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Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Gospel Selections

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(Here is an opportunity for Concordia's poets to try their ingenuity in reproducing old Woltersdorf's sentiments.) What he said amounts to this:

If Thy Word, Lord, is deemed worthless,
The support of faith is gone.
Thousand worlds I'd gladly forfeit
To hold fast Thy Word alone.

That expresses the devout conviction of every sincere theologian. When the Word of God is abrogated, all truly theological functions come to a stop, and we close this seminary as a school of theology, for our *principium cognoscendi* is gone.

I conclude with a few heartfelt utterances of Luther. He says: "A theologian's first concern must be, to be thoroughly conversant with the text of Scripture and to maintain this principle that sacred matters are not subject to debate." V:456. Again: "The theologian who does not make his beginning by hearing God's Word and believing it, is going to be a failure; he will not accomplish anything as it should be and will not preach correctly, even though he had all the wisdom of the world." VIII:37. Again: "Theologians must not consider it a trifling matter, when the sublime Majesty forbids whatsoever does not proceed from the mouth of the Lord." XIX:821. Again: "A theologian and preacher must not say: 'Lord, forgive me if I have taught what is wrong'; but of everything that he teaches in public, and writes, he must be sure that it is God's Word." XXII:1507. Lastly: "All that one has to do in theology is, to hear, and believe, and firmly hold in the heart this fact: God is truthful, no matter how silly it seems what God says in His Word." V:457.

Berkeley, Calif.

W. H. T. DAU

Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Epistle Selections

Ninth Sunday after Trinity

Acts 17:24-31

Oh, that someone had the gift of looking ten years into the future! What will be the condition of our world in 1952? Will it be ruled by dictators, by highly concentrated money power, by some superpowerful league of nations, or will it bow under the yoke of a few ruthless, lawless nations? Will the forces of evil gain in strength, or shall some more righteous form of world administration materialize?

Whatever the eventual answer to these questions may be, the Christian, enlightened by the Holy Scriptures, knows that whatever man-made powers will arise, God will still rule the world.

God Rules the World

1. *This truth is comforting to the Christian surrounded by the world*
2. *This truth is assuring especially during this disturbed period of the world*
3. *This truth reminds us that by His rulership God speaks to the world*

1

a) While preaching in Athens, Paul was confronted with some of the most highly developed idolatry of the ancient world; "He saw the city wholly given to idolatry," v. 16. He describes his audience as "too superstitious," v. 22, i. e., too much devoted to divinities. Not content with service to the common gods, the Athenians had erected an altar to "the Unknown God," v. 23. The Acropolis with its magnificent Parthenon, still in existence today, could be seen from the place where Paul stood. Amid this entrenched idolatry, Paul calmly and confidently asserts the futility of all idols and temples, and preaches the true God who made and rules all things, vv. 24, 25.

In our land we are not confronted with heathen temples and idols today, but we have idolatry nevertheless: worship of money, self-indulgence, materialism, the pleasure craze not yet seriously checked by the war. Phil. 3:19.

b) Paul was also confronted with some of the best intellects of Athens: Certain philosophers of the Epicureans and Stoics had accosted him, v. 18. Luke describes the Athenians as spending their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing, v. 21. Paul was speaking before some of the politically important people of Athens, the Areopagites, v. 19.

So Christians are surrounded by a world which prides itself on its intellectual achievements. Science has been greeted as the savior of mankind. A false science has often contradicted the Bible, denied the existence of God and His creation, even as rationalism in Athens put an end to the sermon on Mars' Hill, v. 32. The overthrow of the Bible and Christianity has often been predicted.

c) Over against all this, Paul calmly asserts: God made the world and all things therein; He giveth to all life and breath and all things. Surrounded by a wicked, unbelieving world, the Christian has the assurance that God rules over all.

2

a) We are living in a disturbed world; not only do we have a global war such as the world has never seen before, not only are destructive forces let loose that terrify the imagination, but national boundaries are crumbling, and nations of long standing are threat-

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ened with extinction. Where will this end? Will greed and ambition dominate all, and honesty and order be banished?

b) God rules over all nations, Ps. 2:4. He has "determined the times before appointed," v. 26. Each nation has its divinely allotted time; when God's time has come, it will rise to greatness, and when His time has come, it will decay and disappear. Example: The great Roman Empire of Christ's time disappeared when God's time had come.

God also rules over national boundaries: He has determined "the bounds of their habitation," v. 26. God, the Ruler, will finally determine where each nation shall dwell. He may use wars to accomplish His purpose, but even warring nations must finally bow before Him, Ps. 46:6, 9, 10.

c) We Christians have this confidence in a world in turmoil, that God rules even now. We may not now see the purpose of His plans, but we can trust in Him to carry out His purposes, Job 13:15; Ps. 40:4.

3

a) God's government of this world has a message also for the heathen: "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him," v. 27. The raising and destruction of nations, the setting and removal of national boundaries, no less than His whole work of creation, v. 25, preaches to the world in plain language: There is a God to whom you owe obedience, Rom. 1:19, 20. We correctly interpret the turmoil of our day only if we hear therein the powerful voice of our God calling to men to repent, v. 30, and warning them of judgment to come, v. 31.

b) God's government of the world of our day has a special message to Christians: A world that has heard God's call to repentance needs the Gospel of Christ. Paul's sermon on Mars' Hill passed from God's government to Christ, v. 31. Our world needs Christ and His Gospel. Our times are opening new doors for the Church. Let us heed God's voice of our times, be active, and work the work of Him that sent us.

H. O. A. KEINATH

Tenth Sunday after Trinity

1 Tim. 1:12-17

Even a casual reading of this text will leave the impression that the apostle was deeply moved when he wrote these words. They deal with a topic that once was an abomination to him but through a strange series of events had become near and dear to his heart both on account of its meaning to himself and because it was the very core of the message to whose proclamation he was determined to devote every ounce of energy throughout the remaining days of his life. That topic is grace.

The Exceeding Abundance of the Grace of God in Christ Jesus

1. *As it manifested itself in the life of St. Paul*
2. *As it manifests itself towards all sinners*

1

The apostle first draws a picture of himself prior to his conversion, v. 13. A "blasphemer." He spoke against the Lord and compelled others to do the same, Acts 26:11. A "persecutor." Acts 22:4; 9:4, 5. "Injurious." But this is a weak translation, better "insolent, overbearing," i. e., one who displays his insolence not merely by words but by deeds. For the meaning of the verb cf. Luke 18:32. All this sums up as blackest guilt.

But what a different person he is now! He has "faith and love which is in Christ Jesus," v. 14. The unbeliever has become a believer in Christ; his hate has turned into a passionate love towards his Master and His disciples. Even more than this. He is now a minister in the service of that same Jesus whom he persecuted, v. 12. The monstrous sinner has been changed into a penitent believer and mighty apostle of the Lord (Lenski).

Verse 13b gives the reason why this change was brought about. There was nothing that the unconverted Paul had, knowledge, zeal for the Law, or any other quality that had counted. Simply he obtained mercy. His ignorance is not mentioned as an excuse but to show that God had to use mercy if Paul was to be brought out of his spiritual darkness. The apostle, one of the best educated men of his day and nation, humbles himself completely and gives all glory to God.

The method which God employed in bringing about the remarkable change in his chosen vessel further emphasizes God's grace. Christ Jesus "enabled him," or, more literally, "gave new power within." The old force in Paul which drove him to give expression to his enmity to the Lord was replaced by God by a new force impelling Paul to a life of devotion to, and service in, the cause of his new Master. It was all an act of grace on the part of God.

In view of the exceeding grace shown him, the apostle is thankful, v. 12a. He joyfully acknowledges his debt to God's grace, v. 14a.

2

Paul stands not alone as the recipient of God's grace in Christ Jesus. All men by nature are enemies of God, their will is perverted, and even the fact that they may not realize their precarious condition does not render them guiltless. They are all under the curse and will have to bear the consequence of their sinfulness. And there is nothing that they themselves can do about it. If they are to be saved, God alone can make provision.

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It is here that divine grace shows the way out of his dilemma to the sinner, v. 15b. Jesus' coming into the world includes His entire work of redemption from His incarnation to His death on the cross. The grace of God in Christ Jesus opens the way for the sinner to escape God's wrath and eternal doom. Salvation is now an accomplished fact, and all that the sinner needs to do is accept what Jesus has earned for him. No works on his part could save him nor are they required. And the Gospel brings this joyful news to the ears of the sinner by God's express command to his disciples.

But is this not a plan too fantastic to be true? God through the mouth of His apostle removes all doubt, v. 15a. The Gospel message is absolutely true and reliable. It is backed not by integrity of respectable men but by our God, who is Truth. He cannot deceive us. Behold further the experience of Paul as an example of what the grace of God in Christ Jesus has in store for any sinner, v. 16.

Truly, when we thus consider the grace of God in Christ Jesus, we must with a full heart join in the apostle's concluding doxology, v. 17.

G. V. SCHICK

Eleventh Sunday after Trinity

James 2:13-17

Man is justified without the works of the Law, alone by faith in Jesus Christ. That is the core and center of the Christian religion, the doctrine with which the Christian Church stands or falls. This doctrine is proclaimed on nearly every page of the Bible. Of this doctrine give all the prophets witness, Acts 10:43; Christ, John 3:16; Paul, Rom. 3:24-28; all apostles. Thus also James. Upon this doctrine he bases all his admonitions addressed to the twelve tribes, 1:1. Chap. 2:1: The faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In our text James takes occasion to warn against an ever present danger.

Beware of a Dead Faith

1. *How it is recognized*
2. *In what it results*

1

A dead faith often hides behind pious words and assurances. A man may say he has faith, v. 14; he may even be very free and emphatic in making that statement; he may recite the Creed—especially also the Second Article—with the congregation, and yet delude himself, may mistake the mere knowledge of Biblical truths for the faith of the heart. V. 15: "If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of bread," or be in any other kind of want, he

may have some very pious wishes to offer: "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled," v. 16a, may the good Lord take care of you and, out of His mercy and great abundance, provide you with all that you need. Thus he may surround himself with a halo of being very religious, 1:26, and yet be entirely devoid of the true faith of the heart. Thus he may deceive others and even himself. Only *seems* to be religious, 1:26. This self-deception is the worst kind of deception. Then how can the dead faith be recognized?

It can be recognized by the absence of its fruits. "Faith, if it hath not *works*, is dead, being alone," v. 17. Though he is able and in a position to help, he does not give "those things which are needful to the body" nor offer any real assistance to those whose destitution is brought to his attention and even cries out to him. Perhaps he finds to his own satisfaction that the need is not very great, that there is no stark nakedness nor utter lack of food. Or the man having a dead faith does not visit the fatherless and widows, does not keep himself unspotted from the world, 1:27; or does not regard the poor, 2:1-3; or does not bridle his tongue, 3:5-10; or does not show fairness and justice, 5:4, 5. As a tree is known by its fruits, so a true and living faith is known by its works and the false and dead faith by the absence of them. Matt. 7:17-20; Gal. 5:19-26.

Beware of a dead faith! Where are the fruits of your faith? Good works indeed do not merit salvation, neither in whole nor in part, Rom. 3:24, 28, they are not necessary for *salvation*, but they are necessary. Why? God looks for them, Eph. 2:10; 2 Cor. 5:15; the spiritual and material welfare of your neighbor requires them, Matt. 5:16; 1 Pet. 2:12; Gal. 6:10; Matt. 5:42; to you they are the evidence of the sincerity of your faith. True, living faith is always active through love, Gal. 5:6.

2

V. 14. "What doth it profit?" A barren faith may *seem* to be profitable. A person having a dead faith may gain a better standing in his community, may be looked upon as a very respectable and devout man, as a reliable business associate, etc. In his church he may be admired for his depth of Biblical knowledge, for his readiness to dig even deeper into Scriptural truths, for his ability to discuss theological problems. He may step into a position of leadership, etc. But again we ask with St. James, "What doth it profit?" The answer is, nothing. In a dead faith there is not profit for his salvation. St. James asks, "Can [the, that] faith save him?" The answer again is, no. To *say* one has faith and to *have* it, are two different things. The dead faith is nothing but a sham and a make-believe. No, such "faith" cannot save.

Worse than that! V. 13. "He shall have judgment without

mercy that hath not showed mercy." St. James is here not speaking of the so-called mercy of unbelievers, who are frequently ready to lend a helping hand to the indigent and suffering. Their virtues are nothing but glittering vices; for without faith it is impossible to please God, Heb. 11:6. He is here speaking of those—actually in the same class with unbelievers—who claim to have faith but whose faith is without fruit, dead, who have not the mercy that is heaven-born, that is wrought by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel of Christ, that can be found only in a heart that clings to Christ as the Savior. He who has not this mercy shall have judgment without mercy. Matt. 25:41-46a; Luke 12:48b.

Beware of a dead faith; it leads to eternal disaster. On the other hand, v. 13b, real "mercy rejoiceth against judgment." He who has the mercy that springs from God's mercy in Jesus Christ need not fear judgment; on the contrary, he can rejoice, be full of glad confidence at the approach of judgment, for he knows that his Savior will publicly acknowledge his works of mercy as evidences of a living faith in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Let us return to our beginning. Man is justified not by the deeds of the Law, but alone by faith in Christ; but let us make sure that it is a living faith, not a dead one. R. NEITZEL

Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

Rom. 7:18 to 8:4

The Christian religion is the only saving religion. To enter life eternal one must be a Christian. It is therefore a vital question "What constitutes a Christian?"

Paul, a Model Christian

1. He laments his sinful depravity
2. He rejoices in his deliverance
3. He walks after the Spirit

1

From Paul we learn that self-satisfaction and Christianity are incompatible opposites. A Christian does not lull himself into a false security of perfection. A Christian knows, 7:18, 19: that sin dwelleth in him, v. 20; that evil is present with him, v. 21; that the law of sin brings him into captivity, vv. 23, 25. He knows that because his body is a body of sin, a sinful body (cp. Rom. 6:6), it is a body of death, 6:12, a mortal body, subject to sickness, death, decay, corruption. Not a pleasant thought, 2 Cor. 5:4.

The Christian laments, v. 24; he is altogether dissatisfied with himself. Others may praise him. In his own eyes he is a wretched

man as far as his own efforts are concerned. The better he becomes acquainted with himself, the better he learns by his own experience the truth of Gen. 8:21b; Ps. 51:5; Matt. 15:19, the more humble he becomes. As he sees that even his best efforts are contaminated with the filth of sin, he hides his face in shame, falls down before his God and exclaims, 7:24.

2

V. 25a. The Christian has been delivered from this bondage of sin, not through his own effort, since the Law could never deliver from sin and death because of the weakness of his flesh, and in his flesh dwelleth no good thing. Therefore he cannot attain through his own efforts that perfection which the Law requires in order that man be pronounced free from sin. God Himself effected a deliverance, sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. The Son of God became like man, resembling sinful man in every respect excepting sin, endowed with a human intellect, human emotions, human will, subject to human sufferings, yet at all times holy, Heb. 7:26. This God-man was sent "for sin," to expiate, to atone for man's sin, to deprive it of its power to rule, to enslave, to accuse, to condemn man. When Christ died on Calvary, sin had lost its jurisdiction over mankind. By the second Adam the sons of Adam had been delivered from the dominion of sin.

Into this glorious liberty the Christian has been brought by the Spirit of Life through Word and Sacrament, 8:2. The Christian, knowing that Christ has redeemed him from the guilt of sin, thanks God that even though his flesh still serves sin, his mind, his new spiritual nature serves God, and that God judges him not according to the flesh, but according to the new man.

3

This joyful assurance does not lure the Christian into false security, but urges him unto holiness and good works. That is the purpose God had in mind when He sent His Son, 8:3, 4. Redemption is not an end in itself, but serves another end: it makes possible sanctification. The Spirit frees the Christian from the state of sin and death, and translates him into the state of righteousness and life, 8:2. Now the Christian is able to will good, 7:18. He hates sin and loves the good, v. 19. He delights in the Law of God, v. 22, serves the Law of God, v. 25.

So the Christian walking after the Spirit, battling against sin, though remaining imperfect throughout his lifetime, can in the faith of Jesus, who has delivered him not only from the guilt and punishment but also from the power of sin, exclaim, 8:1.

TH. LAETSCH

Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity**Phil. 2:1-11**

Christians should strive together for the faith of the Gospel. Thus Paul had said in words almost immediately preceding our text, 1:27. In order to do this according to the will of God and effectively, they should do so "with one mind." Therefore the apostle's exhortation in our text, v. 2.

Christians Should Be Likeminded in All Humility

1. *The exhortation to be likeminded, vv. 1-4*
2. *The enforcement of the exhortation by the example of Christ, vv. 5-9*

1

a) As to things only concerning this life Christians may have different opinions; but in their attitude toward God, His Word, their spiritual relations toward their fellow men, Christians should be of the same mind, v. 2.

b) The reason or motive for such likemindedness is found in v. 1. In respect to any consolation or exhortation of which Christ is the source; in respect to any comfort which flows from love; in respect to the common fellowship of Christians in the Spirit; in respect to any spiritual emotions and compassions: all these things the Christians have in common, and by these they should be actuated to be of the same mind, having the same love to God and their fellow men, v. 2.

c) Likemindedness among Christians is hindered by selfishness, strife, a party spirit, and by vainglory, each seeking to satisfy his own selfish and sinful desires, v. 3a; Gal. 5:13-15. Likemindedness is promoted by unselfishness and humility, v. 3; Eph. 4:1-6; 1 Cor. 1:10, 11. A Christian may look to his own interests but not to the exclusion of those of others, v. 4; he should even esteem others better than himself, v. 3.

Application. — Much selfishness, pride, conceit, party spirit is found among Christians and hinders their mutual Christian relation and their co-operation in things spiritual and in building Christ's kingdom. Thereby also offense is given not only to fellow Christians but also to the people of this world. Christians should by God's grace seek to overcome all this by heeding the apostle's admonition and, as the apostle furthermore exhorts, by the example of Christ.

2

a) Christ is the very God Himself. He, therefore, did not think it robbery to be equal with God; that is, He did not, by claiming to be God, assume to be what He was not, v. 6.

b) But although Christ is God, He emptied Himself, *ταυτὸν ἐκένωσεν*, "made Himself of no reputation," as the King James Version has it, "aeusserte sich selbst," as Luther translated. Christ did not empty or divest Himself of His divine attributes, but wherein His emptying Himself consisted, Paul tells, saying, "He took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," vv. 7, 8.

Not in becoming or being a man, for Christ is still true man, did His emptying or His humbling Himself consist, but as man becoming a *servant* to the extent that He finally "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," vv. 7, 8.

c) Paul's exhortation that Christians be of the same mind, in all humility serving one another, esteeming others better than themselves, vv. 3, 4, he enforces by the example of Christ, saying, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," v. 5. Since Christ, the almighty God and sinless man, so humbled Himself for us, how much more should we, sinful as we are, humble ourselves in the sight of God and toward our fellow sinners. The humility that is characteristic of Christ should be characteristic of Christ's followers.

Then even as Christ was highly exalted by God, vv. 9-11, so God will graciously exalt us, 1 Pet. 1:5 a, 6. J. H. C. FRITZ

