

9-1-1942

## Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Gospel Selections

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### Recommended Citation

Laetsch, Th. (1942) "Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Gospel Selections," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 13 , Article 59.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol13/iss1/59>

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## Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Epistle Selections

### Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity

2 Pet. 1:2-11

Marvelous titles are given to Christians in Scripture. Cp. John 15:15; Rom. 8:14-17; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:9, 10. In our lesson Peter tells his readers that they are partakers of the divine nature, v. 4. In commenting on this passage, Luther writes: "This is a statement, the like of which is not found in the New or the Old Testament." (St. L., IX:1349.) Let us study this passage.

#### The Christian's Fellowship in the Divine Nature

1. *Its glorious reality*
2. *Its imperative implication*
3. *Its marvelous outlook*

#### 1

In distinction from the modernistic, pantheistic doctrine of the immanence of God in natural man, Peter teaches man's natural depravity, vv. 4, 9. Cp. chap. 2:12-22. We are not by nature in fellowship with God. We became (see original γένησθε) partakers. We entered into fellowship with the divine nature by the great and precious promises of the Gospel of Christ Jesus, v. 4, and these promises have their origin in God's glory and virtue, His divine power, v. 3. To create man required but a word. To recreate us into His fellowship, to redeem us from the power of the devil, required a battle which Almighty God alone could carry out; cp. Ps. 49:7, 8; 2 Cor. 5:19-21. Whatever we now have of the things that pertain unto life and godliness is due to this almighty grace, v. 3, and was given to us when He brought us to the knowledge of God and our Savior. Cp. John 17:3. Included in these gifts is the fellowship in the divine nature. We have escaped corruption, v. 4; cp. Heb. 9:14; 10:22, and are now God's children, created in His image, in righteousness and holiness, spotless before Him through Christ Jesus. Luther asks, "What is God's nature?" and answers, "It is eternal truth, righteousness, wisdom, eternal life, peace, joy and bliss, and whatever may be called good. Everyone in fellowship with God's nature receives all these gifts so that he lives eternally and has everlasting peace, bliss, and happiness and is pure, clean, righteous, and all-powerful against the devil, sin, and death. Therefore Peter means to say, As little as one may deprive God of eternal life and truth, so little can you be deprived of them. Anything done to you is done to God; if anyone wants to suppress a Christian, he must suppress God." (St. L., IX:1349.) What a truly marvelous gift based on a truly immovable foundation: God Himself, His divine power, glory, and virtue, v. 3.

2

Having escaped, etc., v. 4, we should neither become blind nor forget our purging from old sins, v. 9, by remaining barren, etc., v. 8b. The very fact that we are in fellowship with God implies that we must be diligent in good works, that we prove by our lives that we are indeed no longer servants of sin and Satan, but are fellowshiping with God. We should not permit the tree of our faith to remain without fruit. We are to add, i. e., supply (as the good tree supplies fruit just because it is a good tree) virtue in keeping with our faith. Our life, our deeds, our words must agree with our profession of faith. Cp. Titus 2:10b. Explain each of the items, vv. 5-8, and make the proper applications. The strength to live up to this implication we receive by the very fact that God has taken us into fellowship with Himself.

3

V. 10. By being diligent in good works we make our calling and election sure. That is to say, we grow in our own assurance that we are truly children of God, called in time and chosen in eternity. Serving sin burdens our conscience with guilt and robs us of our assurance of salvation. Diligence in good works (and only works performed by faith are good works) proves to us that we are children of God. Serving God continually in good works we "shall never fall," v. 10; cp. Heb. 10:38, 39. As we have supplied good works, so God will richly, in a measure far exceeding any merit or worthiness on our part, supply to us an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, v. 11. Not because of our good works, but because these works prove that by God's omnipotent grace we also have become twice-born men, John 3:5, 6, received into communion with the divine nature. Picture the glories of this eternal kingdom and close with an earnest admonition to diligence in good works in view of the unmerited marvelous grace we have experienced.

TH. LAETSCH

**Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity**

**1 John 2:12-17**

To His disciples Christ says: "No man can serve two masters. . . . Ye cannot serve God and Mammon," Matt. 6:24. This warning is necessary, because the Old Adam in believers sinfully and stubbornly clings to the things of this world, sometimes causing them to fall. Saul, 1 Sam. 15:1 ff.; Demas, 2 Tim. 4:10; Col. 3:1, 2; Judas, John 12:6. We have every reason to consider

**God's Earnest Command "Love Not the World"**

1. *To whom this is addressed*
2. *What it implies*
3. *Why we should heed it*

## 1

The command is earnest, but flows from true, divine love, which is eager that those whose sins are forgiven for Jesus' sake should not fall from grace, v. 12. The expressions used in this verse describe those to whom the command is given as sincere Christians. The endearing address "little children" depicts them as God's beloved children, whom He desires to keep in His love. They are God's dear children through faith in Christ ("for His name's sake"), in whom their sins are forgiven.

The apostle next specifies the "little children" according to their station in life, adding to each descriptive noun weighty words impressing the command, v. 13. The *fathers* know Christ, have a mature knowledge of Christ, good Christian discernment. Compare for contrast 1 Cor. 3:1 ff. Explain the words repeated for emphasis in v. 14. The *young men* have overcome the Wicked One, the devil, v. 13; they are strong, v. 14; Eph. 6:10. Through faith in Christ they have fought a good fight when they renounced the world and became Christians. To young men strength is particularly becoming; to Christian young men, *spiritual* strength. They are strong because the Word of God abides in them, v. 14. The *little children* have known the Father, v. 13, have learned to love God the Father in Christ Jesus with childlike, genuine affection, 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15.

God, then, addresses the command to *all* Christians, old and young, including mothers, young women, little girls. To all, in a peculiar way, the world is alluring. Older people are attracted by wealth; young people by pleasure; smaller children by deceivers of all sorts. Eccl. 7:20; Is. 64:6 Phil. 3:12; Ps. 119:9. Sons of Eli, 1 Sam. 2:12; Absalom, 2 Sam. 15; boys at Bethel, 2 Kings 2:23, 24. David, 2 Sam. 11. Achan, Josh. 7. Gehazi, 2 Kings 2.

## 2

The command reads, "Love not the world." That does not mean (a) that we may not rightly love God's creatures nor enjoy legitimate pleasures, Gen. 2:15 ff.; Ps. 145:9, 15, 16; (b) that we should make arbitrary church rules, abstaining from smoking, moderate use of alcoholic beverages, etc., such as the enthusiasts enact, who do not properly distinguish between adiaphora and things which God's Word forbids. Point out Luther's Christian joyous life. Fictitious piety is not piety at all but transgression of God's Law.

To love the world and the things in the world is to make them our treasure, our idol, and to put our trust in them, instead of in God. Matt. 6:19-34. God here forbids every sinful desire and use of the world. Study for illustrative material Luther's excellent explanation of the First Commandment in his Large Catechism.

In particular, to love the world means (a) to obey the lust of the flesh, 2 Pet. 2:10; Rom. 13:11 ff.; (b) to serve the lust of the eye, Ps. 119:37; Prov. 23:5; Rom. 3:18. Buechner describes the lust of the eye "as sinful and forbidden evil desire, as when one is moved by inordinate passion to feast his eyes on things which mislead into sin, Eve, Gen. 3:6; David, 2 Sam. 24; 11:2 ff.; (c) to be governed by the pride of life, Ps. 73:2 ff. The pride of life is inordinate elation and self-gratulation because of earthly goods and possessions. Forbidden are all evil desires of sex and the stomach, of the eye and the heart.

Do we need this command and warning? The very command accuses us. Let us beware. Gal. 6:7, 8. Let us remember Israel, 1 Cor. 10:1-12.

3

We should heed this earnest command of God in view of (a) God's great love toward us, which prompted the warning, v. 12; (b) God's ineffable blessings conferred on us, vv. 13, 14; (c) the destructive effects of such love of the world, vv. 15, 16; (d) the vanity of such sinful world love, v. 17 a; (e) the eternal reward of grace which obedience to this command offers, v. 17 b; Ps. 1:23; Rev. 7:9 ff.

We who have been endowed with God's Word in all its truth and purity have special reasons to be faithful and renounce the world, Rev. 2:10; 3:11. The present war teaches us an earnest lesson supporting the command of the text, Matt. 24:6, 7, 37 ff. The Lord is at hand! 1 Pet. 4:7.

J. THEODORE MUELLER

**Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity**

**1 John 2:28 to 3:8**

All men without exception are born as sinners, Rom. 3:23, and are under the curse of the Law. But through the Gospel differences are brought about among men in their relationship to God. Many indeed remain enemies of God, but others through divine grace are brought to faith and therefore become sons of God, Gal. 3:26. This blessed relationship with its effects upon a Christian's outlook and life St. John would have his readers keep in mind.

**We Christians Are Sons of God**

This fact is reflected

1. *In our hope for eternity*
2. *In our striving against sin*

1

Christians are the recipients of God's love to the extent that they are called sons of God, 3:1. This title indicates the high esteem in which God holds those who believe. They might therefore also

be expected to hold a position of eminence and honor in this world. But such is not the case. Christ already told His disciples that they would be in danger on account of their faith, Matt. 10:22; that they would be persecuted, John 15:20. St. John in 1 John 3:13 speaks of the hatred of the world against the Christians.

The apostle explains that this hostility of the world against the Christians is what naturally might be expected. The world takes the same position over against Christ's disciples as against Him, for "it knew Him not," v. 1. The world had no use for Christ at that time, and its attitude has never changed. Furthermore, adversities in this life should not offend the Christian, because his hope of deliverance does not center on this world but on his life in the world to come. Therefore "it doth not yet appear what we shall be," v. 2.

This state of affairs might offend some Christians and make them waver in their faith. Above all, they are "little children," 2:28; 3:7, a term of endearment as well as an allusion to weakness. Though in straits, they are encouraged to "abide in Him," to continue in firm faith in Jesus, so that they can stand before Him with joyfulness on the Day of Judgment, v:28. Then their hope will be realized, and they will enter into their full glory. They will be like Jesus, 3:2. Cp. also Rom. 8:29 f.; 1 Cor. 15:49-53; Phil 3:21; Col. 3:4. They shall see Jesus as He is, v. 2. Cp. also 1 Cor. 13:12. To see Jesus in His Word is the true Christian's greatest joy on earth. How much greater will be the joy of seeing his Lord face to face in eternity. Blessed sons of God who can look forward to such glory in the world to come as the culmination of their faith.

## 2

From the hope that he will be like Jesus naturally follows that the Christian already in this life seeks to become like his Lord so far as this is possible, v. 3a. Christians, as sons of God, must strive against sin. The apostle does not declare that Christians ever are sinless. He gives no support to the claims of the perfectionists. That the Christian, too, still sins, he indicates emphatically 1 John 1:8. This declaration he does not retract. Cf. also Luther's explanation of the Fifth Petition. Sin's inroads on the Christian's life are regrettable, but real. Christians do transgress the Law and so sin, v. 4. What the apostle wishes to emphasize is that sons of God do not live in sin. Sonship and slavery under sin are incompatible, v. 6a. Christians are now spiritually alive, Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13. Therefore the Christian purifies himself of his sins, v. 3. This is a continuous process; cf. also Luther's Catechism, Baptism, Fourthly. The power to strive successfully against sin comes from Christ's achievement in our behalf, v. 8b and v. 5.

The apostle issues a stern warning against living in sin. In

those early days there were deceivers who maintained that a life of sin could be harmonized with discipleship. They sought to pair Christ with Belial. The apostle minces no words in placing this attempt in its true light, v. 6b, even more than that, v. 8. He that lives in sin loses his sonship with God and becomes a child of the devil.

A timely warning also for our day. Deceivers are abroad who seek to tear down the barriers between Christ and the world. Christian faith and life are reduced to a minimum, and withal the assurance is given that such as follow these false prophets still are sons of God. We Christians should be on our guard and not permit ourselves to be deceived. We have a criterion by which to judge, v. 7b. Sons of God do what is right in the sight of their heavenly Father. By their fruits these false prophets shall be known, Matt. 7:15-20. Let us be on our guard since no more dreadful lot could overtake us than to lose our sonship with God.

Truly, the dangers that beset the sons of God are great. We are weak, but our strength lies in abiding with Jesus, and therefore we pray, *Lutheran Hymnal*, 417:6. GEO. V. SCHICK

### Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity

Heb. 4:9-13

The natural enmity of man against God manifests itself in his attitude toward God's Word, Law and Gospel. Man rejects both. He refuses to submit to the Law of God, boldly transgresses its demands, resents its threats and regards them as unjust and cruel. The Gospel fares no better. The salvation it offers is neglected, Heb. 2:3; the plan ridiculed, 1 Cor. 1:22, 23. The Letter to the Hebrews exhorts Christians not to follow this natural inclination, 2:1-3; 3:7, 12; 4:1. A similar warning admonition is recorded in our text.

#### Beware of Neglecting the Word of God!

1. *It is a living Word, piercing soul and body*
2. *It will judge us on the Last Day*

#### 1

V. 12a. The word of a man increases in power with the measure of his authority. The Bible is the Word of the living God, Heb. 3:12; 10:31; Ps. 36:9a; Jer. 23:36; of God Almighty, Is. 40:26, 28. Hence it is a living Word, 1 Pet. 1:23, never aging, never out of date. It is powerful, energetic, always active, Is. 55:11; Ps. 147:15. Shall we neglect this Word?

God's Word pierces soul and body, 12b. That is the effect of both Law and Gospel in both believers and unbelievers.

The Law of God, written in the heart of man, Rom. 2:15, and speaking to man in the Bible, in periodicals, through his fellow men, over the radio, convicts man of his sinfulness, Rom. 3:20; pierces his heart, rouses his antagonism against God, Rom. 4:15; Ex. 5:12; fills him with fear, often needless, Ps. 14:5, often well grounded, Heb. 2:15; affects his body, his joints and marrow, cp. Ps. 32:3, 4; hardens his heart, Heb. 3:13, 15, 16. Compare Smalc. Art., Part III, Art. II, *Trigl.*, p. 479. — This soul- and body-piercing power of the Law is experienced by the believing child of God throughout his life. Read penitent David's lament, Ps. 6:1-8; 38:1-11; Habakkuk's plea, chap. 3:1, 16; Paul's description of the constant struggle of the flesh against God's Law, Rom. 7, and you will realize the truth of Heb. 4:12; cp. Jer. 23:29.

The Gospel preached to unbelievers in like manner pierces soul and body. Christ assures us that the unbeliever, when hearing the Gospel, will be convicted by the Holy Spirit of its truth, John 16:8-11; and He tells Saul: Acts 9:5. And what heavenly joy permeates the body and soul of a believer when he by the grace of God is brought to faith and a new life by the Gospel of life and light. 2 Cor. 4:6; 3:17, 18; Is. 57:15-19; 61:1-3; Ps. 51:8. On the piercing, penetrating power of God's Word cp. Is. 6:8; Jer. 20:7, 9; Luke 24:45; Acts 2:37; 16:14, 30; 24:25; 26:24-28; 28:24-29. Shall we neglect this living Word?

## 2

Text, v. 12c. The Word of God is a discerner, one able to judge, to pronounce a correct sentence on the basis of the facts. Its discerning power is not restricted to the outer works; it is able to judge also the thoughts and intents of the heart, thoughts being the product of emotion or passion, intents of calm, logical reasoning. The inmost hearts, its feelings, its desires, its schemes, its motives, all lie naked and open to the eye of the all penetrating Word, v. 13b, which strips man of all natural or artificial covering, penetrates through all excuses, and demands of every individual, 13a, an answer to its double question: the one of the Law, Have you fulfilled the Law? Mark 12:30, 31; the other of the Gospel, Have you accepted Christ as your Savior? What shall our answer be? Shall we neglect that great salvation, that eternal rest and bliss, offered to all mankind, vv. 9, 10, by living in sin and serving it rather than the living God, or by relying on our own righteousness rather than the righteousness of Jesus which is revealed in the Gospel? Let us heed the solemn warning, v. 11. Then we shall in time and eternity experience the saving and sanctifying power of the Gospel and make the Law of God the norm of our life. Then we shall enter into that rest remaining to the people of God.

TH. LAETSCH