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Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Gospel Selections

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Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Epistle Selections

Fifth Sunday after Trinity

Phil. 3:8-14

In the Third Article we confess: I believe in the communion of saints, i. e., the congregation of holy and perfect people, and then we continue: and the forgiveness of sins. A contradiction? No; for Christians have a twofold holiness, Christ's and their own. Luther *ad Gal. 3:27*: We put on Christ according to the Gospel (justification, a perfect righteousness) and according to the Law (sanctification, the incipient righteousness). St. Louis, IX: 463 ff.

The Twofold Righteousness of Christians

1. *Perfect righteousness through faith*
2. *Imperfect righteousness in life*

1

Paul scored 100 per cent on six points of Judaistic righteousness, vv. 5, 6. Had surpassed his comrades in zeal, Gal. 1:14. But he suffered the loss of this righteousness, v. 8. (Note the passive voice.) The Pharisee is proud of his own righteousness, and it was not easy for Paul to give up the greatest treasures of Pharisaism. And there is a Pharisee in all of us. Therefore impossible for the Old Adam to confess: Nothing in my hands I bring; naked, foul, full of sin I am. How difficult to consider the highest treasure of the old Adam as dung, garbage, excrement, offal. But Paul had learned it, and so must you and I.

Only by giving up everything which the Old Adam treasures, i. e., human righteousness, can we win Christ and be found in Him. Paul is not speaking of the mystical union described in John 15:1-5, but of justification; not of the Christ "in us" but of the Christ "for us." The entire world stood in Christ before the judgment seat of God. In Christ the entire world is absolved, declared perfectly righteous. Faith appropriates the entire Christ, for Christ cannot be divided, and thus the believer has the righteousness which is of God, a perfect righteousness. Rom. 3:21, 22; 4:5. Justification is a forensic act. And therefore Christ's righteousness is the believer's perfect righteousness. Thus Paul lost everything in order that he might gain everything.

To know this in true faith is the greatest knowledge, v. 10. The perfect righteousness rests upon the resurrection, Rom. 4:25. To win Christ, to know Christ, to be found in Him, in short, to have Christ's perfect righteousness, means that we must experience the power of His resurrection. The guard at the empty tomb witnessed the fact of Christ's resurrection, but did not know its

power. Paul first experienced the power of Christ's resurrection on the way to Damascus. There he experienced that Christ lives and that Christ alone was the Captain of his salvation, 1 Cor. 15: 8-10; 1:30. Of course, everyone who has accepted Christ's perfect righteousness, won for us on the cross and sealed in the resurrection, will be an offense to the world. The world hates Christ's righteousness and transfers its hatred to the perfectly justified. The enmity of the world leads to persecution and possibly to martyrdom. Paul learned this at Damascus, Acts 9:16. Cp. Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 4:10; Gal. 6:17; Col. 1:24. But he is not disturbed, for he knows that it will lead to his glorious resurrection. The uncertainty in "if by any means" is not concerning the fact of his resurrection to glory (he was certain of that, 1:6), but concerning the manner in which he would reach this goal, whether by a natural death or by martyrdom. To have and to retain Christ's perfect righteousness through faith is Paul's only ambition in life.

2

But is Paul's theology not anomalous? He had renounced all righteousness to gain Christ's perfect righteousness and then strives for the righteousness of life. No contradiction, because there is an indissoluble connection between justification and sanctification. Paul shows this in all his epistles, especially Romans. See Luther's Preface to Romans on the relation of justification and sanctification, reprinted in *Trigl.*, p. 941, § 10. Paul's theology expressed epigrammatically by Luther: Faith alone justifies, but faith is never alone. Paul makes much of the Christian's personal righteousness. Cp. Rom. 6:1-14; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 6:1-18; Phil. 4:20; Col. 3:1-5; etc. Many have misunderstood Paul, and have placed the doctrine of sanctification into the center of Paul's theology. Perfectionism of the Roman Catholic Church, the modern holiness bodies, our own Old Adam. The perfectionist has the mistaken idea that a "relative" perfection is sufficient. Pentecostals speak of relative, Adamic, angelic, and absolute, or divine, perfection. Our Old Adam compares his life with that of his neighbor.

We must strive for righteousness in life. But it is never perfect. True, we must distinguish between the fruits of the spirit, which are God-pleasing, and the carnal righteousnesses, which are filthy rags. But Paul shows that the personal righteousness of Christians is imperfect. (1) He has *not* attained, vv. 12 a; 13 a. Object of "attain" is implied in "made perfect," particularly v. 15. The final end of Christ's work is our perfect sanctification in heaven. (2) He follows after, presses toward, the mark; in other words, perfection in righteousness is a *goal* which is still in the future. (3) A steady

progress, step by step. Today we must overcome this besetting sin; tomorrow another battle must be fought; next year a different spiritual problem must be solved. There is growth, but the full stature is not reached in this world. Eph. 4:12, 13.

And as we feel the imperfections in personal righteousness—and we feel them in increasing measure—we earnestly long for the goal of our faith life, namely, perfect personal righteousness at the throne of God. Amen.

F. E. MAYER

Sixth Sunday after Trinity

Eph. 2:4-10

The world operates on the basis of work and wages, desert and reward. So closely is this principle woven into the thinking of man that it is hard for him to imagine any other basis on which God operates toward him. It is the mark of man-made religion that it inserts this principle into the relation between God and man; that it makes man earn, wholly or in part, the good things that God has for him. Man is apt to belittle things given to him as a gift and regard them as less valuable than things earned, or deserved. To permit this idea to invade religion, however, robs man of his sureness of God and deprives God's gifts to man of their goodness. It is the purpose of this sermon to exalt

God's Gifts to the Christian, the Gifts of His Pure Grace

The text before us

1. *Emphasizes that God's relationship to the Christian is that of grace*
2. *Describes the gifts offered to the Christian by this grace*

1

God stands in the relationship of grace to the Christian; He is rich in mercy, acts with great love, v. 4, shows to us the exceeding riches of his grace and kindness, vv. 7, 8.

A. This implies that man earns nothing from God.

1. He is unable to earn anything from God. By nature he is dead in sins, v. 5; without strength, Rom. 5:6; even the Christian's deeds, viewed in the light of their earning power, are imperfect, Is. 64:6.

2. There can be no change in the dead condition of man by himself; God must make the whole change. This change is therefore an act of God's grace, vv. 5, 8, 10. This grace reaches out toward man and makes the all-important difference in his life through Christ Jesus; notice vv. 5, 6, 7, 10. His work for man, carried out through a sinless life and an innocent death, is the

basis upon which God can forgive man's sins and set up a new life; hence Christ is everything to man, to the Christian; He is God's great gift, 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 9:15.

B. This removes all occasion for boasting.

1. Pride is natural to the human heart; man loves to multiply occasions for pride. He tends to misuse even his religion to exalt his own sense of importance; pomp and ceremony; self-satisfaction of religious activity and organization. But God has deliberately planned the way of salvation to remove all occasion for boasting; v. 9; 1 Cor. 1:29, 31; Rom. 3:27.

2. There is only one thing that the Christian can do with the gifts of God: he cannot earn them; he can only accept them as a gift by faith; and even the faith is God's own doing, v. 8. Instead of boasting, therefore, there can be only humble gratitude in the Christian heart, and a full sway of God's grace in his life.

2

The apostle views the grace of God as a precious jewel; he turns it in every direction and picks up every radiant and colorful reflection. The gifts of God's grace are really only one, the work of Christ Jesus; but there are varied results.

A. The gift of quickening.

1. By nature man was dead in sins, incapable of any life toward God, any good to man that God could regard as life.

2. But God has quickened us. We are made alive. This is a spiritual life, beginning at once; v. 5; Rom. 6:1-7; but it means life without end and in a far grander state than the present; vv. 6, 7; Rom. 6:8 ff.; it means an eternal being with God and with one another.

B. The gift of salvation.

1. By nature man is lost, lost to his own power for good and, above all, lost to God; vv. 3, 5.

2. God has given us salvation. This gift strikes the heart of man's need; for it gives him forgiveness of sins and peace with God, v. 8; it gives it to him without condition and abundantly, since the work of Christ is accomplished, complete, sufficient; v. 8; Rom. 4:16; 5:20; 11:6.

C. The gift of a good life.

1. The true Christian religion emphasizes the work of God; that is everything. But it does not on this account keep silence about the life of the Christian; God has saved him with the design that he should live a life of good works, v. 10. That design is carried out also by grace, through the redemption of Christ Jesus, v. 10.

2. By faith, then, let us accept quickening and salvation; by faith, as saved and redeemed sinners, let us produce those works which are the completion of God's purpose of grace in us.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

Seventh Sunday after Trinity

Heb. 12:5-11

Since we are living in trying times, since there are so many wrong and sinful views concerning trials and afflictions, we consider

God's Views Concerning Trials and Afflictions

- 1. Trials and afflictions in the lives of Christians are marks of sonship**
- 2. Trials and afflictions train for greater faith, service, and sanctification**

1

A. St. Paul admits that the Christians to whom this epistle was addressed had suffered hardship and persecution; cp. 10:32-34. But the persecution and the trials had not as yet reached their climax, and not so many had lost their very lives. Therefore the apostle says: Heb. 12:4. In order to give them strength for the coming ordeal, he gives them the exhortation and instruction of the text.

B. V. 5. The apostle reminds us of a word of exhortation and comfort which we dare not forget, Prov. 3:11, 12. Lest they fail to read it, he quotes the word for them, v. 5 b. We note that only for God's children are trials and afflictions the tokens of fatherly care and love. Children of this world often suffer the same afflictions as Christians; but for them these things are not the correcting, disciplining hand of God, but rather the heavy hand of an angry God because of their sin, their unbelief, their impenitence. But here God speaks to His children, the Christians, and He urges them not to underestimate the correction of the Lord, His entire method of training and educating His children. It may be training through suffering; but it still is training, the same type of training that a good Christian father and mother give to children entrusted to their care. Hence there must not be any fainting, any despondency because of the trying situation, v. 5 c. Forewarned is forearmed. The Christian in trouble, in affliction, knowing these things, will not despair, will not lose faith, but see in it all the loving hand of God. Apply this to our sad war conditions. Show that also now there is no reason to underestimate the greatness of the trial, no need to give way to discouragement and despair. We need the discipline, the training of God.

C. These trials and afflictions are the mark of true sonship, vv. 6, 7. The whole thing seems so natural, so ordinary, in the case of the average family that the apostle asks: "For what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" Wherever there is loving concern for the welfare of a child, for the future betterment of the child, a Christian father, a Christian mother, just naturally takes measures to give the child the necessary direction, correction, and guidance, even by stern measures. There can be no doubt about the loving concern of God. His love is emphasized here and in many other passages of the Bible, and so the necessary discipline is applied to all members of God's family. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."

D. The lack of such trials and tribulations is not something to be elated about, v. 7. Absence of divine affliction and discipline is an evidence that we are not God's children, not genuine children of the Lord, but it is rather the evidence that we belong to the father of lies. How often do Christian people think of this fact? Only too often they think that good days, days of health and prosperity, are a special mark of God's grace and that days of affliction, of sickness, of trouble, are evidences of God's wrath. It is true that in such days our conscience reminds us of many sins, but we ought to remind ourselves of v. 8; Job 5:17.

2

A. Our text further shows that in the mind of the Lord these afflictions have a definite purpose, that of deepening faith, of increasing service, and of producing growth in sanctification. Vv. 9, 10 show us the greater reverence we owe God because of His concern for us and in our spiritual development.

B. The older a person gets, the more does he respect and appreciate the good Christian training received from Christian fathers and mothers. They gave us training for a short time, perhaps only during the days of our youth, v. 10 a. They at times merely corrected us "after their own pleasure," because we had angered them. They may have even made serious mistakes, for even the best of parents are frail, fallible human beings. But behind it all was loving, parental concern, the earnest desire to help their children develop into good, Christian children, good citizens for this world and the next. In spite of their errors, we love our parents and respect and thank them for the training they gave us.

C. God, our heavenly Father, who gave us not merely our body, but also the spirit and soul, trains us not merely for the short time of youth, but He trains us even unto hoar hair. He

trains us for our eternal profit, "that we may be made partakers of His holiness." Surely the knowledge of these things will help us, strengthen us in our faith, and make our pilgrimage through life so much easier.

D. But the afflictions of God are also training unto righteousness, v. 11. The Christian feels his troubles just as keenly as the child of the world. But just such afflictions train us in patience, in trust, in service. We are more eager to bring forth the fruits of righteousness after we have been purged, John 15:2. Afflicted Christians are usually the most consecrated Christians. Such training of God, grievous though it seems for the moment, prepares and strengthens us for eternal salvation, 1 Pet. 1:6-9; 5:10; Rom. 8:25.

E. Let us remember these things in the trying days that are upon us. When our sons leave for the battlefield, when our daughters leave to take up war duties, when defeats come, when messages of casualties reach our ears, when our own loved ones are taken away, when our homes are destroyed, when our church and schools suffer, let us not despair, but let us see in it all a mighty call to repentance, a call to increased loyalty to God and His kingdom, a clarion call to higher faith and greater sanctification. Then, and only then, do God's views concerning the nature and purpose of His fiery trials become true in us.

E. L. ROSCHKE

Eighth Sunday after Trinity

1 Tim. 6:6-10

What St. Paul wrote in our text 1900 years ago to the young pastor Timothy might well serve conditions today, when we are warned that for the duration of the war at least the vaunted American standard of living must be relinquished and that citizens everywhere must confine themselves to actual necessities of life.

To Christians this is not an unreasonable expectation. Nor does it impair their contentment and happiness. While indeed our country's need provides an added incentive, they are at all times mindful of this divine truth: "Godliness with contentment is great gain."

On the basis of our text let us consider:

True Contentment

Note how the apostle

1. *Describes true contentment*
2. *Exhibits its gainfulness*

1

A. V. 6. St. Paul describes true contentment as inseparably connected with, and inevitably resulting from, "godliness." *Εὐσέβεια*, subjective religion, piety, worshipful, trusting adoration of the true God in all His glorious majesty, His power, love, and wisdom. Particularly in His transcendent love in Christ Jesus. The assurance that this God is his God fills the Christian's heart with serene contentment. Ps. 23:1; 73:25, 26; 42:11; Matt. 6:25 ff.; Heb. 13:5.

B. V. 8. Contentment is to be satisfied with the necessities of life — food and raiment, including shelter.

a. Discontent arises from perverted appraisal of values. Our American standard of living demands over and above actual necessities all manner of conveniences, comforts, even luxuries, and abundant means to procure them. Without these we have become prone to discontent, self-pity, etc.

b. Contentment is satisfied with "daily bread." Cf. treatment of Fourth Petition in Schwan's Catechism. Contentment comes from true appraisal of values, realizing that besides actual necessities for physical existence there are blessings, cheap, yet priceless, which the humblest may enjoy. Happy family life, friendship, health, beauties of nature, national blessings of free democratic institutions, etc. One may refer to contentment in pioneer days with all their hardships.

Hence contentment may and should fill Christian hearts even in these trying days.

Such contentment is indeed "great gain."

2

A. St. Paul exhibits the gainfulness of true Christian contentment by contrasting it with the opposite — "they that will be rich," "love of money" — and the evil results of this.

a. The opposite of contentment: "they that will be rich," v. 9. *Βουλόμενοι*, the determined, consuming desire to be rich, failure of which leaves unhappiness and discontent. "Love of money," inordinate, idolatrous love of money as the greatest good and indispensable for happiness.

b. The evil results: (1) V. 7. It is fatal folly to set idolatrous affection on money, which at best is a fleeting possession. Cf. Luke 12:15-21. — (2) V. 9. "Temptation" — to acquire, hold, and increase worldly goods in a sinful way. "Snare" — the avaricious is held captive, enslaved by his vice, entrapped by lusts both foolish and hurtful; he is doomed to complete ruin, misery and destruction here and hereafter (double term). This is no exag-

geration, for v. 10 is a matter of common experience and observation. While not the only root of evil, certainly love of money is the vice which in an outstanding measure leads to all manner of sin and evil. Crime statistics show that an alarming percentage of crimes is directly traceable to this vice. At the bottom largely of present disturbed world conditions.

c. V. 10 b sums up evil results. The avaricious stray from the way of faith which alone leads to true happiness now and forever. "Pierce themselves through with many sorrows"—pangs of conscience, endless cares and fears which, especially in our days, torment those who worship the tottering idol mammon. Here and hereafter, Prov. 13:15 b.

B. Positively, contentment is great gain, because it is so closely related to godliness.

a. The godly, who put their trust in God, are not deceived. God's promises never fail. They who through faith in Christ have Him for their God are in possession of all the wealth of His love, are inconceivably rich.

b. Contentment is happiness. To be content in God, is to have all the true desires of the heart satisfied. Ps. 37:4. That is happiness, the greatest gain.

c. Paul experienced the gain of contentment, Phil. 4:10-13. So will all who by the Holy Spirit's grace acquire this virtue. Hymn 371:5.

AUGUST F. BERNTHAL

