



"Meditate
upon these things;
give thyself
wholly to them;
that thy profiting
may appear unto all"

I Timothy 4:15

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KNOWING CHRIST = TO EXPERIENCE THE POWER OF HIS
RESURRECTION AND FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS

(Philippians 3)

Philippians 3 is autobiographical, but at the same time polemical, doctrinal, and hortatory.

REJOICE IN THE LORD! "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord!" This is to be the distinguishing feature of the Christian's life.

Paul is not talking about a bellylaugh evoked by some type of humor. No, rather he is talking about the inner joy that is essential to good mental and spiritual health, that acts as a gyroscope amidst the storms of life. That joy flows from and ever seeks renewed stimulation in the Lord.

What greater treasure could anyone possess? For this reason it must be guarded at all costs. So St. Paul warns frankly and forcefully against those who would destroy that source of joy. He calls those people "dogs," "evil workers," and "the Mutilation." In speaking that way Paul would cause no small stir in most churches today that consider false doctrine but wholesome variant opinions from spiritually fertile minds and false prophets eminent biblical scholars. He called his opponents "the Mutilation," which in the Greek is a play upon the word "circumcision." By their insistence upon circumcision as a necessary supplement to Christ, they were not only advocating mutilation of the body but were actually mutilating and so destroying the spiritual life of those who followed them, for as Paul wrote to the Galatians, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4).

RIGHTEOUSNESS! BUT WHOSE? Paul's opponents emphasized righteousness, but they stressed a righteousness that man had to acquire by his own efforts. When it came to that kind of righteousness, Paul excelled all his opponents. He gave a brief biographical sketch to prove his point: "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of

Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the law, blameless" (3:5-6). None of his opponents could marshal such a list of credits. If it was a matter of accumulating "brownie points" or merit badges with the Lord, Paul would have stood first in line.

But on the road to Damascus and later from Ananias Paul learned the basic spiritual truth — that any and all man-made righteousness is totally inadequate, that the harder man strives for righteousness the farther he pushes himself away from it. The world considers it an indisputable truth that man must and can produce a righteousness that can be acceptable to God. Paul was taught that this highest wisdom of man is a pernicious, soul-destroying lie of Satan.

He expressed himself thus: "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (3:7-9).

In the moment of his conversion Paul was taught by the Spirit to look away from himself and to fasten his gaze solely on Christ. Righteousness is absolutely necessary for salvation. No one can stand before God without it! But the question remains, "Whose righteousness?" Not the sinner's, for "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Is. 64:6). The best that any person can produce can merit him nothing better than a one-way ticket to hell. Righteousness we need and have to have! That is why the Father dispatched His Son into this world. When Paul by the power of the Spirit "won Christ" and was "found in him," he acquired by faith that righteousness which covers as a blanket the filthy rags of his own righteousness. From that moment on he found himself complete in Christ.

Knowing Christ means getting rid of what we have and must be rid of — our sins — and getting what we don't

have but must have — righteousness. Thus the expressions "to win Christ" and "to be found in Christ" in Philippians mean the same thing as "being complete in Christ" in Colossians. It is this blessing of forgiveness/righteousness that should move the Christian to rejoice in the Lord always.

In verses eight and nine of chapter three of Philippians Paul defined "winning Christ" and "being found in him" in terms of righteousness, specifically in exchanging his own righteousness, which he characterized as being "of the law," for the righteousness of God which is by faith in Christ.

But Paul was not content to let the matter rest. He continued explaining and defining what he meant by winning Christ and being found in Him. That means to know Christ by personal experience, that is, to experience "the power of His resurrection and fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (3:9). The eye quickly passes over these words and the tongue easily speaks them, but the mind must pause even to begin to grasp the content of these words.

EXPERIENCING THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION

When had Paul been taught to exchange his righteousness for the righteousness of Christ? It was when he experienced the power of Christ's resurrection on the road to Damascus. Remember that this same Paul had consented to the death of Stephen as he kept watch over the clothes of those who stoned him (Acts 7:58; 8:1), that he was literally snorting out threatenings and death against the Christians (9:1), and that he was on his way to exercise his unholy zeal for the righteousness of the law by rounding up Christians who had been taught to exchange that righteousness for the righteousness of Christ (9:2). But his proposed career of championing the righteousness of the law came to an abrupt end when he was confronted near Damascus with the very One who had been condemned to death by the Sanhedrin, and justly so, as Paul believed. How could a dead man speak? He heard his name called, "Saul, Saul!" He heard his career analyzed in a way that he never could

have thought of it, "Why persecutest thou me?" In that instant he experienced the power of the Lord's resurrection, for the risen Lord stopped him in his tracks, smote him with blindness, gave him three days to ponder the error of his thinking and life, and then sent him one of His faithful servants to bring him the assurance of forgiveness and the grace of baptism (Acts 9:3-18).

PREACHING From that time on Paul lived a life created by the power of Christ's resurrection to which he bore testimony in season and out of season. St. Luke recorded Paul's sermon at Antioch in Pisidia. He reviewed the sacred history of his people, showing that that history came to a climax when God raised up the Christ by sending His Son in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, whose career came to a climax when God raised Him up from the dead, even as David had prophesied in the 16th Psalm (Acts 13:16-41).

Before the sophisticated Athenians Paul stood on Mars' hill and proclaimed the saving counsel of God. He reached his climax when he spoke of the day of final reckoning when judgment would be conducted by the very man whom God had raised from the dead (Acts 17:22-31). The power of the resurrection broke forth naturally and inevitably as the climax of Paul's message, wherever and whenever presented.

In his defense before King Agrippa St. Paul protested that he was being held under arrest for no crime except believing and bearing witness to the common promise that God had made and repeated throughout the history of the Jews, namely the resurrection of the dead (Acts 26: 2-8), which is not an impossibly philosophical dream, but a reality in Christ (v. 23).

RIGHTEOUSNESS Paul's basic concern was righteousness. In his Pharasaic instruction he had been introduced to the great teachers and legal leaders of Israel. They had all lived, set forth their explanations of the law, and left their examples of living according to the law in their lives, and then had died. A dead man, however virtuous and noble and law-abiding he was, can but leave an example and instruction for others to follow, nothing more. But One who lived according to

the law, innocently died under the law, and arose again could do more. He could give His righteousness to others by faith. Only a resurrected Man could do that. That is why the gift of righteousness and the resurrection are inseparable. To know the power of the resurrection is to possess by faith the righteousness of God in Christ.

CHRIST, THE
SON OF GOD

To know Christ, that is, to have experienced the power of His resurrection, is to know Christ as the Son of God. Before Saul made that trip to Damascus, he thought of Jesus of Nazareth as a renegade, apostate Jew, who was endeavoring to destroy the great treasure and pride of the Jews, the law. Jesus was to him the worst possible enemy both of God and man because His teaching undermined both the law given by God through Moses and so also undermined the one way of the people back to God, namely through the righteousness of the law. But when the man he thought was dead called him by name and subsequently bestowed His grace and mercy upon him, Paul personally experienced that he was not dealing with a corpse, but with the living Lord.

So it was that after he had recovered from his traumatic spiritual experience, "straightway he preached in the synagogues" in Damascus. What did he preach? That this same Jesus of Nazareth, whom he had but recently considered a renegade and apostate Jew, "is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20). Later, when St. Paul wrote a letter to introduce himself to the Romans, he identified himself as a slave of Jesus Christ and as an apostle of the gospel of Jesus Christ, who was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). The resurrection bears witness to the deity of Christ; to experience the power of the resurrection is to know from personal experience that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

RELIABILITY OF
CHRIST'S GOSPEL

To have experienced the power of the resurrection is furthermore to trust the reliability of the gospel of Christ without reservation. Paul's gospel came under severe attack in Galatia. How did Paul defend himself and his gospel? Did he quote the highest Jewish authorities? Did he exalt his own intellect, his own spiritu-

ality, his own religious experiences to verify his gospel? None of this! He wrote, "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:11-12). He had received the gospel by direct revelation of the risen Lord. Thus it was that the experience of Christ's resurrection gave Paul the certainty of the reliability of his gospel to such an extent that he could write, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8). How can anyone know in the cacophony of conflicting voices on the religious scene today what is truth or whether the gospel of Christ's righteousness is the one true gospel? Knowing Christ, that is, experiencing personally by faith the power of His resurrection, gives that assurance.

FORGIVENESS OF SIN	Righteousness gives us what we need and do not have; forgiveness takes away what we have but must be rid of. To experience the power of the resurrection is to experience the certainty of forgiveness.
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Paul brought his sermon at Antioch to a climax by proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus. What was the significance of that event? St. Paul stated it: "Be it known therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sin: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13: 38-39). Contrary to the opinion of the Jews, the law was powerless to justify anyone. What was needed was forgiveness for daily transgression of the law. That forgiveness is assured through the resurrection. What is the connection between forgiveness and the resurrection? To the Romans Paul wrote that we are to believe "on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:24-25). Even as our sins caused His death, so the forgiveness of our sins caused His resurrection, for the Father was compelled by justice to acknowledge the holy life and sacrificial death of His Son as atonement for sin by raising Him. In Corinthians Paul expressed the connection between the resurrection

and forgiveness in this way: "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (I Cor. 15:17).

RESURRECTION
LIVING

What are we to understand by "resurrection living"? God sent His Son to this planet not on private business

but for all mankind. Jesus was the second Adam, the Representative, the Substitute for the race of mankind (Rom. 5:12-21; I Cor. 15:22,45). He lived, suffered and died for all mankind. So also He arose, ascended on high for all. The effect of His mission to earth was to change the way men live — replacing enmity toward God with fellowship, selfishness with love toward all, disharmony with harmony toward nature, inner turmoil with peace. To achieve this in an individual there must be a spiritual dying and rising again, a dying of being at odds with God, man, nature, and self and a rising again into a liberty which expresses itself in love toward God and man, harmony with nature, and peace with oneself.

ROMANS 6

After solving the problem of mankind's sin and resulting guilt and alienation from God by the forgiveness and reconciliation found in Christ, Paul begins to discuss the new resurrection way of life that flows spontaneously from the blessing of justification. The general question was: Should the justified sinner continue to live in sin in view of the fact that Christ died for all sin and offers forgiveness by grace? Paul rejects such a thought as blasphemous. Being justified involves a break with the old way of living and the beginning of a new way. Paul reminded the Romans of their baptism which was in connection with Jesus Christ and His death. That was not a mere ceremony or a symbol or an outward sign of some grace previously and inwardly received. No, it was rather God's appointed and effective means for initiating the new way of living. "Therefore we are buried with him (Christ) by baptism into death." Christ died once because the penalty of mankind's sins was laid upon Him. His death removed the penalty of our dying eternally. But it did something in the here and now. It caused in us a dying unto sin, thus replacing a living in sin. Baptism is the means by which this dying is effected. That is one side of the new resurrection life. Paul continues: "That like as Christ was

raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Christ was raised from death to live in glory. So also through the power of baptism we are to enter in upon a new way of life. Paul amplifies this thought by speaking of the crucifixion of "our old man," that is, our sinful nature. That is the negative of which the simultaneous counterpart is living unto God.

Such resurrection living is also called living in the Spirit, for it is the Holy Spirit who works in us the daily dying of the flesh and arising of the new man. In Romans 8:11 Paul put it thus: "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." What is the nature of Spirit-quickened or resurrection living? Again the negative/positive: mortifying the deeds of the body and being led by the Spirit of God.

COLOSSIANS In this epistle Paul was concerned about
2 AND 3 the question of whether the believer's
 doing and leaving undone was necessary
to supplement the work of Christ. After assuring the Colossians that they were complete in Christ, Paul continued by describing the way of life that reflects this new condition. They were circumcised spiritually through the physical circumcision of Christ, which marked His being put under the law for them. That spiritual circumcision manifests itself "in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh." Then follow the concepts of being buried and rising with Christ by the power of baptism. In Christ there is triumph over sin and sinning. It is all in Christ without the need of any supplementation on the part of the believer.

The believer is to live the resurrection life: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Resurrection living is daily dying to earthly things and living unto things above, ever waiting for that moment of glory "when Christ who is our life, shall appear (for) then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

Then shall the tension of daily dying and rising be changed into continuous living in love with Him.

FELLOWSHIP OF The life of a believer is to be pat-
HIS SUFFERINGS terned after that of his Lord and Sa-
 vior — by way of the cross to the
crown. That is what St. Paul meant when he defined know-
ing Christ as experiencing also "the fellowship of his
sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."

The Lord Jesus made this abundantly clear when he separated Saul unto Himself on the road to Damascus. Ananias was told by the Lord: "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:16). Paul's role as a persecutor was to be changed into that of one of many persecuted.

St. Paul soon learned to realize that knowing, that is, experiencing by faith the Lord as Savior, inevitably and unavoidably also involved experiencing the fellowship of His sufferings. Years later, after his first missionary journey, during which Paul had been expelled from Antioch, forced to flee from Iconium for fear of being stoned, and after having been stoned at Lystra, Paul exhorted the new converts who had learned to know Jesus in an effort to confirm them in the faith. What was the tenor of his exhortation? St. Luke preserves this fact-of-life statement of Paul: "... that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

The fact of life, the necessity of suffering for Christ's sake, was a concept that our Lord impressed upon His disciples again and again — Matt. 5:10-12; 16:24-26; 20:22-23; John 15:18-21. St. Paul also emphasized this fact of life for a believer again and again in his epistles.

In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul spoke of "standing in jeopardy every hour" and "dying daily" (15:30-31). In his second letter Paul spoke of the suffering of Christ as abounding in us (1:5). Further on in the epistle Paul spoke of "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" (4:10). Paul was learning from experience just what the Lord had meant when He

told His disciples on the night of His betrayal: "The servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). In the eleventh chapter Paul enumerates a veritable catalog of his sufferings, which included beatings, imprisonments, being stoned, suffering shipwreck, peril from a hostile nature and a gospel-hating mankind (II Cor. 11:23-31). One almost begins to ache empathetically just from reading this biographical section.

In his letter to his beloved Philippians Paul makes the statement that "unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (1:29). We have been taught in catechetical instructions to think of faith as gift of God, but sufferings? Yes indeed, they, too, are a gift of God, for knowing Christ means to experience also the fellowship of His sufferings. Did not our Lord Jesus say, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 16:24-25)?

In his letter to the Colossians Paul wrote that he was rejoicing in his sufferings (1:24). Paul was not a spiritual masochist, as George Bernard Shaw depicted the Christian martyrs in his *Androcles and the Lion*. No, he was a realist who had learned to bow to the will of the Lord. He knew that to know and confess the Lord Jesus as Lord and Savior in this evil world in which the prince of this world, the devil, is still on the loose means to experience the fellowship of the Lord's sufferings in one's own body.

This was not an experience peculiar to St. Paul. St. Peter comforted and exhorted the believers scattered throughout Asia Minor in these words: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (I Peter 4:12-13). These words of Peter remind one of similar words of St. Paul written to the Romans: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared

with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (8:18). The glory comes later, the suffering now, for to be a Christian means to experience the fellowship of our Lord's suffering.

CAPTURED, BUT NOT
YET HAVING CAPTURED

We come now to a section in
which the Spirit of God led St.
Paul to use changing tenses,

both the active and passive voices, the subjunctive and indicative moods, and simple and compound forms of the same verb to express his thought. The Greek is a very flexible language. All the nuances are difficult to reproduce in English. The following is the passage:

"... That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead, Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (vv. 10-14).

The key word is translated "apprehend" in the KJV. That means to seize or get or arrest. A criminal is apprehended when he is captured or arrested. Paul speaks of himself as having been captured by Jesus Christ — "that for which also (since) I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." St. Paul was referring to his experience on the road to Damascus. He was going to Damascus to apprehend or take into captivity Christians and bring them back to Jerusalem. But before he even arrived in Damascus, his plans were thwarted because he was himself captured by Jesus Christ. He was thereby released from unbelief and taken captive by faith, released from persecuting Christ and made a slave of that same Christ.

In that moment Paul got to know Christ. What that meant Paul explained as experiencing both the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering. When would knowing Christ in this way come to an end?

When he would attain or arrive at the resurrection from death. The KJV translation, "if by any means (somehow) I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead," may lead one to think that Paul was uncertain as to whether he would reach that goal. Paul was certain of attaining unto the resurrection, but he was uncertain as to how this would happen. Would he get out of the prison from which he was writing, would he die a natural death, or would he suffer martyrdom? How would he attain unto the resurrection? That was his question.

"Not as though I had already attained (got hold of, captured), either were already perfect (have already been made perfect or mature)." Is Paul talking about the last grand experience of the resurrection — I haven't got there yet? That did not have to be said, for it was obvious — he was alive and writing in prison. What he had not yet fully captured or got hold of was knowing Christ by experiencing the full power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. He had not been able to live the resurrection life to its fullest potential because of the drag of his flesh. Perhaps the Lord had much more, as He did have, to teach him about suffering for Him. Was Paul going to be a quitter in striving to penetrate the glory of the risen and living Christ in living the resurrection life and in bearing His cross? No, "I follow after," I'll keep working on this, "if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." I am determined to capture and thus to experience myself that for which I was captured by the Lord on the road to Damascus.

Paul certainly was a hero of faith to the Philippians, but he did not want them to get the wrong impression, so he wrote to them: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended (captured, got hold of, arrived at the goal): but forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Paul was neither going to rest on his spiritual laurels nor live in the past, his old self. He was going to charge ahead to reach the ever unattainable prize in this life, fully experiencing the resurrection life and fellowship in Christ's sufferings. That would be reached only after death had freed him from

his flesh and the resurrection had given him his glorious spiritual body like unto the living Christ.

WALKING ON EARTH, AS
CITIZENS OF HEAVEN

Paul turns from discussing in personal biographical terms (10-14) what it means to know the Lord Jesus to an earnest exhortation to the Philippians (15-21). "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect (that is, mature in Christian knowledge and understanding), be thus minded." Let every mature Christian realize that though he has been captured by Christ, he still has not yet captured the full experience of resurrection living and fellowship with the Lord in His sufferings. "And if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." Some of the Philippians may not have fully shared the vehemence with which Paul labeled the faith in Christ + works advocates as "dogs," "evil workers," and the "mutilation." Some may not have perceived the irreconcilable conflict between the righteousness of Christ and man's own righteousness. Others may not have fully realized that knowing Christ means experiencing both the power of His resurrection and bearing His cross. Paul is confident that the Lord will supply what is lacking in their understanding. "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." All were mature! Let all walk according to their Christian maturity, ever pursuing the goal of resurrection living.

With an appealing, endearing address, "Brethren," Paul urged the Philippians to follow the example of himself and others: "Be ye followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." A good example can be more easily seen and is more distinctly outlined on the background of an evil example, even as white stands out more clearly on a black background. What does it mean to live a life of ever experiencing the power of the Lord's resurrection and ever experiencing also the fellowship of His sufferings? Certainly not this: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." Paul is not warning against the libertines, whose motto always is "Eat,

drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." The biblical concept of "belly service" or having one's belly as one's god means serving one's own interests whatever they may be — intellectual, emotional, religious, social, sensual or whatever.

The people Paul denounced as "dogs," "evil workers," and the "mutilation" were quite possibly decent, upright people. But their "belly" was nonetheless their god. How so? Because they were trusting their own righteousness, their own moral capabilities, their supposed innate, natural ability to make the right moral decisions and so to produce a righteousness that would be acceptable in the sight of God. In so thinking they were enemies of the cross. Did not the Lord on more than one occasion say, "I am not come to call the 'righteous,' but sinners" (Matt. 9:13)? The "righteous" were those who supposed themselves righteous. They instinctively and militantly rejected the very thought that they needed a better righteousness than they had. The Lord depicted such a man in the parable of the marriage of the king's son — the guest who refused a wedding garment because he was quite sure his own garment, his own righteousness, would pass inspection (Matt. 22:1-14).

In contrast to this evil example of people whose god is their belly, Paul wrote: "For our conversation (commonwealth, citizenship) is in heaven." We live on this earth clothed in the righteousness of the Son of God who is in heaven. We strive for the righteousness of life according to His life. So we live the resurrection life, ever anticipating translation from earth to heaven: "From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, so that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." When Paul refers to his body as vile, he has in mind especially his sinful flesh which is constantly asserting itself and preventing him, as it prevents all Christians, from experiencing the resurrection living to its fullest extent. Paul teaches us to look forward to the day of death/resurrection when we shall put off the flesh and put on our resurrection bodies, ever after to live the resurrection life in glory with our Lord. This is the final and ultimate prize,

the goal of all our striving.

SUMMARY In this third chapter of his letter to the Philippians St. Paul outlines the Christian life in biographical terms combined with concerned exhortations to his beloved Philippians. What does it mean to be a Christian, to live a Christian life?

RIGHTEOUSNESS — The basic problem is that of right-
WHOSE? eousness. There are only two possibilities: Either a person lives his life in a righteousness that is produced by inherent spiritual powers, a righteousness that is practiced according to some norm, religious or social or whatever; or a person lives his life in a foreign righteousness which must be imputed to him.

St. Paul had been taught from youth on that he possessed a remnant of the divine breath once breathed into man, that accordingly he had a free will in moral matters, that he could exercise that will to live a moral life according to the *Torah* of Moses, and that a merciful God would forgive any failings to live according to the *Torah*. He believed that the spiritual energy requisite for living in righteousness was a gift of God for each man to exercise. And he exercised it with a will and a determination that caused him to excel in righteousness in the eyes of his peers.

This is the natural way for man to think and feel. It is the curse of sin fallen upon the mind of man, the *opinio legis*. All the world's great religions and all the philosophers and moral leaders of mankind firmly believe that man can and must exercise the spiritual powers inherent in him to produce a righteousness that finds divine approval. Inasmuch as man fails God is merciful and forgives. It is a rare minority that imagines that perfection or perfection-plus can be achieved so that no forgiveness is needed.

EXCHANGING SIN FOR As long as man clings to his own
RIGHTEOUSNESS righteousness, he remains in un-
 righteousness. It takes a creative
act of the Spirit of God to make a person realize that
anything and everything that he produces in the line of

righteousness is nothing better than "filthy rags" or "dung." When that miracle is worked, the individual learns to cast his own righteousness, which is a euphemism for his sin, at the foot of the cross, even as we sing: "I lay my sins on Jesus, The spotless Lamb of God." In exchange the Christian receives the righteousness of Christ, as he sings: "Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness My beauty are, my glorious dress." This miracle was wrought in Paul, as it has been in every child of God since the beginning of time. This St. Paul spoke of as "putting on Christ," "winning Christ," or "knowing Christ."

HAVING RIGHTEOUSNESS,	The moment one obtains the
PURSUING RIGHTEOUSNESS	righteousness of Christ by
	faith one begins a lifelong

pursuit of the righteousness of life. The two go hand in hand. The one who is captured by Jesus Christ, as Paul put it, strives ceaselessly to capture the glorious blessing of walking in righteousness.

The child of God gets up in the morning and goes about his daily routine, ever striving to live his life as a student, parent, laborer, manager, professional man according to the norm of perfect love toward his God and his fellowman, but at the end of the day he must confess his shortcomings. He needs to be cleansed by the forgiveness of sin and covered with the righteousness of his Savior-God. He can neither live nor die without his Lord, so he sings: "Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes."

Only a person who is clothed in the righteousness of his Savior-God can or will want to pursue righteousness, that is, living according to the divine norm of love. Paul spoke of himself as pressing onward in a race. The writer to the Hebrews exhorts: "Follow ... holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). The Christian ever pursues, but never attains in this life. He is not misled by those who claim to have experienced the second grace, that of having completely gained the victory over the power of sin in this life, for the words of St. John have been engraven upon his soul, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8). Yet the pursuit is not forever! It ends in the moment of death

when we discard this vile body and in the moment of the resurrection when we shall put on the glorious resurrection body. Would that we were there!

Paul F. Nolting



HOMILETICAL HINTS FROM I AND II CORINTHIANS

(Conclusion)

III.

When the apostle Paul wrote his two letters to the Corinthians, the congregation there had already been in existence for several years. Corinth was a trade center of some 300,000 inhabitants. It was a leader in promoting heathen culture, and was noted for its voluptuous luxury and shameless immorality. It was here that Paul gathered and established a congregation on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-11). A few Jews, such as Aquila and his wife Priscilla and the proselyte Justus, opened their hearts through the Holy Spirit to the Word of God. But the majority of the converts had been manifest heathen. The apostle established them all on the same foundation, "for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 3:11). The apostle saw the members of this congregation as believers standing on this foundation. He thanked God on their behalf, that in everything they were enriched through Christ, in all utterance (Luther: "doctrine") and in all knowledge, as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in them, so that he was very confident that God would preserve them unto the end (I Cor. 1:4-8). Therefore he greeted them in both letters as a "church of God."

And in order that people would rightly understand this expression, he added in his first letter: "to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (I Cor. 1:1-2).

He was speaking to believers, people who know the Word of God and the way to salvation. They know what sin is and what grace means. They know that before God they cannot be justified by works. But they also know that faith finds comfort in the free grace of God in Christ, and that this brings forth the fruit of a godly life. We note how often the apostle repeats the question: "Know ye not ...?" (I Cor. 3:16; 5:6; 6:2-19; 9:13,24; II Cor. 8:9; 13:5, etc.). And this "knowing" among them was not merely a mental knowledge. They had also received the Gospel and stood therein by faith (I Cor 15:1-2). Therefore when he referred to them as "brethren" over 20 times in his two letters, he was not using an empty, meaningless expression. But what about the man who was guilty of incest? As a manifest and impenitent sinner, was he still in the congregation? He was indeed still on the membership roll of the congregation. But when Paul considered his "membership," it is evident that he severely chastized the congregation for not having excommunicated him. He says indeed that some of those to whom he was writing had earlier been fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, sensuous, sodomites, thieves, greedy, drunkards, slanderers, extortioners. "But," he then adds, "ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (I Cor. 6:9-11).

As the apostle therefore writes his two letters to the Corinthian congregation, he sees them as a sanctified gathering of Christians, one in faith in Christ the Savior of sinners; one in the confession of His name before friend and foe; one in love toward him and the brethren; one in the battle against the hellish forces of darkness.

We also preach to Christian congregations. Our preaching is not primarily addressed to the great masses of people who are walking about in spiritual darkness and blindness, and who are under the rule of unbelief, and are therefore guided by the countless secret and public vices of the surrounding world. We preach to Christians. The Good Shepherd has commanded us to feed His sheep (John 21:15-17). We know very well that here on earth we can never be absolutely sure that any gathering of people will be made up of only true, genuine Christians. Until the Last Day dawns, there will always be

hypocrites among the outward fellowship of Christians. But we also know that we are unable to read people's hearts. So we leave the judgment of individuals completely to Him who "trieth the hearts and reins" (Ps. 7:9). We can only consider those who confess the Christian faith with us, and who do not contradict the confession of their mouth by their works, to be our dear brethren. A preacher who permits the thought to enter his mind that he is no longer preaching to a Christian congregation, but to a gathering of nominal Christians, is not only making it most difficult for himself to carry out his office, but his sermons will more or less reflect this thinking. They will tend not so much to build up as they will tend to show bitterness. How very differently a person will preach when he knows he is talking to people whose ears are listening for the voice of the Good Shepherd. A preacher should not imagine that this would cause him to become one-sided in his preaching. When we study the lives of Christians as we see them, the conditions in which they live, the dangers which oppress them, and the battles which they must go through, then there is reason enough to set forth the whole counsel of God for their salvation in our sermons.

In his letters to the Corinthians, the apostle sketches an accurate picture of the Christians to whom he is writing. He testifies that they have a good knowledge. But at the same time he laments that they have become puffed up in their knowledge and are lacking in love and, therefore, know nothing yet as they should (I Cor. 8:1-2). He blames their "puffed up" condition for their flippant attitude toward the man guilty of the terrible offense of incest (I Cor. 5:2). He does indeed say to them: "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say" (I Cor. 10:15). But at the same time, he could not speak to them as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ (I Cor. 3:1-3). They had repented of their earlier coarse sins, and still these sins would break forth anew, and other sins would be added to them. Through Titus he had heard that quarrels, jealousy, angry feelings, selfishness, slander, gossip, proud and disorderly behavior existed in their midst (II Cor. 12:20-21). The party spirit had so confused the congregation that some over-rated the person of the apostle, while others despised him. Some members were involved in law-

suits over earthly possessions before heathen judges. Some did not act in love in matters of Christian liberty. In connection with the love-feast, some thought only of themselves, and permitted the poor brethren to go hungry. Some profaned the Lord's Supper, so that they were not even impressed by the fact that their Christian hope in the resurrection of the dead was being undermined. The apostle thinks with trembling about his impending visit in their midst, when he will see all these things with his own eyes.

Well, then, was that still a Christian congregation? Was that name appropriate? We are tempted to ask such questions, and many a one would be quickly inclined to answer in the negative. Not so the apostle Paul. To be sure, he expresses the fear that many are not truly repentant, and he will not be able to spare them. Therefore he urgently exhorts all of them: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (II Cor. 13:5). But aside from the impenitent man guilty of incest, he does not deny the name of Christian to any of them. The difference between Christians and non-Christians does not consist in the works which they do or do not do. Rather, the difference lies in the fact that the non-Christian permits sin to rule over him in one or another form (even one's natural self-righteousness is sin, and is actually the greatest abomination before God). The Christian, on the other hand, as soon as he recognizes his sins for what they are, mourns over them and seeks forgiveness in Christ. A Christian lives in such repentance, and every day is led to repent through the preaching of the Word of God.

So let us not despair when all is not as it should be among our members. Perhaps among them too there will be good knowledge, but they will be puffed up. Perhaps old sins rear their heads again. Perhaps the ways of the world are widespread in our congregations. Perhaps the ministry of the Word is not held in due honor, and the person of the preacher is despised. Very often we want to see the fruits before we have properly planted the seed. If we have preached an earnest sermon concerning some particular sin, and do not see immediate results, then we may easily be overcome by discouraging thoughts. It is one thing to plant and to water, and it is another

thing to give the increase (I Cor. 3:6-7). Some preachers imagine that as soon as they have said something, it should be carried out. It sometimes seems as though they wish to be heard, not so much because they have spoken God's Word, but because they have spoken God's Word! They are more concerned that the instrument be praised than they are about Him who gave His pure Word without their seeking Him. Let us rather be all the more diligent in prayer, that God would make His Word powerful and active in our hearers, as it is spoken by His preachers and teachers.

It would be a mistake to compare our hearers to those who live completely dedicated to the coarse sins of the flesh, and who have closed their ears and hearts to the Word of God. At the same time, it would be a mistake for us to be indifferent to the wrongs in our congregations, and placate ourselves by saying that conditions were not the best in Corinth, either. The sad situation in Corinth troubled the apostle deeply. It was a very humbling thing for him (II Cor. 12:21). It was painful for him to see that the despising of God's Word leads to a complete falling away from Christ, with the resultant loss of one's salvation. Therefore he speaks so firmly at all times, whether in an earnest admonition or in a friendly exhortation. He points to the example of the Children of Israel in the wilderness. Their path was marked by a whole series of mass graves. "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition. ... Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Cor. 10:11-12). He points to the many cases of sickness and death in the congregation, (I Cor. 11:30-32). He shows from his own example how he tried to glorify God and His plan of salvation by his doctrine and life, but always in the midst of trials and testings.

Like the apostle, we too must always keep the goal of our preaching in our mind's eye. Our goal should include edification (οἰκοδομή = building up, restoring the fallen, I Cor. 14:26 and II Cor. 12:19) and also the perfection (κατάρτισις = setting a member right again; the word would be used for setting a broken bone, II Cor. 13:9) of the congregation and its individual members. When many in a congregation are broken and in a tumbled-

down spiritual condition, and where many among the members of Christ's body are in a confused or disorderly condition, then surely the preacher has a most difficult assignment. But he is spurred on to ever greater diligence, for he wants to be found as a faithful steward (I Cor. 4:2). So he considers very carefully the condition of his hearers, in order that he may give to them their appropriate portion of meat in due season (Luke 12:42). He preaches the Law sharply, and then is not stingy in coming with the divine comfort of the Gospel. He shows how God punishes sin already here in time, but also shows how the punishment is intended as a correction in order to lead wayward children to return to Him. He knows how the devil lies in wait to bring about the downfall of Christians. He knows that their souls stand in constant danger in this world, where the Gospel is looked upon as being just so much foolishness and a stumbling-block (I Cor. 1:18-23). Therefore he does not merely try to stir up their conscience, if it has fallen asleep, but he also tries to strengthen them. Such efforts will not be without result. God's Word is still God's power. It must always gain the victory and cause us to triumph (II Cor. 2:14). We should not expect, of course, that all who hear God's Word will be saved. The Word must triumph, even when it is for many, through their own fault, a savor of death unto death. Through our preaching God reveals in every place the savor of His knowledge, both among those who are saved and among those who are lost (II Cor. 2:15-16).

IV.

There are also hints in Paul's letters to the Corinthians regarding the form which a sermon can take. Concerning his manner of preaching among the Corinthians, Paul says that he had not declared the testimony of God "with excellency of speech or of wisdom," nor with "enticing (*πειθοῦς* = persuasive) words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (I Cor. 2:1,4). For Christ had sent him to preach the Gospel, "not with wisdom of words (*ἐν σοφίᾳ λόγου* = in wisdom of speech), lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect" (I Cor. 1:17). The apostle wants to know nothing about the wisdom of speech to which the Corinthians were accustomed from the heathen orators. By means of high-

sounding, bombastic words and glittering phrases and impassioned outbursts and the power of imagination, they would try to stir up the people and set forth all kinds of fallacies and sophistries, in order to gain their desired end. These two epistles stand as proof of what Paul had in mind. With simple and easily understood words, he here proclaims the great, wonderful thoughts and deeds of God for the salvation of sinful mankind, the Word of Jesus Christ the crucified! When he sets forth some doctrine or exhorts them to faith and a godly life, he steers clear of anything that would distract them from the actual subject being discussed. He wanted to preach simply. And that is preaching in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. The Holy Ghost Himself speaks in the Word of the cross, leading the hearts of the hearers to believe what the words say. This acceptance and faith is not the result of human persuasion, but of the power of God.

Just as we should learn from the apostle to preach the Gospel in its truth and purity, so we should also learn to present it simply and plainly. It does not have to be presented in some ingenious form, as though we can and must do something to make it less offensive to the world by our rhetorical embellishments. Flowery language, poetical expressions, artistic phrases, and other fine talking can perhaps cause people to be amazed or esthetically uplifted and charmed, but they can never convert a person and convince him of the truth of God's Word.

This very simplicity and plainness gives the sermon genuine beauty of language and grandeur of style. What can be more simple, and at the same time more beautiful, than the familiar words concerning reconciliation in II Cor. 5:19-21, and also the hymn concerning love in I Cor. 13? This is not to say that the apostle disdained all adornment of speech. We find many figures and metaphors in his two letters to the Corinthians. The flow of words often shows how stirred up he was within. But never was there any affectation or anything unnatural or any desire to glitter.

Let us be natural when we speak. Surely we will strive, to the best of our abilities, to produce the best

sermon we can, also as far as its outward form is concerned. We wish to present divine truths clothed in beautiful language. At the same time, our language must always remain simple. Not everyone is able to speak simply in flowery language. When one does not have this talent, he should let it alone. Young David accomplished with his slingshot what he could not have accomplished dressed in Saul's suit of armor. So we should not adopt a style which is not appropriate for our temperament. It is the Word which must do the work, and not the efforts we expend in proclaiming the Word.

Another obvious attribute of Paul's preaching is its clarity. When the Corinthians heard and read Paul's letters, they knew exactly what he meant. Clearly and decisively he set before them that which he had to say as a steward of the mysteries of God. There was no wavering back and forth. He always kept his goal in mind, both in his letter as a whole and also in its individual parts. He clearly distinguished Law from Gospel, and divine command from human custom and opinion. Clearly he sets forth the marks which distinguish Christians from non-Christians. The point he wished to make in each of his arguments was always sharply clear. Clarity, certainly, precision are chief requisites of a sermon.

Therefore meditation is of great importance in sermon preparation. It is true that the apostle did not speak with words he chose himself, but with words which the Holy Ghost taught him (I Cor. 2:13). The Holy Ghost is the real Author in Paul's letters. At the same time, Paul devoted much time and thought also to the form of what he wrote and said. He sent many sighs to the throne of grace, asking to be given the right thoughts and words. The fact that he felt fear and trembling when he preached among the Corinthians (I Cor. 2:3), and the fact that he expressed the inner thoughts of his heart, his anguish and his joy (II Cor. 2:1-4), show clearly that the divine inspiration was no mechanical outpouring of words, as is sometimes suggested. Rather, the Holy Spirit received the apostle into His service, together with all of his work and his educational background.

How much less can we do without thorough meditation! For us it is absolutely necessary that we be perfectly

clear on the concept involved before we preach on some subject. We should understand its content and context, its parts, its essential and non-essential characteristics, its opposite and its synonym. We want to know whether our subject belongs in the realm of the Law or of the Gospel. We want to think through the reasons which we offer, so that our argument is not weakened by unsatisfactory proofs. A good concordance is helpful so that one can compare pertinent Scripture passages. If a person is clear on something in his own mind, then he will be better able to speak clearly and precisely to his hearers. But if a person is not sure of himself, then he needs many more words to express himself. When a person senses that something is lacking, he tries to fill in with more words. The result is that the presentation becomes even more confusing and disorganized. When circumstances prevent us from devoting sufficient meditation to our subject matter, then we are troubled by the feeling of inadequate preparation. So it is an indispensable prerequisite, that we ourselves are genuinely clear on the subject of our sermon, as well as on the goal we wish to attain. We should know how to explain it so as to impress it upon our hearers.

But in order to make a clear presentation, it is important to present the individual parts in proper order and sequence, so that each is in its appropriate place. Here again the apostle serves as our example. In words which apply also to the manner of our sermon presentation, he says: "God is not the author of confusion," and again: "Let all things be done decently and in order" (εὐσχημόνως καὶ κατὰ τάξιν, I Cor. 14:33,40). And Paul then follows this precept by his precise order from beginning to end in his letters.

But above all, the letters to the Corinthians show us how the attribute of "aptness to teach," which is required of the servant of the Lord, should become evident in the sermon. (Cp. I Tim. 3:2 and II Tim. 2:24.) Since the immediate circumstances which are discussed in these epistles are largely ethical in nature, one might expect to find very little by way of doctrine. But the very opposite is the case. Every portion of these letters is filled with doctrine. Doctrine is the foundation on which everything else is built. When Paul chastized the divis-

ive party spirit in the congregation (I Cor. 3), he first of all instructed them concerning the relationship of the preacher to God, to the congregation, and to each other, and then added the necessary exhortations and admonitions. He teaches them the will of God concerning the many practical questions which arose in the congregation, and shows step by step how Christians should conduct themselves in the midst of all the dangers which threaten their faith and their lives as Christians. Only then does he follow with the application. Even when the Corinthians had (or should have had) knowledge, still his words are largely instructive, or he at least reminds them of the pertinent doctrines. How often we hear the words: "Know ye not?" "Ye know." In short, he wanted his hearers to understand the principles that were involved, so that they would be convinced of what was right, and not merely be overwhelmed by his powers of persuasion.

A sermon is lacking much when it is concerned chiefly with influencing a person's feelings before the orderly foundation has been laid by means of a quiet presentation of the pertinent doctrine. Such a sermon consists largely of exhortations and appeals. A detailed, clear, quiet description of a truly Christian life will do much more good than will a threatening assertion concerning the necessity of such a life. We should not allow ourselves to be side-tracked by the thought that all of these things are already familiar to our hearers. Paul wrote as follows to the Philippians: "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe" (Phil. 3:1). There are always hearers present who need instruction in the most familiar doctrines. And even Christians who are rich in Christian knowledge like to hear time and again the old familiar truths of Scripture. They always find something more to learn. Like Luther, they wish to remain students of the Catechism for as long as they live.

At times one hears the comment that doctrinal sermons are dry, and that the hearers are bored by them. It is no doubt true that there are dry doctrinal sermons. But this is not the fault of the doctrine. It may very well be the case that preachers who overwhelm their hearers with great force and with a torrent of words meet with greater approval than those who set forth in a thor-

ough manner the doctrines of God's Word, and then apply them to their hearers. But only that sermon will produce real and lasting fruit, when it brings the hearers to a knowledge of the saving doctrine and furthers them in that doctrine. Let us therefore fill ourselves with the light of heavenly doctrine from above, so that we may impart to our hearers "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4:6).

At the same time, we should surely be on guard that we do not treat the doctrine in an abstract manner, as though we were dealing with dead knowledge. We dare never forget that Christian doctrine in all its parts has a very practical goal: to glorify God and to bring men to salvation. The people to whom we preach need this doctrine in order to be saved. When we always remember this, then our sermons will, as a matter of course, be fashioned in such a way as to bear in mind the special needs of our hearers as we treat each individual doctrine. Then the sermon will not leave people "hanging in the air," but it will answer the questions which at times arise in their hearts, or which need to be discussed (I Cor. 1:11; 4:6; 5:1,10; 7:1, etc.). In this way the sermon becomes a lively thing. The presentation of doctrine illuminates and makes clear what before was unclear, so that each person is easily able to make appropriate applications to himself.

Since the Word of God is a message which God wants us to bring to our hearers, we should preach it in such a way that it is impressed upon their consciences. The sermon should move the hearers to a heartfelt affirmation of the Word of God which they have heard, since it is impossible for them to take a neutral position. Much can be done along this line in the conclusion of the sermon, or even in the conclusion of each individual part. Then it is entirely appropriate to have a short, powerful closing exhortation, an appeal to self-examination, or to summarize briefly the matters which are to be impressed upon the conscience. The last chapter of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians gives us a fine example of this.

Hints of many kinds can be drawn from the letters to the Corinthians. But the main thing impressed on us

is that we constantly keep clearly before our eyes the purpose of the sermon, and the means by which this purpose is to be achieved. When we formulate our sermons in this way, and are constantly occupied with learning from those writings that were inspired by the Holy Ghost, then our ministry and our preaching will serve to glorify God, and souls will be led along the narrow path to heaven.

A. Schulz



OUR CALLING
SERVANTS OF GOD — SERVANTS OF PEOPLE

PART II

WHO ARE WE? The unbelieving heathen continue to churn under the wrath of God and His condemnation rests upon them. And who are we? Out of the midst of this miserable mass of sinful humanity we have been called by God's grace. We were a people who were sometimes darkness but are now the children of light and children of the day, a people who were not a people but now have come into the new day of the children of God. A people who were under God's wrath and condemnation even as others because of our sins, but now have come into the most blessed state that any individual will ever realize as long as he dwells on this side of eternity. For we have become the chosen people of God and His Spirit dwells within us. And from the borders of God's kingdom of grace in which we now rejoice and labor shines forth the blessed light of life illuminating a world of darkness which groans under the travail of sin and can only be set free by Him who has come to set at liberty the captives.

As the Spirit of God wells up within us and our lives are filled with the full glory of the election of grace, our purpose for living rises above the earthly and takes on the heavenly. We realize that we are the salt of the

earth. We are the light of the world. We wonder how it is possible that such appellations be ascribed to us, who see our sins so vividly every day of our lives; yet, we are called to realize that we are the only ones in this world who have what it takes to rescue mankind from the prison of sin. We alone have been entrusted with what it takes to free man from the wrath of God and eternal condemnation. It almost causes us to stammer to say it! It sounds so prideful, doesn't it? But we were not the first to say it. God was! And we do not need to apologize for something which God has said.

HOLY PRIDE We have been called to be His for one specific purpose upon earth. He did not call us to make a name for ourselves, to give our lives to laying up treasures for this life, to serve the organizational structure of a congregation or synod as though that were an end in itself. Rather, He has called us "that we might shew forth the praises of Him." This is our calling. This is our glory. This is our purpose in life. This is our reason for living. And as long as we have life and breath may the Lord use us to praise Him, and may we be proud to serve Him!

Proud to be a servant? There is a pride which is not sinful. Will not every one of God's people be ready to confess, "I am a child of the living God through Jesus Christ my Savior and I am proud of it. He is my Lord, my Master, and my God!"? We will not be ashamed to confess that the Christ hanging there on Calvary's tree with blood pouring from His sacred veins, His body a beaten and battered mass — there is my King, my Savior, and my God. We are ready to say that we are His servants and are proud of it and seek no greater honor. For there is none greater. Indeed, though we find nothing within ourselves of which to be proud, yet we may joyfully sing:

Jesus Christ my pride and glory
He, the true and living light.

ABRAHAM'S SEED Jesus Christ was the glory of the Hebrew nation. Though most had lost sight of this God-revealed fact and considered political salvation the predominant need, yet Simeon knew well that the glory of his people was to bring forth the Messiah

and to let the light of that glory shine forth throughout the nations.

Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant
depart in peace,
according to Thy word:
For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation,
which Thou hast prepared
before the face of all people;
A light to lighten the Gentiles,
And the glory of Thy people Israel.
(Luke 2:29-32)

The reason for the existence of the nation of Israel was found in the promise to Abraham, "... in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 28:14). This was its purpose, its reason for existence, its glory. When its God-given purpose was accomplished, its reason for existence as a nation was over. And when the nation of Israel blindly rejected the Christ, their glory vanished also. "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:38).

But the Jewish dream of political salvation continues even among the Gentiles, as the Chiliasts insist that God will revive the nation of Israel in the last times. Therefore such people, even today, consider the descendants of Judah to be very special in God's eyes, the "apple of his eye" (Zechariah 2:8). But this matter is laid to rest once and for all time with inspired simplicity when the apostle Paul is caused to write: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, There is neither bond nor free, There is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:26-29).

OUR GLORY This all points very directly to us. For in Christ God points to His faithful and says, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (I Peter 2:9). Now think

of it! That chosen generation has been moved by God to call you and me to serve in that very special labor of the public ministry. We are to serve as special oracles of the Lord our God. We must ever be aware of the glory which is ours in our service to God in order that we might fully serve our fellowman with the light of life.

We must, of course, remain fully aware of the fact that we are merely instruments of the living God. Not we but He must convince the hearts of men that He is their Savior, their Lord and their King. But neither dare we forget that "he that heareth you heareth me" (Luke 10:16). We must not forget or take lightly: "who-soever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me ..." (Matt. 18:6). You know the rest!

"WHERE IS MY HONOR?" The chosen people of God in the days of Malachi were calling Jehovah LORD. But God had to rebuke them through Malachi: "If I am a Father, where is my honor? And if I am a Master where is my fear?" Now, the priests in the days of Malachi seemed to have a most difficult time in recognizing wherein they were despising and mocking the name of God. God had to spell it out! "You are bringing to my altar polluted food." He had a right to expect the best and He received the blind, the lame, the cripples, the sick as offerings. Would anyone dare to come before the civil governor with these offerings and expect them to be received by the powers that be with gratitude? Of course not. But, you see, their despising the name of God through their miserable offerings did not seem like a serious matter to them, for they no longer considered their calling as God's chosen people the most important matter in their lives. They no longer considered their labor as servants of the living God and servants of God's people an honorable and blessed work. Rather, they considered their God-ordained labor as contemptible and wearisome. "Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts" (Malachi 1:13).

The priesthood of Israel had lost sight of their glory. The very reason for the existence of the priesthood had become strange in their hearts and minds. The purpose of the priesthood was for giving life and peace

to all the people through the means of grace as outlined in the laws of God. As with the means which God employs in the New Testament, so also in the Old Testament the prescribed means created and preserved spiritual life. They were stewards of the grace of God which continually pointed them to the promised Messiah. This was to be the daily consecrated concern of the priesthood. And so their attitude toward this labor in the Lord was an important consideration.

As long as they walked in the fear of the Lord and stood in awe of the glory of their labors, they instructed according to truth and walked with God, and many were turned from iniquity unto the living God. For as messengers of the Most High, as laborers together with God, as ambassadors for the living God they were to keep God's grace before the eyes of the people, (Cf. Malachi 2:5-7).

But when they turned aside from the Word of God and considered their duties as nothing but laborious and irksome tasks, they became a stumbling block to the people. Since the fear of the Lord was not evident among the priesthood, the people lost their reverence toward God and His means of grace and lost respect for the priesthood as well. As the Lord informed them, "Therefore, have I also made you contemptible and base before all people, according as ye have not kept my ways ..." (Malachi 2:9).

"I AM A GREAT KING" What a terrible state of affairs!

It makes us sad to hear that the Lord must cry out in seeming anguish that which His people ought to know: "I am a great King," (Malachi 1:14). Why did it need to be said? Why does it need to be said today? Because in the eyes of many the simple, plain labor of the kingdom may become contemptible today also. The preaching and teaching, the administration of the Sacraments, the comforting, admonishing and exhorting, the struggle with error which constantly rears its ugly head, the holding to the simple truths of Holy Writ by faith when all the world, Satan, and our flesh rages against it! Are we tempted at times to say, "What weariness is it!"?

Of course, it is wearisome to the flesh! What do

we expect? The flesh is in league with Satan. And Satan wishes us to close our mouths and grow weary of the work. But as the glory of the Gospel of Christ shines into our hearts, the weariness of our flesh is forced to recede. For our spirit is given new life and rejoices in the Lord's permitting the glory of Christ to flow forth through us in word and action to those entrusted into our spiritual care and to those others who stop long enough to listen. But does this always happen as it ought?

As I was growing up, I was startled to hear my pastor state in the midst of some very trying pastoral frustrations, "There must be an easier way to make a living!" It was unthinkable, at the time, that a clergyman of our faith who was called by God and God's people into the public ministry should ever wonder if he perhaps should consider serving the Lord in some other capacity in life. The weakness (or the strength) of the flesh (depending upon how one looks at it) was showing through the glory that was expected to always beam forth in full brightness from a called servant of God.

Some years later, as I was beginning the ministry and experiencing various trials of the ministry, I curiously asked another pastor, somewhat older than I, if during his service in the ministry he had ever thought of serving God in another walk of life. To which he instantly replied with shocking frankness, "Have I ever thought of doing something other than serving the Lord in the pastoral ministry? Of course I have. Sometimes I think of it every day!"

This may be shocking to read, especially for those who may be embarrassed by the frankness of it, or for those who have struggled with the thought but have never breathed a word to anyone. But it carries with it something far more instructive than possible embarrassment. First of all, it carries with it a demonstration of the power of God — the power of God in our hearts, a power that will not let us go, regardless of the difficulties and frustrations which confront us in this service of the Lord. We should realize that it is not so surprising that there are few in the faithful ministry of the Lord. Rather, it is a miracle of God that there are any

at all! The reason why there are some who have been moved to serve God and God's people in this capacity is very simple. The Spirit has convinced us that the glory of Christ's Gospel of forgiving love is the highest wisdom that will ever enter the ears and hearts of men. The need for it by all people is clearly revealed in Holy Writ and obviously demonstrated by natural man. And the power of it alone is able to save the souls of all people. What else can one do on earth that will better serve this great responsibility and supply this greatest need?

Secondly, it may cause us to realize that weariness of the flesh is a matter of fact. We are not proud of it, but, rather, ashamed. We are filled with a shame that causes us to repent before our great King every day of our lives. But what a great King He is, who forgives us even this sin in Christ Jesus and fills us with His Spirit! Thus, the glory of the Gospel overpowers and displaces this miserable activity of the flesh so that the joy of the labors of God's kingdom may stand out in bold relief before all with whom we come in contact. The prescription for a glory-filled ministry is nothing new. Prayer and meditation upon His Word is the answer. For the Word shows us the glory of God in Christ Jesus. And when our heart stays in tune with the glory of God's gracious love to us and to all mankind we will remain dedicated servants of God as well as devoted servants to His people.

L. D. Redlin



SERMON STUDY — THE ETERNAL WORD

The times scream for God-words. They aren't heard much these days. Much of what is said lacks the concise authority of the God who told Moses, "I AM the one who is!" Eyes aren't accustomed to view the influence of affluence in their daily routine. Materialistic and deterministic principles change the glory of our Savior God

and His eternal Word to "reasonable" applications of influential affluence in myriad social programs. The impetus fails on two sides. Money has never been able to save anyone or induce God to do so. Furthermore, a campaign glued to socio-political issues misses the essence and impact of God's communication with mankind in the Gospel.

THE ETERNAL WORD is not just an abstract for theoretical philosophers or theologians. God does not leave mankind an uncertain revelation which lacks in clarity or application. He revealed Himself personally. The Eternal Word is the incarnate Son. God gave us something we could at least begin to comprehend and understand: a talking, walking, hearing, seeing, fingered-and-toed man. He was made in every respect like us, but without sin.

When we talk of the incarnate Word, the first eighteen verses of John's Gospel flash into conscious memory. It is God's summary-commentary on the mystery and meaning of the enfleshing of our Savior. We offer a mini-pericope for the Advent and Christmas seasons which utilizes texts from this section. A quick check in Nesper's *Biblical Texts* indicates that not a few series have texts for all eighteen or the first fourteen verses. The Saxon Pericope makes three texts from these verses; Wuertemberg, Fendt-Liefeld-Owens, Eisenach, and Synodical Conference have texts of smaller sections of this prologue. No one appears to have made a series dividing the eighteen verses to cover an extended schedule. Though influenced partially by paragraph selections in new English translations of the Bible, the texts indicated are my personal choices, reflecting what I thought a convenient division for series-presentation.

1. John 1:1-5 — 1st Advent
THE WORD: OUR SAVIOR IS
GOD.

John uses the same "in the beginning" of Moses. Since when the *Logos*?

Luther, "He is that person of the Trinity who declares or expresses the personality of God, and He declares it in such a manner that the whole Godhead is expressed, and he who has the Word has also the deity undisturbed." He is Creator, Life, and Light. Creator: "And God said ..." "Let us make ..." Life — the type of spiritual existence which cor-

responds to His essence, concreated in Adam and Eve, available since sin by imputation through faith. Light — of course, not natural light, but the whole panorama of grace. God gives us what we need for a particular problem (sin-darkness) and bestows an advantage to those who accept the fact that He has accepted them because of the sacrifice of Christ.

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| 2. John 1:6-8 — 2nd Advent
THE VOICE: JOHN PREPARES
THE WORLD FOR ITS LIFE
AND LIGHT. | Nothing happened accidentally. God sent the one whom Jesus later called the greatest man to rise among those born of woman. |
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John calls him the Witness. He reflects the impact of Isaiah's prophetic vision. From his wilderness pulpit the Baptizer calls men to repentance, shattering the security of man's self-deception or soothing the hopelessness of their despair. Men unthreatened don't need saviors. John "threatened" so that the Light he witnessed might shine brighter in contrast to the blackness of their (and our) sin and death.

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| 3. John 1:9-11 — 3rd Advent
THE LIGHT: REAL LIGHT;
THERE IS NO LIGHT OTHER
THAN JESUS. | To suggest a need for light when the sun seems to be working pretty well and local utilities keep the artificial sources going most of the time always raises a few eyebrows. But men with problems, rebels sitting in darkness, need solutions that fit those particular problems. Enter <u>the</u> Light. He was coming. He has come! He came for a purpose: to enlighten everyone. Tragedy! He was there ... in the world. Rejection. People primed for messianic blessing say, "No." He is here now in the witness-word of those who saw, believed, and reported. Rejection. Solomon is right: no new thing under the sun. People are determined to work out their own salvation <u>without</u> fear or trembling; it is ultimately less God. The voice of Jesus still echoes across the cities of unholiness, which spurn His saving will and invitation, "You are unwilling." |
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| 4. John 1:12-13 — 4th Advent
THE PRIVILEGES OF CHILDREN,
THE ONLY ONES WHO CAN PROP- | The time clock for celebrating Christmas winds down to busy-ness |
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ERLY CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS. and frantic preparation, all of which bear the intended purpose of minimizing or ignoring proper meditation and worship. Many celebrate the "holiday," not the holy day. They have Christmas, but not a Savior's birthday. To honor the incarnate Word is a privilege. God alone gives the power. He gives the faith that accepts His eternal decree of salvation through forgiveness of sins in Christ. He gives the insight to understand the implications of this Gospel for daily living. He gives the strength and spirit to be genuinely happy and to react with joyous worship. No natural, physical cause, no sexual will, no volitional human act has created this privilege. We have the privilege of children (adopted, you know!), because it is our living God's will to save. The dry bones live!

5. John 1:14 — Christmas THE WORD MADE FLESH. God's stated choice for His self-revelation is the Word who receives body and soul. He is not apparition, superhuman, or suprahuman. He receives mind, will, emotions — made in our likeness, yet without sin; no fleshly, sinful nature to compromise His holiness. The incarnate Word did not choose to live with the angels. He dwelt among us. He fought our battles. He was sympathetic with our temptations, since He endured them all — for us. Those believing then saw glory. We see what they saw. It is our God speaking to us personally in a Person. He sends the eternal Son to do and die for our spiritual blessing and advantage. Those who saw told; they couldn't help it. They wrote so that our joy may be complete.
6. John 1:15-18 — 1st Christmas GRACE AND TRUTH: WITHOUT THE INCARNATE WORD THERE IS NO GRACE OR TRUTH. Pity those for whom the meaning of Christmas involves a choice between two fairy tales. They don't accept the incarnation of the Son of God, so there's no significance in His birth. And even children know there's no Santa Claus. Men think they can experience the love of God in the spirit of giving. They assume no spiritual accountability. Happiness based on personal emotions or subjective reflection becomes an end in itself. The whole activity of God's plan to send Jesus, make Him man, cause

His suffering, death, and life is indicative of the divine will. He would have us remember the summary-word of His kindness — GRACE. The TRUTH is the personalization (Christ) and the verbalization (Christ's words) of grace. Oh, to see how mankind manhandles truth and TRUTH. Everything is so relative; today's truth is tomorrow's myth. God gives His assurances outside of man, his subjective capabilities, and his inclination to righteousness. The salvation message recounts and is made dependent on real, historical, space-time phenomena. From the fulness of Christ we have received more grace than we need or deserved.

M. Sydow



THE LORD'S ANOINTED —
CROWNED WITH VICTORY

*(A metrical version of Psalm II, by E. Reim,
reprinted from the Journal, December, 1965.)*

(THE PSALMIST)

Why do the heathen rage,
And why do nations plot in vain?
The monarchs of the earth, they take their
stand,
Their great men put their heads together
Against the LORD and HIS ANOINTED.

(KINGS AND RULERS)

Up! Let us break their bands
And fling their shackles far from us!

(THE PSALMIST)

But He who sits on heaven's throne — He
laughs!

The Lord of all, He holds them in de-
rision.

Then He will shout at them His anger,
His burning wrath will throw them into
terror.

(THE LORD)

Yet I — I have installed My King
On Zion, Mountain of My Holiness.

(HIS ANOINTED)

Now I will tell of a decree:
The LORD has said to me:
"My Son art Thou; this day have I be-
gotten Thee."

(THE LORD)

Demand of Me, and I will give to Thee
The nations for Thy heritage,
For Thy possession — e'en to its ends —
the earth.
In pieces wilt Thou break them, with an iron
sceptre,
And as a potter's vessel Thou shalt shat-
ter them.

(THE PSALMIST)

And now, O kings, be wise;
Do let yourselves be taught, ye judges of
the earth.
Oh, serve the LORD with fear;
And trembling, shout for joy.
Kiss ye the Son, lest He be angry, and ye
perish from the way;
For quickly will His fiery wrath consume.
But blessed are they who put their trust
in Him!



