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## Practical Subjects for Pastoral Conferences

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### **“Practical” Subjects for Pastoral Conferences**

It is an interesting phenomenon, and one entirely in keeping with the lessons of church history, including the history of dogma, that a period of intense interest in doctrinal matters and in doctrinal discussions in any church-body may be followed by a period which is characterized by evidences of fatigue and of being surfeited with studies and discussions of this nature. In other words, we may expect periods of externalization to follow generations of the required emphasis on Scriptural doctrine in its fulness and comprehensiveness.

It is not necessary, of course, that such alternate seasons should be found in the Church, that the living orthodoxy of the Lutheran Reformation, for example, should be followed by a period of *Hochorthodoxie* introduced and sustained by what almost amounted to an evangelical scholasticism. But this movement finally resulted, as history shows, in excrescences which culminated in Pietism and even in Rationalism. If the history of dogma teaches us anything at all, we should learn to realize that a cold intellectualism in the field of Christian doctrine is bound to have such consequences, either an externalization in the outward forms of worship or a hostility toward the emphasis upon purity of doctrine. In more than one instance this tendency has led to indifference with regard to orthodoxy and subsequently to unionism. The literature of the Church offers abundant testimony, in such instances, of developments which operate with specious arguments intended to set aside the unequivocal insistence upon a full acceptance of Scriptural truth.

Many of these considerations were occasioned by observations made during the last decade, not so much with reference to any negotiations with other Lutheran bodies in America as with regard to phenomena in our own midst. There are symptoms before us, and some of these of an alarming nature, that discussions per-

taining to the primary or fundamental doctrines of the Bible are considered superfluous, if not boresome. Many of the topics assigned for pastoral conferences are far from the field of fundamental dogmatics and Biblical theology. Have we really exhausted the possibilities of study with regard to the doctrine of justification, especially the Scriptural fact of the objective justification with its implications for mission-work and church-membership classes, of the atonement through the blood of Christ, of the reconciliation planned in the counsel of the Triune God and effected through the sacrifice of Calvary? Are all the teachers of our Church clear on all points of the doctrine of conversion, of predestination, or the election of grace, even on plenary and verbal inspiration? And even if a conference, in the course of a few decades, has apparently exhausted the topics offered by the field of dogmatics so far as the older members are concerned, what about the young men, who certainly are in great need of being firmly rooted and grounded in the Word of Truth? If we feel that a change is needed, in order to give us a new approach, what about studying the entire Bible, or at least its most important books, from the standpoint of Biblical theology? It is inductive study, to be sure, and frequently requires harder work than the simpler deductive system of dogmatics. But what marvelous opportunities it offers to individuals and to groups, working along more functional lines, to ransack the Scriptures most thoroughly and to gain the confidence of direct contact with the inspired account!

If the objection is still voiced that present-day conditions demand practical discussions, our reply is this: Where could we expect discussions which have a more direct bearing upon any conceivable circumstance of life and conduct than in the Word of the eternal and omniscient God? Of course, we here proceed from the assumption, nay, upon the claim that the Scripture is not a mere historical document which brings lessons to us only by deduction and implication but that "whatsoever is written aforetime is written for our *learning*," Rom. 15:4, and that "*all Scripture is . . . profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,*" 2 Tim. 3:16. The attitude taken by some teachers at the present time that instructions and admonitions found in apostolic writings are not applicable to our times by the text itself finds no support in the Bible and its demands. Unless the context of any particular passage definitely limits the statements it contains to contemporaneous conditions, we are to regard the words of the Lord as having a direct bearing upon the belief and conduct of all men everywhere.

In support of our contention that the Bible is an intensely practical book and should be made the basis of all conference

discussions at all times, we should like to present, at this time, only two suggestions, supporting each of them with an outline containing evidence for our position. We are surely all in full agreement on the point that the Bible is a *book of teaching*, that its purpose is to make men wise. We have in the Scriptures the words of the prophets of old, in the historical, prophetic, and poetical books of the Old Testament; and we have the words of the evangelists (including the direct teaching of our Savior) and the apostles in the books of the New Testament. Do we often pay attention to the fact that the *form of presentation*, and not only the content, the approach and the method, offer a very important field of study to the teacher of the Bible to this day? For example, Jesus had the words of eternal life, as Peter so joyfully confesses, John 6:68. Yet He did not fling these words at men in various teaching situations in an indiscriminate manner, but He proved Himself a master teacher by taking into account the individual and the group, the background and the state of intelligence, in fact, every item or factor which was necessary to bring about conditions of perfect teaching. And this fact must be kept in mind with regard to all the other teachers who speak to us through the pages of the Bible. True, we cannot place them on a level with the Master Teacher, Jesus, in whom "all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily," and "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. 2:9,3, but we know that the Holy Ghost, who gave these men the *impulsus scribendi* and also the *materia docendi*, thereby utilized and undoubtedly also intensified the natural ability of the inspired writers as *διδασκαλοι*. In other words, these men, under the Spirit's guidance, made use of their natural capacities as well as their acquired abilities, also in the field of teaching, in order to present the divine truth in the best possible form in the specific teaching situations with which they were confronted when they penned the words of their accounts, letters, or dissertations. That is why these writings are such excellent models for our study, not only for their content but also for their form. That is why an individual, or a group, could well spend decades of intensive study in order to understand the teaching methods of the inspired writers and, if possible, to follow in their footsteps.

Let us take, for example, the Apostle Paul. Even a superficial knowledge of Biblical Introduction will enable the student of Scriptures to see how amazingly well the form of his teaching fitted the situation of each addressee whom he had in mind as he wrote. His manner of presentation differs in each of his letters, even in those which were written to the same congregations and within a relatively short interval, as *e. g.*, in the case of

the letters to the Corinthians or those to the Thessalonians. There are similarities, to be sure, in the so-called Captivity Letters and in the Pastoral Letters. But the differences observable in these letters are just as clearly set forth, if one but takes the trouble to look for them.

The Letter to the Romans is rightly called the *didactica magna* of the Apostle Paul, and evidently not only on account of its contents but also on account of its form. It is compelling, overwhelming in its argumentation; it leads the reader from one point to another, so that he cannot escape the conclusions which inevitably grow out of the discussion. Let us analyze the first chapters of this remarkable document.

The apostle at once establishes a point of contact with his readers, the members of the congregation at Rome, which at this time he had not yet visited. His salutation awakens interest, because it at once places the God-man, Christ Jesus, in the center of the discussion, and his greeting is sincere, eager, and enthusiastic: "beloved of God, called to be saints." It is a positive, constructive approach, and highly practical, because it shows the apostle's intense and prayerful longing for the Roman Christians and refers to his earnest attempts to make the journey to Rome at the earliest opportunity. At the conclusion of this wonderful introduction (vv. 16, 17) the apostle states the theme of the entire letter in the words of a mighty declaration, while at the same time he suggests the question which his readers were expected to have in mind as the aim of the teaching of the letter, namely: How is this righteousness of God to be obtained?

In developing his theme or topic, the apostle, having in mind to present the righteousness of God, as wrought by Christ and imputed to faith, must needs proceed from the fact of the need of this righteousness on the part of man. In vv. 18-32, therefore, he draws a startlingly vivid picture and a scathing denunciation of the Gentile world, with its unspeakable guilt before the holy God. Every word of this description is so placed and so supported as to exclude the slightest opportunity of any Gentile to offer extenuating circumstances or to plead innocence.

But at this point the apostle hears an implied objection, namely on the part of one or more members of the Roman congregation of Jewish extraction: Surely this accusation and denunciation does not include me; I am not guilty of such idolatry or of such unspeakably wicked conduct. But the apostle immediately brings a counter-argument, which completely overthrows the protests of self-righteousness. He flatly states that the Jew and the Gentile are in the same position before God. He asks a leading and very personal question to provoke thought and to

arouse the conscience, followed by a direct charge that self-righteousness tends to harden the heart and to inure the conscience. (Vv. 3-5.)

Having thus stated his thesis with regard to the condemnation of both Gentiles and Jews before the forum of God's holiness, the apostle analyzes this theme by showing that the judgment of God is against all unrighteousness, no matter where it is found, climaxing a series of parallel clauses with an emphatic declaration that there is no respect of persons with God, whether a person without the knowledge of the written Law or with such a knowledge is concerned in the situation. This development of the apostle's major premise, up to and including verse 16, is followed by a minor premise in vv. 17-29, concerning the failure of the Jew to fulfil the Law. The writer begins with an assumption or hypothetical case, with a description of a Jew who might feel that his conduct is in full agreement with the Law of God, vv. 17-20. But the conclusions in his own favor which the Jew evidently wishes to have drawn are skilfully set aside and proved to be inadequate by a series of leading questions which definitely cause the self-righteous Jew to reconsider his opinion of himself, vv. 21-23. The inevitable deduction from the obvious answer to these questions is clinched by an appeal to Scripture authority, to an argument from the Ceremonial Law, and by two rhetorical questions, vv. 24-27. The conclusion of this minor premise takes the form of an explanation which intends to have the Jewish reader form a correct definition of one who is a Jew indeed, namely, according to the estimate of God, vv. 28, 29.

But at this point the apostle senses the possibility of an objection, which he must answer in order to satisfy his readers as to the correctness of his contention that the Jews are also under the condemnation of unrighteousness. Some one may say: What advantage, then, has the Jew? Is the position which he held under the Old Testament covenant of no benefit to him? Is all his supposed righteousness in the outward keeping of the Law an empty boast? Chap. 3:1. The apostle begins to reply by pointing to at least one outward advantage, a privilege which is historical and therefore objectively acceptable, namely, that to the Jews God had committed His oracles. Immediately another objection in the form of a suggestive question is interjected: Surely the fact that there were some renegades among the people of the Old Covenant could not make the faithfulness of God invalid, so that His adoption of the Jews, presumably on the basis of their righteousness, would no longer stand? The negative answer is given by the apostle with great vehemence, and supported, furthermore, by a Scripture text, v. 4.

Still another objection is implied in vv. 5 and 6, again in the form of a suggestive question calling for a negative answer on the part of the apostle: If the righteousness of God, by way of contrast to the unrighteousness of men, stands out all the more gloriously on the strength of the latter, should we assume that God is expending his anger on man when He charges them with unrighteousness? Would that not militate against just judgment of God? The apostle disposes also of this objection. And still another point might be raised here, as the apostle indicates, vv. 7 and 8, namely, that the very fact of human deficiency might redound to the glory of God, for which reason God should not be so severe with those by whose sinful actions some good was caused.

This leads to the climax of this part of the apostle's argument, which he introduces as a question on the part of some Jewish reader or hearer, somewhat sarcastically offered: I take it, then, that we Jews are not considered better than the Gentiles with respect to an acceptable righteousness. And Paul's reply is forceful: No, in no wise, a statement which he proceeds to prove by a long list of passages from the Old Testament, every one of which places Jews and Gentiles on the same level of condemnation before the forum of God's justice and tells all men, without exception, that they lack the righteousness which would make them acceptable in the sight of God. And the conclusion of this entire argument, with special reference to the Jewish objector and skeptic, is: By works of the Law no mortal may hope to be declared righteous in the sight of God.

The summary of the apostle's arguments up to this point may be given as follows: Major premise, God's judgment is against all unrighteousness (and the Gentiles must here be declared to be unrighteous); minor premise, The Jew has failed to fulfil the Law of God (hence the Jew also is unrighteous); conclusion: The Jew is equally guilty with the Gentile in the sight of God.

Thus one might continue through the entire letter, analyzing the manner of Paul's teaching from paragraph to paragraph and from verse to verse, and thereby penetrating ever more deeply into the pedagogical skill of this great teacher. A small conference might do well to put the Greek text of Romans into the hands of all its members and, with the aid of some grammatical knowledge, trace the development of every argument employed for the sake of drawing conclusions and driving home the individual points. It is a project which will undoubtedly elicit much discussion and will lead to a better evaluation and application of the apostle's amazing teaching ability, a form of training which clearly is invaluable for both children's and adult catechumen classes.

Let us now demonstrate a second form of the study of Scrip-

tures along practical lines. It is a form of topical study along synthetic lines, the theme being: The position and work of Christian women according to the Pastoral Letters. A requirement for the success of this type of conference work is the absence of fixed ideas, of preconceived notions, for we must at all times approach the Word of God with open minds, with the suggestion of Eli, as made to Samuel, furnishing the impetus: Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.

Our theme may be put thus: What does the Lord say through His inspired apostle, concerning the position of Christian women in the home and in the Church? Let us analyze or subdivide our topic by asking: 1. What about young women? 2. What about older women? 3. What about young widows? 4. What about older widows?

1. What about young women? What is their position according to the express will of God?—The apostle names some personal virtues and habits when he states that women in general are not to exhibit the characteristics of the emancipated females of the Grecian world, and in particular of the *demimonde* of that day. The coiffure affected by women of loose morals, with a plethora of gold and pearls and costly garments bedecking their bodies, was definitely not in harmony with the conduct of those women of whom the Lord expected modesty and a show of quiet common sense, healthy-mindedness of the highest order, which certainly does not seek the attention of either men or women by clothing that attracts the eye, for Christian women are to dress only in modest apparel, such as is not worn with the idea of alluring men or emphasizing charms which are not intended by the Lord for public display. 1 Tim. 2:9. Instead of this, the one and only way in which a Christian woman is truly adorned to please the Lord, as one professing godliness, is by the exercise of good works. V. 10.

Does it follow, then, that a Christian woman is to withdraw from all human society and intercourse and to be condemned to a life of ignorance? Not at all, as the apostle explains in verse 11. She may and she should learn, but, as the Lord says, in silence she shall learn, in all subjection, as one who is under the direction and headship of her husband (or her father). Her mentality and intellectual equipment are not for one moment questioned or placed on a low level, for it is a question of headship and leadership only. Cp. 1 Cor. 14:34, 35. In emphasizing the point that a Christian woman should not assume the functions of a public teacher in meetings representative of the congregations ("keeping silence in the congregations"), the apostle adds: "To teach I do not permit a woman, nor to lord it over a man, but to be in silence." V. 12. So it is definitely the Lord's will to have women



excluded from positions of teaching and leadership in the Church, for the two verbs are coordinated in the sentence. And this command the apostle supports by proof-texts from the Old Testament (Gen. 1:27; 2:7, 22; 3:6). On the one hand, the priority of Adam's creation is presented as the reason for the leadership of the man in the affairs concerned in this statement. And, on the other hand, there is the fact that Eve, the woman, was completely misled by Satan, so that she, literally, "became in the transgression," that is, she was involved in it, she was the first to yield to the blandishments of the devil. This again does not reflect upon the keenness of the woman's intellect but merely indicates that her emotional reactions may cause her to yield more quickly than the average man under the same circumstances. Cp. Eccl. 7:28. See also the apostle's reference to the proneness to emotional instability, 2 Tim. 3:6 f.

That the apostle has chiefly younger women in mind, such as may normally be supposed to live in the estate of holy matrimony, is seen from the concluding verse of the chapter, which sets forth the position and the function of a Christian woman in a most unique way, for the apostle states: "She shall, however, be saved through child-bearing," this being her special God-given privilege and a good work which would, in a particular sense, give evidence of the saving faith which lives in her heart, as the concluding words, in a generalizing statement, declare: "If they (that is, all the women who are here concerned, who fit the apostle's description) remain in faith and love and sanctification, with healthy-mindedness." These are personal qualifications and virtues which appear in the life of Christian women in the sphere which the economy of God has assigned to them.

If we turn, now, to Titus 2:4, 5, we find an enumeration of attributes and virtues which the Lord expects in younger women. The young women, according to the text, are to be "husband-loving, children-loving," evidently as the basis of family life, and in this connection sensible, chaste. Of particular importance in this connection is the word *οικουργός*, connected with a verb which means "to perform the housewifely duties, to attend to the work of the household." Well does the adjective *ἀγαθός* attach itself to the list at this point, since it means *tuechtig, brauchbar, tauglich*, excellent, applying herself to her duties, dependable. And the concluding phrases are certainly most significant: "Subject to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed." A Christian woman who fails in this respect, brings shame and disgrace upon the name and Word of God. Cp. Rom. 2:23, 24.

If we briefly summarize what the Pastoral Letters say specifically of younger women, we have the following picture. Their

sphere of activity is not to be in public, specifically in the public meetings in which the affairs of the Christian congregation are managed, not in congregational or ecclesiastical leadership. Their dress and adornment is not to be along the lines affected by the women of the world, in an ostentatious display of jewelry and alluring coiffures. Their conduct is to reflect good common sense and healthy-mindedness, discretion, chastity, goodness, submissiveness to their husbands, love, holiness, as outgrowths of true faith. Above all, the home should be the center of their activity, in having charge of its various duties, in bearing and rearing children and in showing the proper regard for the members of their household. The slogan of the former empress of Germany, Augusta Viktoria, may well find emulation also in our days: *Kirche, Kinder, Kueche*.

We have treated the first point at some length, in order to demonstrate the possibilities of such topical treatment with practical applications. We shall present the other points in outline form only.

2. What about older women? What is their position according to the will of God? How can they best give evidence of their consecration to their Lord? — They are, briefly, to exhibit those attributes which will accord to them the respect due to mothers, 1 Tim. 5:2a. They are, more specifically, as the apostle states, in their attitude to be respectable, their entire conduct being in keeping with their position as saints, yea, as priestesses of the Lord (*ἱεροποιεῖς*). Of course, they cannot be guilty of tale-bearing and blackening their neighbors' character, nor will they be addicted to wine, being slaves of spirituous liquors in habitual drinking. A very fine sphere of activity for such older women, whom the duties of the household will probably not confine to the home exclusively, is given by the apostle in the words that they should be "good teachers, in order that they may give sensible instruction (and by such admonitions bring about a condition of a well-balanced judgment) to younger women." This suggestion of the apostle opens up a field of great opportunities, since older women have a most excellent chance to give the younger women the benefit of their experience and thus to be patterns to them in sanctified living. It is a field of activity which may well satisfy the most energetic and ambitious of Christian women, so that there will be no need for further fields to conquer.

3. What about young widows? Apparently their position in the Christian congregations in apostolic times called for special treatment, but the principles laid down in the inspired account may well serve to regulate certain vexing problems in Christian congregations at this time. The apostle's direction to Timothy with

reference to this situation is sharp: "But the younger widows reject (that is, refuse to have their names placed on the rosters of those who received special assistance from the congregation)." The reason for this is contained in the explanation of the apostle that the assistance given by the congregation in such cases might cause such younger widows to give themselves to a wanton life, contrary to the life of chastity which the profession of Christianity exacts from its adherents, so that women of this type often reached the stage when they actually denied the faith which they had formerly held and confessed. At the same time the opportunity given them by the assistance rendered by the Christian congregation might cause them to yield to idleness and to become gadabouts and busybodies, concerning themselves with affairs which were none of their business and thus making a nuisance of themselves, especially by their idle talk. The strong apostolic advice and injunction in cases of this kind, therefore, is that these younger women should get married, that they should bear and rear children, that they should be in charge of the home, and thus in every possible way avoid the danger of having the adversaries of the Christian religion speak of it in a disparaging manner. (Each one of these points may be carried out at much greater length, with constant reference to parallel passages in Scripture.)

4. What about older widows? Here the Lord's instructions are very comprehensive, 1 Tim. 5:3 ff., 9ff. The apostle definitely condemns any widow who lives in wantonness. His picture of a widow whose conduct is God-pleasing is that of one who in her more or less lonely state puts her trust in God, who is the God of the widows and the fatherless, and is engaged in prayers and in supplications night and day, thus keeping in the most intimate communion with her heavenly Father at all times. And in further characterizing a widow who lives in accordance with the high ideals of the Christian religion, the apostle emphasizes chastity and faithfulness in holy marriage, together with the fact that such a widow should have the testimony of having been active in good works, of having borne and reared children, of having practiced true Christian hospitality, of having relieved the troubles of those who were in affliction, and of having very earnestly and assiduously followed good works of every kind. Here again the individual points could be carried out at great length, in order that every Christian congregation, with its pastor, may understand the will of God with regard also to the older widows in the congregation. For such is the description which the Word of God affords with reference to the position of Christian women in the various circumstances of life.

It is in this manner that pastoral conferences may well do their work along the lines of institutes, in studying the Word of God in its many practical applications in life situations, the many professional relationships as well as the doctrinal implications. The number of topics which could be treated in this fashion is practically inexhaustible, and corporate study conducted in this fashion will certainly lead to a deeper appreciation of the Bible as the source of all doctrine and the one norm of life.

P. E. KRETZMANN

## Verbal Inspiration — a Stumbling-Block to the Jews and Foolishness to the Greeks

*(Continued)*

We are asked to come in under the charter of liberty proclaimed by the moderns which calls for freedom from "the tyranny of words." We cannot do so, for three reasons.

First, we do not feel that Verbal Inspiration imposes a legalistic yoke on us. It does indeed require of us unquestioning acceptance of all the statements of Scripture. On that we and the moderns are agreed. We are bound by every word of Scripture. But we do not resent, nor rebel against, this bondage. It is a holy bondage. We rejoice in it. Why? Verbal Inspiration has taught us that these words of Scripture are God's words. In every word of Scripture our glorious Lord, our gracious God, is speaking.

We can understand the attitude of the moderns. They conceive of the Bible as a more or less human product. "Die heilige Schrift," R. F. Grau and the rest say, "ist uns nicht mehr ein grosser vom Himmel herabgesandter Gesetzeskodex." But we know that it actually did come down from heaven. "Holy Scripture did not grow here on earth." (Luther, VII:2095.) Therefore we give it honor and reverence and gladly obey every word of it.

The moderns are laboring under the delusion that ever so many of its statements are erroneous, that ever so many of its teachings need restatement and development. Verbal Inspiration has freed us from this delusion and superstition. We have learned that God's Book is perfect. We fear to lay unholy hands upon it. We tremble at God's Word. "As for me, every verse makes the world too small for me." (Luther, XX:788.)

No, no; we do not feel that the command to "consent to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 6:3) puts us under a degrading bondage. When God addresses His servants, they say: "Speak; for Thy servant heareth," 1 Sam. 3:10; "Thou hast the words of eternal life," John 6:68. When we read and preach holy