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Outlines on Old Testament Texts (Synodical Conference)

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Outlines on Old Testament Texts (Synodical Conference)

Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity

2 Kings 5:8-19

"The heavens declare the glory of God." Ps. 19:1. Man can learn from nature that there is a Supreme Being, omnipotent, eternal, glorious, Rom. 1:19, 20. However, really to know God and to trust in Him is not within the range of man's natural powers. It is rather, as we see also in the case of Naaman, the Syrian, a divine gift bestowed by means of the Word of God.

Naaman's Conversion to the God of Israel

1. *How It Was Brought About* 2. *How It Became Evident*

1

Naaman was a man of high rank and authority. V. 1. Not often do we find such among the believers. 1 Cor. 1:26. How did it come about? All his worldly glory notwithstanding, he was a leper. But his wife had a maid of Israel waiting on her. V. 2. The little maid recommended the prophet in Samaria. V. 3. Acting on this recommendation and equipped with a letter of his king Benhadad to Joram, king of Israel, Naaman called on the latter.

The reaction of Joram to Benhadad's letter was unfavorable and very discouraging. V. 7. Hope had all but died out of the leper's heart, and he was about to abandon his quest when a message of divinely inspired, supreme confidence arrived from the prophet. V. 8. Obeying the summons, Naaman stood at the door of the house of Elisha. However, he did not so much as come out to meet the great man, who was to realize that his princely splendor and riches did not give him a claim on God's favor. But he sent him the command and promise of v. 10. Strange to say Naaman did not welcome this good word. Vv. 11, 12. He had very definite ideas of his own as to how the cure was to be effected. And since the prophet's prescription was not in line with these, he turned and went away in a rage. But God was longsuffering and patient with him. The sensible remonstrance of his servants was the means by which the general was brought to his senses.

He now sees his folly. Instead of following his physician's instructions, he had tried to do the prescribing. Though doubts may still have assailed him, yet faith kept the upper hand and won the day. As he dipped himself in Jordan the seventh time, "his flesh came again as the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." Not

only physical health he recovered but also health of soul. He had found his God.

Like Naaman we, too, are indebted to God for our faith. The same blindness and opposition to God's Word that we note in Naaman afflicted and actuated us. We were just as sinful and guilty, just as unreceptive to the Gospel. But according to His mercy he saved us. Titus 3:4-7; Eph. 5:25-27; 1 John 5:20. Such grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. 2 Tim. 1:9.

2

That Naaman had indeed become clean, also morally, his attitude and conduct make evident. V. 15 a; Luke 17:15. With a heart aglow with love and gratitude to the God of Israel, he urges upon the Lord's prophet a princely gift. V. 15; cp. v. 5 b. In this case, however, the prophet declines. He wants the truth to stand out clear and unclouded that it was the Lord's doing. Without resenting the refusal Naaman asks for another favor. V. 18. Of this soil he wants to build an altar as a memorial to the divine benefaction. Ps. 103:1-3. On this he intends to offer burnt offerings and sacrifices only to the Lord. He has a tender conscience. V. 18. It is a great relief to him that he may enter the house of Rimmon in the performance of his duty as the king's adjutant.

If our heart has been purified by faith, it will appear in our disposition and life. We shall be glad to support the ministry with our contributions. 1 Cor. 9:11, 14; Gal. 6:6. To worship God publicly and privately will not be onerous, but a sweet and blessed privilege, and we shall sacrifice to God the thankofferings of our lips and of willing obedience. There can be with believers no flouting of God's will, no moral laxity. They will conscientiously seek to ascertain and do the will of God and will not be found in unsavory places of temptation and sin unless duty demands their presence there.

Have we a faith that works? Let us wash and be clean by faith in the remission of sins conveyed and sealed to us in our baptism. So shall we know God and serve Him.

PAUL G. BIRKMANN

Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity

1 Sam. 15:13-26

This narrative is one of those of which Paul declares: 1 Cor. 10:11. Through attentive consideration of this text the Holy Spirit wishes to save us from grievous sin, from shameful folly, from despair, and eternal ruin. Therefore, praying for His blessing, we shall now prayerfully consider that which our text presents to us:

The Ruinous Sin of Saul, the King of Israel

1

This sin began in *shameful ingratitude*.

a) God had bestowed upon Saul most precious blessings. Samuel refers to this v. 17.

By birth Saul was a member of God's chosen people. Reared in the true religion. His father was a wealthy, prominent man. God had also given to Saul not only a healthy body but also an impressive and commanding presence, 1 Sam. 9:1, 2. God gave to Saul a very faithful, wise, godly pastor, Samuel. God also anointed him to be a king of the people of Israel, v. 17. God bestowed upon him repeated deliverances and successes, which brought great glory to Saul's house. Moreover, God had given him a son of genuine piety, valor, intelligence, and unselfishness, a son of whom any father could be proud, Jonathan. God gave him a son-in-law who was a very prince among men, David. Through this son-in-law God brought repeated deliverances to Saul and all Israel. Tell me, could we not say to Saul: What more could the Lord have done for you?

b) And now notice the shameful ingratitude of Saul. Instead of thanking God, he gave way to gloomy discontent. He became filled with base ingratitude to God and to man. Instead of rejoicing because of God's gifts, he was filled with jealousy, anger, and ill will towards David, and in part also towards his own son Jonathan. These sins so possessed him that he wished to kill both David and Jonathan. He despised Samuel's admonition; he despised the Word and commandment of God. Text, vv. 13-16. What shameful ingratitude!

Who is not appalled at this man's sin? But "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." We also are tempted to ingratitude, jealousy, envy, discontent. We forget to heed: "Forget not all His benefits." "Count your many blessings." God preserve us from Saul's shameful sin! God give us gratitude and appreciation of His great blessings, till we sing with the Psalmist, Ps. 116:12-14. Hymn 34, stanza 1; or Hymn 33, stanza 2.

2

Now notice what it was that took the place of gratitude which should have been in this man's heart, *pride and self-righteousness*.

a) Far from being ashamed of this his sin of ingratitude, Saul proudly and foolishly entertained the highest opinion of his own wisdom and ability. This led him repeatedly to prefer his own plan, his own thoughts, to the plain, clear commands of the Lord. He thought that he was above humble obedience to God. Thus, instead of doing what God had commanded him: to destroy the Amalekites and to fight against them until they be consumed, he

preferred to save their king, Agag, in order to bring him home in triumph. Instead of destroying the sheep and the oxen, v. 9, he thought of preserving the best of these "in order to sacrifice them to the Lord." In Saul's opinion the commands of God were foolish but Saul's schemes and plans were wise. Instead of humility and fear of God pride and self-righteousness filled his heart.

b) We see this same sin in Absalom, Ahithophel, and Judas. That is a very common and most ruinous sin. All unbelievers become guilty of it. Indeed, this sin also tempts us. God has warned us: 1 Pet. 5:6. Text, v. 22. It is God's intention to elevate us; but even as it was necessary for Jesus to be humiliated, crucified, to die, and be buried in order to receive a name above every name, so it is necessary for us first to suffer, to bear the cross, so that God may exalt us *in due time*. Our flesh and blood rebels against that, even as Peter did not wish to hear Jesus speak about suffering and humiliation, Matt. 16:22.

Through this sin of contempt for God's mercy and of self-exultation, the exaltation of human reason, men become fools, Rom. 1:22. The ways of God are above our ways, they often seem wrong or foolish to us; but: 1 Cor. 1:25; Prov. 1:7.

What was the consequence of this sin of Saul? V. 26. Saul's despair and death, involving his whole family in ruin. Should not this warning example cause us to examine ourselves, to repent of our foolish pride, and to pray earnestly to be cleansed by the blood of Christ? Should we not plead with God to guide us and impress the words of the text upon us: "To obey is better than sacrifice"? This same truth is also impressed upon us in Prov. 3:5-7. Hymn 366, stanzas 5 and 7.

M. SOMMER

Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity

Ezek. 3:17-21

In the congregation at Corinth many Christians did not properly evaluate their pastors. 1 Cor. 1:11 ff.; chaps. 3, 4. That is a fault found in many congregations to this day. Therefore the text is very timely.

God's Evaluation of the Pastor

As to his person; his office; his duty; his responsibility

1

"Son of man." This term, applied so frequently to Ezekiel, was to keep him humble; he was to remember, and all who heard him were to keep in mind, that he was a son of man, born of sinful parents, himself a sinful, mortal being. When God so determined, He sent angels as His messengers. But He does not call angels into the pastoral office, nor does He create perfect human beings for this office. He is satisfied with imperfect, sinful men,

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1 Cor. 4:7, as long as they are Christians, like Paul striving for perfection, Phil. 3:8-14. Christian congregations should not forget this simple fact, not expect the impossible, a perfect pastor, free from all faults, who never makes mistakes. 1 Cor. 4:4, 5. As long as God is satisfied, the congregation must be satisfied with a son of man as their pastor.

2

Though a sinner like all men, a Christian pastor has a very exalted office. He is like Ezekiel appointed by the Lord to be a watchman over the house of God. Ezekiel was called directly, Ezekiel, chaps. 1-3, as was Paul, Acts 9:1-6. But Paul calls not only himself a minister of Christ, etc., 1 Cor. 4:1, but includes in this term men like Apollos and other pastors, 1 Cor. 4:6; Acts 20:28, who were called by the Christian congregations to whom God had given the office of the keys, Matt. 18:18, and whom God wants to call pastors, overseers, watchmen, Titus 1:5; Acts 13:1-4; 14:23. While the pastor is the minister of the congregation, he is also a minister of Christ, 1 Cor. 4:1. While not lords, autocrats, 1 Pet. 5:3, yet they are overseers, Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2, to be honored and esteemed as such, 1 Thess. 4:8; 5:12, 13; 1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7, 17; Luke 10:16; John 13:20; 1 Cor. 9:7-14.

3

V. 17 b. The prophet received his message directly from God, Ezek. 2:9 to 3:12. His duty was to preach this word exactly as it had been given to him. The pastor is given his message in the Bible, God's revelation. His duty is stated explicitly, Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6. God wants him to preach the Gospel though it is foolishness to man, 1 Cor. 1:18, 23; and to proclaim the Law, though that is hateful to man, Ezek. 2:3-8; Jer. 15:10; 20:8. In season and out of season, the command is Matt. 28:20; as Paul did, Acts 20:26, 27, 31; as Peter and John did, Acts 4:19, 20; 2 Pet. 1:12 f.; 1 John 1:1-3. Law and Gospel are to be applied publicly and privately to the Christian in his life at home, in business, as a church member, as a civic officer, in joy and sorrow, in health, in sickness, on his dying bed, Phil. 3:1. That is what God demands, and that, no more and no less, the congregation must demand. Not popularity, not silver-tongued oratory, not flattery, not respecting of persons, but faithfulness in bringing God's message, God's Law and God's Gospel, to the hearts and homes of his parishioners, that alone constitutes the pastor a faithful watchman, 1 Cor. 4:1-5.

4

This faithfulness involves a terrible responsibility, vv. 18-20. God does not demand that the pastor save every soul entrusted to his care. If any one of his parishioners sins, rejects the Law

or despises the Gospel, that parishioner will be held responsible, whether the pastor had warned him or not. But if a pastor prefers to remain on the good side of a wicked or apostatizing parishioner and therefore fails in his God-appointed duty, he forfeits his own salvation. The pastor's own soul is the price he must pay for refusing to warn those entrusted to his care. Let that be a warning to every pastor. And certainly no parishioner should demand so tremendous a sacrifice merely because he does not like to have his conscience aroused by a faithful pastor.

Conclusion: Paul asks the Christians to pray for him, 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1. So pray for your pastor that both he and the congregation may remain aware of the imperfection of his person, of the high dignity of his office, of his exalted duty, and of the responsibility resting on his soul.

TH. LAETSCH

Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity

Ps. 37:25-40

A comparison between a Christian and the wicked presents a serious problem. Therefore the admonition in v. 1, "Fret not thyself," etc. Ps. 73 describes the perplexity of a believer when he contemplates the prosperity of the wicked. It also points out the solution of this problem. Nevertheless the earthly prosperity of the wicked startles many a Christian and troubles him with thoughts of doubt. He knows, of course, that God's ways are not his ways, yet this alone does not seem to be sufficient for him to regain his spiritual balance. Therefore the Bible offers much instruction on this point. So here also.

The Christian Compared with the Wicked

1. *In regard to his life* 2. *In regard to his end*

1

The life of a Christian is rooted in, and stems from, the Word of God, v. 31. By the Word of God (the Gospel, of course) he is born again, he, then, knows himself to be God's child. His heart is filled with gratitude for the infinite love and mercy of his Savior. This Word of God is a living, life-giving power in his heart. Having accepted Christ as his Savior, he has forgiveness of sins, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him, he is called "righteous," vv. 29, 30, perfect, v. 37.

So he leads a life of grateful obedience to his Father in heaven. According to the spirit he delights to do His will. God's mercy to him is reflected in that the Christian is merciful to others, v. 26. God's holiness in that he shuns the evil, v. 27. In times of trouble

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he waits on the Lord, vv. 34, 39. Knowing the love of God in Christ Jesus, he is confident that God's will is always right. He patiently bears his cross, v. 28. He is certain that God will not forsake him. He goes through this life as a witness for Christ, for the eternal truth, v. 30.

The life of the wicked is not rooted in the Word of God. He ignores, rejects, the holy councils of God. His life stems from, and is ruled by, pride, v. 35, selfishness, self-righteousness. In order to attain his ends he disregards God's precepts altogether, lives in persistent revolt, v. 38. He despises those who accept the Gospel, even hates them, v. 32. By thus revealing his enmity against Christ and His followers he proves himself to be a slave to sin and nothing but a willing tool of the devil, the arch-enemy of God and of all that is good.

Therefore the entire life of the wicked, all his doings, be they good (humanly speaking) or bad, all his accomplishments, successes, triumphs, are under a curse; while the life of a Christian with its joys and sorrows, its failings and successes, is under the blessing of God.

2

Vv. 35, 36. Here the end of the wicked is described. There was one in great power. Perhaps he had amassed huge wealth, attained a leading position among his fellow men; like a green bay tree he stood, proud and boastful; had many followers who fawned upon him. He gloated in his power and wealth.

But v. 36. He could not ward off death. And with death his house of cards collapsed. Soon he was forgotten. His former friends "worshipped" at other "shrines." But temporal death is not the real end, v. 38. The wicked having rejected God's merciful plan of salvation will be banished forever from the face of God and suffer eternal punishment in hell. What a "reward" for a few years of carnal joy!

And now the end of a Christian. His trust in God's gracious promises, vv. 25, 28, 33, 34, his diligence in obeying God, v. 26, his efforts to shun the evil, v. 27, his patient cross-bearing, v. 39, his faithfulness, v. 30, shall not be in vain. Yes, he may have endured the sting of the mockers' tongue and suffered from his persecutions, v. 32. He may have been denied the riches of this earth, v. 25, the earth may have been a vale of tears to him. But, and this is all-important, his end is a salvation, a deliverance, vv. 39, 40; his end is peace, v. 37. He enters eternal rest and heavenly peace. He shall not be forgotten. His works shall follow him and increase his blessings. The comparison between a Christian and the wicked in the light of Scripture, is it not a glorious solution of the vexing problem, v. 1?

H. J. BOUMAN

Reformation Day

Ps. 119:105

We praise God today for our deliverance from the bondage of Roman error. It was not Luther who delivered us; he was only the instrument. Luther himself confessed: "With might of ours can naught be done." He used the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, the Spirit of His mouth. 2 Thess. 2:8. Luther sang: "One little word can fell him" (Satan). Therefore he insisted so strenuously that nothing but the Word of God be preached and taught. And he labored to bring the Bible to the people, translation. He wrote the Catechism, to make it easy for the people to grasp the fundamental doctrines of the Bible. He refused to recant unless shown by clear Bible words that he was wrong, Worms. Today the Word of God is set aside again in Christendom at large. It is meet therefore to consider —

Why Is It So Important That We Stand Squarely on the Bible?

1. *Because only then can we avoid error.*
2. *Because only then can we be sure of our salvation*

1

Text. A lamp, a light, is necessary in darkness. We cannot find the way to heaven, "our knowledge, sense, and sight, lie in deepest darkness shrouded." The spiritual darkness in heathen countries. See Is. 60:2; Luke 1:79; John 1:5; Acts 26:18, etc.

It is because of setting aside the true lamp, the true light, the Word of God, that the Church was misled into many errors: supremacy of the Pope, mass, indulgences, saint-worship; worst of all, salvation by works. The true light was discarded, replaced by the so-called light of human reason, and the result: these terrible errors!

Luther by the grace of God rediscovered the true light, he confessed with the inspired writer of our Psalm: **Text.** And the result: he was saved, and he saved many others, from those errors.

Today the so-called Modernists prefer human reason to the light of the Word of God. The result is denial of the plenary inspiration of the Bible, denial of salvation through Christ's vicarious suffering and death, denial of man's total corruption, the teaching of salvation by man's own works. Terrible errors, by which sinners are robbed of all comfort, led into deeper darkness, humanity is deprived of the vitalizing force of the Gospel, and so the Modernist must share in the responsibility for the low ebb in morality obtaining today.

By the grace of God we have the true light, in its bright rays we clearly see the truth, the truth that makes us free. Let us not fail to use it.

2

Text. Thy Word. The Bible is God's Word. God speaks to us in the Holy Scriptures. 2 Pet. 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 1 Cor. 2:13; Luke 11:28. Being the Word of God from beginning to the end, it is reliable to the utmost. Ps. 33:4; Luke 16:17; Matt. 5:18; 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:23, 25.

What the Bible says about our condition: corruption, sinfulness, helplessness, hopelessness, etc., is the truth. It throws the blinding light into the darkness of our ignorance and indifference. It prepares us for the truth that makes us free. What it says about the love of God, that He sent His only-begotten Son, about Jesus' vicarious suffering and death, our redemption from sin, etc., our righteousness through faith in the Redeemer, about the Comforter, about His work of creating and keeping faith through the means of grace, about fatherly, divine guidance through life, about resurrection, etc., etc.—all is true and absolutely reliable. What a blessing!

Under the Pope uncertainty reigns. There is no peace, no sureness; it is hopeless groping, uncertain groping in the dark. Can you be sure of God's forgiving grace? Indeed not, by no means, they say. Certainly, by all means, Luther said, and we say it, too. Why? Because God says so in the Bible. God's faithfulness is the rock of ages upon which we stand. In the Bible we have the sure prophetic Word. 2 Pet. 1:19. We are certain of our salvation because we believe the Word of God.

Let us thank God and praise Him that, through Luther, He has given us anew the true light, without which we would be lost, but with which we can be sure of our salvation. Let us so thank God that we hold the Word of God sacred and gladly hear and learn it, and share this precious gift with our fellow men. Then the Word of God will be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.

H. J. BOUMAN

Twentieth Sunday after Trinity

2 Kings 2:6-18

The *Introit* strikes the keynote of the day. Its antiphon, or opening sentence, is taken from Dan. 9. Here the prophet is described as reading from the scroll of Jeremiah (25:11) concerning the seventy years of Israel's captivity, and is moved thereby to confess: Dan. 9:5, 6, 14 and 16-19. How fitting this confession for our day, when God's servants, in congregations and in Synod, are only too frequently being disparaged, and when, as a result, God's hand is most heavy upon us! Let us realize, therefore—

God Removes and Replaces the Spiritual Leaders of His Church

1

God removes the spiritual leaders of His Church when the time of their service is over.

A. God had appointed Elijah, who became one of Israel's greatest prophets. He was blamed for a drought by King Ahab (1 Kings 18:17); threatened with death by Queen Jezebel (1 Kings 19:1-3); and held in contempt by King Ahaziah (2 Kings 1:1-16).

How frequently we despise the ministrations of our God-appointed pastors! And how often the counsel of Synod's proper representatives falls on deaf ears! (The laity neglects the *Lutheran Witness*; and the clergy, the *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, conference papers, etc.)

B. But Elijah's appointment was soon to be terminated (2 Kings 2:1). Elijah realized it, v. 9, and made a final visitation of the prophetic schools, vv. 1, 2, 4. He also made preparations for the future of the Church, v. 9 b. Elisha remained his faithful servant to the end, vv. 2, 4, 6, 11.

How fitting the admonition of our Sunday's Epistle always to be "redeeming the time" (Eph. 5:15, 16), also with respect to the gifts which God has given us in our pastors, teachers, professors, and synodical leaders!

C. The Lord finally removed Elijah by granting him a blessing which Paul had desired in vain (2 Cor. 5:4; cp. also 1 Cor. 15:51, 52). It was a blessed moment for Elijah, but a sad hour for the Church. Realizing that the spiritual leaders are for God's people a fatherly protection, Elisha cried out, saying, v. 12 a, and as a sign of his great grief "rent" his garments "in two pieces," v. 12 b.

It is in like manner a happy day for a Christian leader, when the Lord terminates his ministry and takes him to heaven, but it is always a sad hour for the Church. It is like the loss of a strong spiritual support, "the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof," v. 12. Thus our Synod has felt keenly the loss of Doctors Walther, Pieper, Pfotenhauer, and others.

2

The Lord, however, replaces those spiritual leaders whom He has removed.

A. Elisha, first called to serve as an "assistant" to Elijah (1 Kings 19:19-21), was now appointed to replace him. To this end he was granted a special sign, vv. 10, 12, and the power of his former master, vv. 13, 14. The "sons of the prophets" accepted him, v. 15; but he, too, was frequently despised, cp. vv. 16-18; 2 Kings 2:23-25; 6:12, 13.

The Lord appoints other spiritual leaders to replace those

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whom He has removed. But, do we always properly appreciate God's replacements? How often the fine gifts of a newly called pastor are disparaged simply because he lacks some special ability of his predecessor!

B. Elisha was a successful leader, because he possessed the right spirit. He was humble, asking only for spiritual gain, for a "double portion" (cp. Deut. 21:17) of Elijah's spirit.

Oh, for prophets in our church who desire above all the "double portion" of the spirit of Elijah! And oh, that our people would seek only such men to serve them!

When we consider our frequent sins against God's spiritual leaders, we, too, might well tremble at the wrath of that King who will certainly punish with eternal destruction all such as despise the invitations and the admonitions of His servants (Matt. 22:3, 5, 6, 7, 12). Let us therefore pray with the day's Collect, "Grant to Thy people . . . pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins." And when through the lips of God's servants we are again assured of forgiveness in Christ, may we then determine truly to "serve Him with a quiet mind," always esteeming God's appointed spiritual leaders as a precious gift of God!

THEO. F. NICKEL

