unending. "Noble words! The sun is setting blood-red, but is shot through with golden glory. Indeed, so should this great life close! These words have left an indelible impression upon all future ages. Socrates's attitude toward the cup of hemlock has been admired; it is the best that paganism can show. But how pitifully empty it is when it is placed beside these

few words of Christian triumph, Christian assurance, looking up to the Lord, the righteous Judge, with all those who are loving His epiphany and awaiting their crowning. Lord, give me a death like this!" (Lenski, *Commentary*, p. 868 f.)

Our text is in line with the standard Epistle, which speaks of the Gospel ministry, and with the Gospel, which points out John the Baptist as an example of faithfulness. One may speak on *Paul's Exhortation to Faithfulness in the Ministry*. The apostle points out what faithfulness implies, his own example, the glorious crown.—*Fulfil the Ministry*. In spite of afflictions, in emulation of Paul's example, in view of the epiphany.—*Endure Afflictions*. That is part of your calling (sober-mindedness will tell you that, in doing your work of preaching Christ and fulfilling your ministry, you must look for afflictions); you have fellow-sufferers; there is for you a glorious crown.—*What May a Congregation Expect of Its Pastor?* That he fulfil his ministry, suffer afflictions, be ready to depart in view of the glory which he preaches to others.—*Pastor and Congregation Looking for the Epiphany*. Willingly doing their full duty, 5-7; ready to endure affliction, 5, 6; confidently looking for the crown of glory.—While here a pastor writes to a pastor, he himself includes all Christians in v. 8. Hence we may generalize the exhortation and show *Paul as an Example of True Christianity*. In his sober-mindedness, his perseverance to the end, his confident expectation of everlasting glory.—In the introduction briefly picture the past, present, and future of the unbeliever. Theme: *The Past, Present, and Future of a Child of God in the Light of the Gospel*. The past is a record of victories won. The present is a time of sober-minded fulfilment of duty. The future holds for him a glorious consummation of their hope.

TH. LAETSCH

Have We the Original Text of the Holy Scriptures?

This question, as our readers will remember, was adverted to in the December, 1938, issue of this journal in an article which discussed the position of the U. L. C. A. with respect to the inspiration of the Scriptures. Prominent theologians of the U. L. C. A., in speaking of the question whether the original text of the Bible must be held to be without error in every detail, have made the statement that the original text of our holy writings is non-existent and that hence insistence on the belief that this text was inerrant