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Outlines on Old Testament Texts (Synodical Conference)

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Outlines on Old Testament Texts (Synodical Conference)

Invocavit

Gen. 3:1-15

Here we have the first record of sin and grace. Sin is revealed in all its hideousness and fearfully disastrous consequences. But the grace of God is mightier. The marvelous beauty, the great saving power, the eternal comfort, of God's grace is revealed for the first time.

Of course, there are questions unanswered. How could Satan conceive the foolish idea to rebel against the Almighty? How could Adam and Eve, while living in Paradise, become dissatisfied and desire the forbidden fruit? How could the holy God still love His ungrateful creatures, with a love so infinite? But though we cannot answer these questions, what is necessary for our salvation is revealed.

The First Record of Sin and Grace

1. *It depicts sin in all its disastrous hideousness*
2. *It reveals the grace of God in all its saving beauty*

1

V.1. The place is the Garden of Eden, Paradise, where Adam and Eve lived in perfect bliss, in perfect holiness. God had given them an opportunity to express their love and adoration for their Creator by a certain restrictive command.

Into this Paradise enters the Tempter, who uses the serpent for his sinister purpose. The woman is addressed, her emotions are appealed to. The question is so formulatd as to arouse doubt in the Creator's goodness.

Vv.3 and 4. The woman adds to God's command, "Neither shall ye touch it." Why? Does she begin to doubt the justice of God's restrictive command?

Vv.5 and 6. The wily Tempter sees his advantage. He gives God the lie. Direct and complete denial of God's veracity and benevolent intention. He plants his own pride and ambition into the woman's soul.

V.6. Eve fell. Her looking at the forbidden tree reveals that in her heart she already had lost all fear, love, and trust in God. The eating of the fruit was but a logical sequence. Adam followed his wife into rebellion.

V.7. The consequences of sin. Their heart is now filled with shameful desires, lusts easily inflamed.

V.8. The awakening of an uneasy conscience. Childlike trust is replaced by fear and distrust.

Vv.9-13. Hideous selfishness puts the blame on others, even

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on God Himself, disregards the welfare of others, lies to escape retribution, blunts the perception, they think they can deceive omniscient God.

V. 14. The curse. Here is the answer to the question, Whence all misery? By sin man has lost the bliss of Paradise and is now under the curse of God. That is the story of satanic cunning, of hideous ingratitude, of terrible misery resulting, of holy wrath and retribution. Thank God the record does not end here.

2

V. 15. These are stern words for the devil. They reveal, however, a grace unbounded, a grace filled with sweet promise and comfort. While it is possible, even probable, that the Lord explained these words to the two sinners, yet they in themselves convey a sweet message. They speak of a bloody conflict between the devil and a descendant of the woman. Since the woman expressed no astonishment when she heard the serpent speak, it is safe to assume that she and Adam knew that Satan spoke through the serpent. Here she heard that her Descendant would fight with Satan and bruise his head, that is, overcome him, conquer him. And that meant deliverance from his power, restoration of their lost estate. That Satan should bruise His heel indicated that the Deliverer should conquer by suffering and dying. That this Conquerer was called the Seed of the woman and not the seed of the man indicated that He would be something else besides being human. That this Seed was actually to conquer Satan convinced Adam and Eve that God Himself would become their Redeemer, born of a woman. To sum up: Sometime in the future there would rise up a person, a seed of the woman, yet divine, and redeem the lost and condemned sinners from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil.

Fortified with this glorious hope, our first parents left Paradise and entered upon a life of misery. This promise of hope became clearer century after century, until at the God-appointed time the Son of God became man and as the God-man did his saving work.

H. J. BOUMAN

Second Sunday in Lent

Gen. 22:1-19

Faith grows in temptation. See Gospel for today. Abraham rightly called "Father of Believers."

A Patriarch in a Patriarchal Temptation *

1. He does not question God's Word.

God had tested Abraham on previous occasions, e.g., when He commanded him to expel Ishmael, Gen. 21:11. But God had

* See Luther, St. Louis, I:1482.

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tempered this trial, v. 12. The command to sacrifice Isaac, text, v. 2, is different, for it seems to clash with Gen. 9:6, and particularly with Gen. 17:19; 21:12. Abraham's dilemma: Either God, who has revealed Himself as the absolute Truth, Gen. 24:27, is not trustworthy after all (sin of blasphemy), or because of lack of gratitude God is displeased with Abraham and has revoked His former promises (sin of despair). Christians are prone to follow their reason in trials: Eve, Gen. 3:3, 6; Zacharias, Luke 1:18; Peter, Matt. 16:22. But Abraham is a patriarch in a patriarchal temptation. He carries out God's commandment immediately—early in the morning; apparently no consultation with Sarah nor Isaac. As far as Abraham is concerned, the sacrifice is *fait accompli*. V. 16; Heb. 11:17, 18; Jas. 2:21. God has spoken; the case is settled. The battle in his bosom is over and the victory won. God must solve the apparent clashes. Abraham obeys to the letter, with the whole heart, at once.—“Oh, for a faith that will not shrink!” We have God's Word as the perfect norm for faith and life. But doubts concerning such doctrines as original sin, the incarnation, predestination, arise; we stumble at apparent contradictions. Then we must take our reason captive. Our duty is not to solve, but to accept the mysteries. Or God's absolute standard of holiness clashes with man's relative ethical standard. The refractory Old Adam, the hedonistic world, and the murderous devil combine to tempt the Christian and cause terrific emotional strains. What shall the Christian do? There is only one answer, namely, the counterquestion: What has God said in His Word? Be a patriarch in a patriarchal temptation. At God's command the hardest task becomes play. Rest assured that, if necessary, God will send 10,000 angels to help you to accept God's Word without question.

2. *He will make the most of God's clearly revealed will.*

God has revealed as much of His being and will as is necessary for us. Even in the mysterious command to Abraham, God reveals His gracious purpose. And the eye of faith immediately detects it. It was the word Moriah, vv. 2, 14. The meaning of the word probably is “the place where God sees” or “where He is seen,” i. e., where God will reveal Himself. (Luther: Moriah from *jare*, to revere, to worship, to serve God, which is done by obedience to, and absolute trust in, God and His Word. St. L., I:1493.) Thus the word Moriah is a promise that God will explain. Therefore Abraham hastens to Moriah. Your Moriah is God's Word, the public service and sermon, the instruction through your pastor and fellow Christians. Whether you are assailed by doubts concerning doctrine, e. g., the universal will of God and the election of grace, or doubts concerning Christian conduct, go to your

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Moriah. But more; as a drowning man clings to the proverbial straw, so in the hour of temptation the Christian searches God's Word for something to support him, and this will become an un-sinkable lifeboat. Former promises take on a new meaning for Abraham, particularly Gen. 17:17; 18:11. Isaac has been dead once before and has been raised. God will do it again, v. 5. Cp. Heb. 11:11, 19; Rom. 4:17-21. Faith transforms the ashes of Isaac into the seed from which kings and the Messiah shall issue. Reason says: In the midst of life we are surrounded by death, but faith reverses this and says: In the midst of death we are surrounded by life. 2 Cor. 1:9; 6:9; Ps. 118:17; 1 Cor. 15:55; John 11:26. Now Isaac's question is answered, vv. 7, 8. The small text in Gen. 18:14 is expanded by faith into an exhaustive treatise of Christian doctrine. And this little verse becomes the source of unlimited power, vv. 9, 10, 12. — Hold to those promises which are clear. The nine words: Mark 16:16a will become so great and meaningful that they will close hell and open paradise for you.

3. He will go from truth to truth.

When Abraham has made the most of a relatively simple truth, God leads him to new truths. God gives Him an oath of His faithfulness, v. 16. Heb. 6:13. True, the new promise, vv. 17, 18, is similar to previous promises, 12, 3; 15:5; but it is clearer and more inclusive. Abraham's action is symbolic of the work of the Seed, Gal. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:19, 20; Rom. 8:32. It is always thus. The more firmly faith relies on God's Word, the greater the blessings, for God is like a fountain. Cf. Large Catechism, *Trigl.*, p. 713, 55-58. And at last we shall go from Beer-sheba to the heavenly Jehovah-jareh, from faith to sight, 1 Cor. 13:12. New hymnal, 133, 5-7. Amen.

F. E. MAYER

Oculi

Psalm 25

The Book of Psalms the hymn book and prayer book of the Old Testament Church. Hymns and prayers inspired by the Spirit of God. Therefore hymns and prayers which never grow old. True, Old Testament writers had only the light of prophecy; yet their prayers are models also for us who live in the light of fulfillment. One such psalm, a prayer from beginning to end, our text for today. With the Psalmist

Let Us Lift Up Our Souls unto God in Prayer

1. *For forgiveness*
2. *For divine guidance*
3. *For help in every trouble*

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1

The Psalmist voices various desires. Very prominent is his desire for the forgiveness of sins. V. 7: "Remember not the sins of my youth nor my transgressions." These were of two kinds, sins (*chatta'oth*, i. e., slips, missteps) and transgressions (*pes'haim*, i. e., rebellions). How well this describes the sins of adolescence! Partly missteps, due to thoughtlessness and weakness, partly rebellion against God and His Law.

V. 11: "For Thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great." A deep sense of guilt.

V. 18: "Forgive all my sins." He knows that they are many.

The basis of forgiveness not something in the Psalmist but "for Thy name's sake," because Thou hast the name that Thou art a merciful God and forgivest sins, and Thy name corresponds to Thine essence and attributes. Ex. 34:6, 7; Micah 7:18, 19.

We join the Psalmist in this petition for forgiveness. Jesus taught His disciples the Fifth Petition.

The believer who thus lifts up his soul unto God for forgiveness will surely find it. The name of our merciful God — the name of Jesus the Savior guarantees it. The answer, Matt. 9:2; Is. 1:18.

2

The Psalmist prays also for divine guidance. V. 4: "Show me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths." V. 5: "Lead me in Thy truth and teach me."

The ways and paths of the Lord are those which He approves and would have the believer go. These are, first of all, the ways of God's commandments. They are, secondly, also the special ways on which He leads believers. They include joy, sorrow, success, failure, suffering.

Always the believer prays: Hymn 549:5.

This prayer for guidance is heard. V. 8: "Good and upright is the Lord; therefore will He teach sinners in the way." Sinners, here *chattaim*, those who sin in weakness, who slip, but are penitent believers. Vv. 9, 12. V. 14: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him"; i. e., God holds, as it were, familiar intercourse with them, telling them what are His thoughts, "and He will show them His covenant."

These ways and paths in which He instructs and guides the believer are good. V. 10: "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant," etc. Old Testament counterpart of Rom. 8:28.

3

Forgiveness and guidance are the most necessary gifts. But the believer prays also for help in his manifold troubles.

V. 2: "O my God, I trust in Thee; let me not be ashamed; let

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not mine enemies triumph over me." V. 16: "Turn Thee unto me and have mercy upon me, for I am desolate and afflicted." Vv. 17, 18a, 19, 20.

What believer is there who has not troubles of his own which would cause him to join with the Psalmist in these prayers for help?

Such prayers are heard. V. 15: "He shall pluck my feet out of the net." Yes, God will abundantly bless His own. V. 13: "His soul shall dwell at ease, and his seed shall inherit the earth."

Having such a God, who is merciful and forgiving and ready to guide and help and bless, who would not lift up His soul unto Him in trusting prayer, pleading for forgiveness, for guidance, for help? Hymn 457.

FRED KRAMER

Laetare

Deut. 7:6-11

The season of Lent brings home to us God's earnest demand that we render Him sincere and wholehearted service, Matt. 26:41; Luke 23:28. — Such service the people in the Gospel for this Sunday did not render the Lord, John 6:15. They were earthly-minded, selfish, materialistic, seeking only the gifts of this world, and not Christ's spiritual blessings, and this despite the Savior's ineffable goodness, v. 5; Matt. 14:14. But so the Jews as a nation have always scorned God's kindness. Acts 7:51. — How do we respond to His goodness, exhibited especially in the sacred story of Lent? Let us examine ourselves today on this point.

God's Unspeakable Goodness Toward Us

We consider

1. *How God's great love has been manifested*
2. *Our joyous, willing response to His love*

1

Toward Israel God manifested His love by making this nation His "holy people," v. 6; Jer. 2:3. Israel was *dedicated* to God and so blessed with the highest temporal and spiritual blessings, v. 8c; Deut. 33:1 ff. Not only our text, but the whole Old Testament depicts God's uncountable benedictions bestowed on Israel.

This amazing exaltation of Israel was not due to any merit or worthiness of the people as such, V. 7. Scripture describes to us Israel's lowly beginning, Gen. 12:1-3; Is. 51:1, 2. It also tells us of Israel's sinful stubbornness, Is. 65:2; Rom. 10:21. — The cause of Israel's exaltation was (a) God's *unmerited love*, v. 8; 10:15; Is. 43:3, 4; (b) God's *gracious covenant* with Israel, v. 8b; Luke 1:55, 72, 73; (c) God's *faithfulness*, v. 9; Heb. 11:11. — Israel's tem-

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poral and spiritual blessings thus had their source in God's free grace, Is. 54:10.

As Israel, so also we have been blessed with innumerable blessings, temporal and spiritual. Consider the good land which God has given us with all the blessings of our daily bread enumerated by Luther in his explanation of the Fourth Petition.— But contemplate yet more the greater spiritual blessings which we consider especially in the season of Lent. All these blessings have been given us without any merit or worthiness on our part, solely by the grace of God, who in His great love has chosen us and in His faithfulness has showered His blessings of body and soul upon us even when we did not deserve them.— What shall be our response to God? He demanded of Israel joyous, willing service. He demands the same of us today. Let our response to His love be joyous and willing.

2

God made known to Israel His demand in very clear and impressive words, v.11. Israel was to observe all the laws of God, His commandments, statutes, judgments. Not only the Moral Law, but also the Ceremonial Law and the Political Law were to be kept by Israel, for which reason God in our text speaks of commandments, statutes, and judgments, which terms describe God's laws from different points of view. This earnest demand we find repeated throughout the Old Testament, especially in Ex. 20:1 ff. and Deut. 5:1 ff.— In addition, He threatened them with severest punishments in case they would fail to render Him cheerful, willing obedience, v. 10; Is. 59:18; Ex. 20:5.— These threats have been executed upon the stubborn, rebellious Jews, whose city was destroyed and who were scattered throughout the nations as a manifestation of God's just wrath, Luke 23:31; Matt. 24:2.

As of Israel, so God asks also of us cheerful and willing obedience, e. g., Gal. 5:16 ff.; Eph. 5:1 ff. His wrath will be upon us, as it was upon Israel, if we fail to obey His commandments, v.10; Gal. 6:6, 7. Let this wrath of God move us to serve Him. Lent pictures to us also God's great wrath upon sin, for if God so severely punished our transgressions in His dear Son, our Substitute, how much greater will be our punishment if we refuse to obey Him?— But should not rather God's goodness move us to love Him above all things and to do what He desires us to do? If God has glorified His love and faithfulness in our election, redemption, conversion, and sanctification, should we not walk as His dear children after the example of our Redeemer? Rom. 12:1 ff.; Phil. 2:5 ff.— May this Lenten season lead us to a deeper appreciation of God's goodness and love, 1 John 4:19; 3:18, and to more cheerful and willing obedience to Christ Jesus, our Lord.

J. THEODORE MUELLER