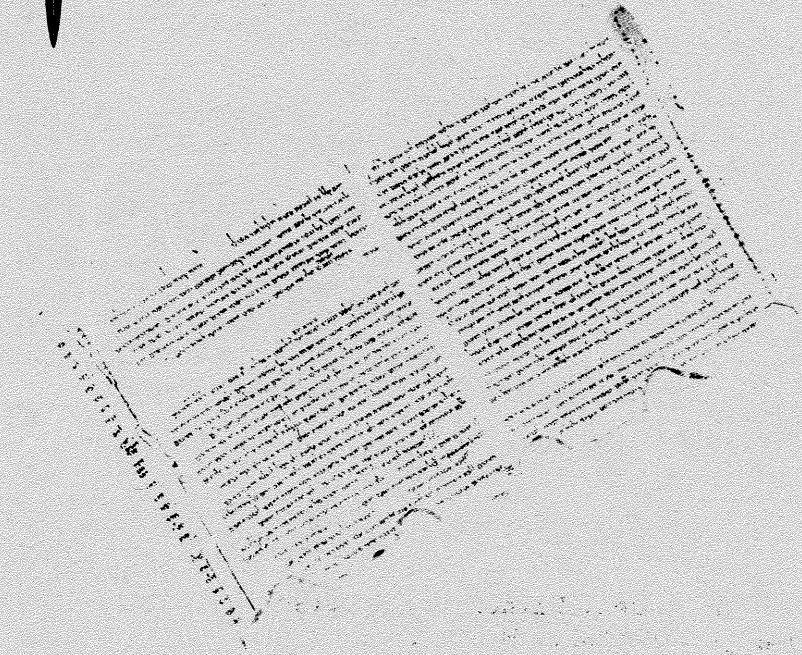


September 1983

Volume XXIII, No. 3

ISSN 0360-9685



The
Lutheran
Synod
Quarterly

LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY

Theological Journal of the
Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Edited by the Faculty of
Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary
Mankato, Minnesota

Editor: Pres. Wilhelm W. Petersen
Managing Editor: W. W. Petersen
Book Review Editor: J. B. Madson

Subscription Price: \$5.00 per year

Address all subscriptions and all correspondence to:

LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY
Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary
447 North Division Street
Mankato, Minnesota 56001

F O R E W O R D

One of our subscribers to the Quarterly is Rev. Daniel Faugstad who serves Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, rural Princeton. He was recently married to Miss Julie Sorenson. Prof. Erling Teigen delivered the wedding sermon and we are pleased to share it with our readers.

With this issue we conclude a series of Articles on A Lutheran Understanding of the Will and Providence of God by Dr. Ernest Bartels. We thank him for sharing these articles with us and trust that they have been a blessing to our readers. Dr. Bartels has two nephews who are studying theology at Bethany Seminary.

Also included in this issue are Homiletics Notes by the sainted Prof. Milton Otto. He taught homiletics for 25 years at Bethany Seminary. Former students will especially appreciate these notes. They will also be a good refresher to all of our pastors. Our thanks to Pastor Theodore Gullixson for compiling these notes and reviewing them with Prof. Otto before he died.

We remind our readers of the annual Reformation lectures which will be held in Mankato on October 27-28. The guest lecturer will be Dr. Gottfried Hoffmann of Oberursel, Germany. His topic is: Luther and Justification.

WWP



TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. WEDDING SERMON	
-- Rev. Erling T. Teigen . .	1
II. A LUTHERAN UNDERSTANDING OF THE WILL AND PROVIDENCE OF GOD IN HUMAN LIFE (continued)	
Chapter 8 - God's Will and Providence in the Lives of the Unholy	8
Chapter 9 - The Will and Providence of God When Christians Suffer . . .	19
Chapter 10 - God's Will When Chris- tians Make Decisions	43
-- Dr. Ernest Bartels	
III. HOMILETICS (notes)	
-- Prof. M. Otto . .	60

Sermon Preached at the Wedding of

Dan Faugstad

and

Julie Sorenson

August 14, 1983

at Our Savior's Lutheran Church
Princeton, Minnesota

by Prof. Erling T. Teigen

My dear friends in Christ:

It is a very great honor for me to address you on your wedding day in the company of your many friends and relatives. And of course, as we address you now before you make public your solemn and sacred vows to each other, we wish only to direct you to God's Word, which alone can be your source of strength as you seek to live together under His will and grace. For that reason, we wish to direct your attention to those words from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians where he connects the deepest profundities of his grace and love to the marriage relationship which he has established for his creation.

Ephesians 5:21-27 (KJV)

Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the

wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify it and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

This text is first and foremost a deep and penetrating proclamation of the Gospel. It is a proclamation of the Gospel which proclaims to the whole world that while all of us are condemned by reason of our inborn, sinful nature, yet God has penetrated the power of sin and death by his loving grace and has justified us by the merits of his Son, that we are saved by HIS merit and goodness, not by anything which is found in us. And he also proclaims to us here that he offers and distributes the merits of his Son not by any works or love of our own, nor by our approach to him, but solely through His Word and Sacraments, through which he comes to us by his own power and will.

The astounding thing, however, is that it is in the context of this marvelous proclamation of the Gospel that our gracious Lord and God, through his Holy Apostle, sees fit to enthrone the Word of his will concerning marriage.

You are going to be a parsonage family, i.e., you, Dan, have been called by God, through a congregation of his people, to be their pastor, and you have been set aside for this work through your ordination. This means that you are called to be God's spokesman, to administer the means of grace in the midst of God's people. You, Julie, are not called to be an assistant pastor, or a shepherdess. You are one of the many who sit in the pew and have the glorious

office of being ministered to by the Blessed Lord of the Church, through one of his servants, the pastor. And you are called also to be Dan's wife, just as he is also called to be your husband. And it is not really a matter of which of these callings comes first or has priority, although it will often seem as though the two are in conflict.

But let me warn you today, Dan and Julie, that parsonage marriages are very fragile marriages indeed. That may seem to be a shocking statement. Many would expect us to say that parsonage marriages are a prime example of stability and should shine forth as a good example. But the statistics belie that idea. And so does human experiences, though it does not always show in a very public way. Parsonage marriages are fragile, for one reason, perhaps, because the husband and wife in a parsonage living in a fishbowl, as it were, as well as those who view their marriage and family life from the community and congregation, may tend to regard such marriages as special, as different and maybe better than any other.

Indeed, your marriage IS special. It is special to all of us here today because you are our dear friends and our focus today is on you and your marriage. And we do certainly hope that all husbands and wives here today will find renewed reason to regard their own marriages as special. Your marriage is very special to you, too, because it is yours. But above all, your marriage is special to God. You are each one of you his dearly loved children, who he knows by name--who he has bought and paid for with the blood of his dear Son. There must surely be rejoicing in heaven whenever his children enter into the holy estate of marriage which he has instituted. Your marriage is special to God because he promises to bless you through his word.

But...let me assure you, your marriage is NOT special in the sense that it is different from any of the other marriages in the community and congregation around you, as though it were immune from the assaults of the devil and the flesh. Each of you is bringing to your marriage not only the many good qualities we know you both have in a human sort of way. But you are also each bringing to it the many sins and weaknesses which live in your human flesh, sins and weaknesses which must make you both say with St. Paul, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Romans 7:18). And that surely must be applied to what you know about God's will concerning marriage as well. If you will hear God's Law and its sharp condemnation that "There is none that doeth good, no not one," then you will also have to realize, my dear friends, that by reason of your sinful flesh, your marriage is destined to misery and failure. If the only thing you have going for your marriage are your inner strengths and noble human qualities, then the failure of your marriage is as certain as death and more certain than taxes.

But in the text we have before us, that is not where our Lord wants us to dwell. Your marriage is not special, i.e., not different from any other marriage among God's people--in that it is above all else, covered by God's grace and redemption. And it is sustained only by that Gospel which is proclaimed to sinful people--to sinful husbands and wives, parents and children.

Don't think, Dan, that what is worked out in your study and preached in this pulpit does not apply to your marriage. When you counsel your hearers on the basis of God's word to be patient, generous,

forgiving, selfless, etc., YOU listen to what you say and take it to heart yourself, and take it to your marriage. And you, Julie, when you hear such preaching, think not that it applies only to others. It applies to you and your marriage and home life as well, not just to all of those sinful people with problems out there.

Now what, specifically, is it that our Lord wants us to think about marriage as he reveals it to us here through St. Paul? OUR LORD WANTS THE MARRIAGE OF HIS CHRISTIANS, HIS BELIEVERS, TO BE PATTERNED AFTER HIS OWN ABSOLUTE SELFLESSNESS. We are not, of course, to confuse His sacrifice with the selflessness and the sacrifice which belong to marriage, and thus make marriage redeeming and sacramental. That it cannot be, for his sacrifice is perfect, and yours never will be---that is, not by your own work; only is it perfect when covered with His righteousness and forgiveness. For that reason above all else, in the midst of all your frailties and in the midst of your daily sin against others, look to his redemption, to his sacrifice on the cross, where he has completely given himself up in your places, and by which God declares you guiltless and righteous and perfect saints. And only through trust in the gracious promise which he delivers to you there does he call you to pattern your marriage after his redemption. Just as he has given himself up completely to save us and asks the redeemed to give themselves up to him, he also asks you to give yourselves up completely for each other.

The simple Gospel is thus the beginning point. You stand, we say again, before your God and before each other, as poor, miserable, weak sinners, with nothing of worth, nothing but the filthy rags of your flesh to offer to him or to each other. And yet HE washes you clean daily, as Paul says,

"THAT HE MIGHT PRESENT IT TO HIMSELF A GLORIOUS CHURCH, NOT HAVING SPOT, OR WRINKLE, OR ANY SUCH THING, BUT THAT IT SHOULD BE HOLY AND WITHOUT BLEMISH."

And what follows from that is that those he has so redeemed and washed clean serve him in faith. It is not that their faith is a good work, a noble gift which they can offer to please him, But it means that they trust him and his word of promise; they keep his word; they obey his word and his will, they submit to him by taking thought not to their own righteousness or works but rather accept his work, his righteousness, his goodness, as their own. To submit to Christ means, above all, to accept all of his work as your own, to believe His gracious promises, and not to add anything of your own to what he says is sufficient.

And how is this to be applied to your marriage? In the first place, we are to remember that indeed this applies to all believers, in all of their relationships to each other. But yet, it is notable that our Lord sees fit to enthrone marriage by likening it to the relationship which exists between him and his church, the believers. The very fact that Christ is called the bridegroom and the church, the believers, are called the bride, is an astounding thing that we can barely comprehend.

When you, Julie, are asked here to submit to your husband, that word is filled with an enormous amount of meaning. It does not mean merely to carry out orders, but it is the same submission and obedience which belongs to faith in his word--obey the word. Surely, devotion to duty is a part of that. But if your submission and obedience to your husband is to be like the submission and obedience which the church has toward Christ, then it includes faithfulness,

trust, honor, love, self-sacrifice. Through that word "submit" you are called upon to empty yourself of all self-interest and to be a true servant.

And you, Dan, are asked by your Lord here, to love your wife. And that love is neither the simple love of passion or infatuation, nor the love of romanticism. But that love is likewise a call to completely empty yourself and give up all of your self interest. To love your wife includes faithfulness, trust, honor, self-sacrifice, indeed, submission as well. It is to hold her needs as being more important than your own, and to be a true servant to her, just as it is said in the Gospel, "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve." When Paul says here, "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it," you are called to empty yourself and serve your wife by laying down your life for her happiness and welfare.

This, my dear friends, lies under nothing other than the precious Gospel. And so it is then our prayer that your marriage will be one which lies always, day in and day out, and hour after hour, under that same Gospel. Hear the promise of our gracious Lord, and look always to what he has done in laying down his life for you. Under His sacrifice and under His Righteousness, God regards you as perfect. And your marriage too, then, can only be perfect when covered by His Grace and forgiveness.

God be with you all of your days. May God prosper you by His grace, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

A LUTHERAN UNDERSTANDING OF THE WILL AND
PROVIDENCE OF GOD IN HUMAN LIFE*

Chapter 8

GOD'S WILL AND PROVIDENCE IN THE LIVES OF THE UNHOLY

In His providence God provides for the physical temporal needs of all people. The Godly and the ungodly alike are recipients of His care. In love He supplies the necessities of life, also to those who do not know, and accept and acknowledge Him.

Jesus made this point very clear in the Sermon on the Mount. He was speaking to His followers about loving their enemies. He said that if they would love their enemies they would be like the heavenly Father. His words, recorded in Matthew's Gospel are "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:44, 45a). He then gives an example of the Father's love being bestowed on those who are, in essence, His "enemies." He says "for he makes his sun rise upon the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45b).

What motivates God to take care of the needs of the ungodly? Reuben H. Ford says, "our heavenly Father pours out His blessings. . . upon the just

*Continued from Volume XXIII, No. 2, June 1983

and the unjust alike, not because He disregarded moral distinctions, but because He is the heavenly Father."¹ In discussing this verse, Martin H. Franzmann speaks of "the Father of limitless spontaneous love."² He says, "The Father's love is love to the loveless shown, love to the evil and the unjust."³ In a sermon on this text Frederick W. Feinsinger said to his congregation

You cannot visualize your Father in heaven as One who would let the sun shine down on His own children, just in certain little areas, and leave all the unbelievers in darkness. When the sun arose this morning, it was shining on the wheat fields of the consecrated widow as well as upon the shacks of those who are living in debauchery and godliness. When the rain falls, God does not withhold it from the property of the godless but He gives it to the Godly and the godless equally and alike."⁴

The venerable British Protestant commentator Matthew Henry said that only once God made such a distinction in permitting His sun to shine on some and not on others. He wrote, "It was but once that God forbade His sun to shine on the Egyptians, when the Israelites had light in their dwellings. God could make such a distinction every day."⁵

Lenski sees, not only Fatherly, but redeeming love as God's purpose in bestowing earthly blessings on the ungodly. He says

Let us not think that it costs God nothing to send sunshine and rain on the unrighteous. It is His mighty agape that restrains Him from sending only destruction upon them. By His benefactions He would lead the wicked to repentance.⁶

He quotes Romans 2:4 (K.J.V.) as a reference
"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness
and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing
that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repent-
ance?"

The Scripture not only says that God provides
sunshine and sends rain to all people, but it
also speaks of God as the provider of food for
all. Psalm 136:25 refers to God as "he who gives
food to all flesh, for his steadfast love en-
dures forever." Koehler remarks, "He 'gives food
to all flesh,' to the heathen as well as to His
children."⁷ Many Lutherans use as a table prayer
the words of Psalm 145:15, 16. "The eyes of all
look to thee, and thou givest them their food in
due season. Thou openest thine hand, thou satis-
fiest the desire of every living thing." Jesus
said of the Father, "He is kind to the ungrateful
and the selfish" (Luke 6:35c).

All human lives are lived in relationship with
God. Even when people commit sinful acts, they
do not act independently of God. God even parti-
cipates in their sins. Bente says, "The fact must
. . . .not be overlooked that God is operative in
men and acts through men also when their deeds are
evil. . . .God has a hand. . . .in the sinful acts
of men."⁸ However, He does this in a limited way.
He does so insofar as they are acts, but not inso-
far as they are evil.⁹ God can and does cause
good to come from the sinful, evil acts of men.
Bente writes

Once a man has yielded to Satan and has deter-
mined upon wickedness. . . .God takes his
wickedness and directs it in such course that
the wickedness is made to serve God's plan
. . . .and at times the welfare of the sinner
himself.¹⁰

Aulén states that "Faith has. . . no deeper insight into God's relation to evil than the conviction that He is able to make evil serve the purposes of His love."¹¹

In His providence God monitors and regulates the evil acts of people. He does this in several ways. He prevents the conception, or the execution, of many sinful designs. A classic Biblical case in point is that of Abimilech, recorded in the twentieth chapter of Genesis. Abraham journeyed into the region where Abimilech was king. When Abimilech inquired about Abraham's wife Sarah, Abraham said the truth, "She is my sister." He withheld the other truth that she was his wife. God came to Abimilech in a dream and warned him that the woman he had taken, Sarah, was a man's wife. God threatened him with death. Abimilech had not approached Sarah, and he dialogued with God, "Lord, wilt thou slay innocent people? Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister?' and she herself said, 'He is my brother.'" In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this!" God then said to Abimilech, "Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me; therefore I did not let you touch her." God, Himself, prevented Abimilech from having relations with another man's wife. How? On the basis of verses 7 and 18 of the chapter, Leupold is of the opinion that God sent a sickness which affected the king's entire household, including Abimilech, which rendered the act of sexual intercourse impossible. Thus, Abimilech was kept from sinning.¹²

Other Scripture passages which illustrate the truth that God prevents the carrying out of evil intentions are Genesis 37:18; Exodus 17:30; Numbers 22:12; 23:8, 20; II Kings 6:17, 18; 7:6; Isaiah 37:36; and John 7:30; 8:20.

God also confines within certain bounds other acts, whose conception and execution He permits.¹³ God may frustrate the purpose of the evildoer while permitting the deed.¹⁴ Isaiah prophesied that God would permit the king of Assyria to invade Judah, but that limitations would be placed upon him and his armies of conquest (Is. 8:5-10). The reason given by Isaiah is "God is with us" (Is. 8:10). Leupold says that "the Lord would bring upon them. . . .the Assyrian nation."¹⁵ But he states that "the prophet shows how futile all attempts like the Assyrian invasion must prove in the end because they are directed at the overthrow of the people of God."¹⁶ Paul makes the point in I Corinthians 10:13 that God allows temptations to come to His people, but within limitations.

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Another Bible reference in this matter is Psalm 124:1-5.

A. L. Graebner writes that "the evil acts of men. . . .are under divine control, inasmuch as God in His providence. . . .directs them to such ends and determines them to such purposes as His wisdom, goodness, and justice have ordained."¹⁷ A Biblical example is that of Joseph, who was sold into slavery by his brothers. When Joseph revealed himself to them he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life" (Genesis 45: 4, 5). Leupold comments, "It should be noted that Joseph very appropriately ascribes these

higher plans to Elohim, for He it is who as the mighty Ruler of the world providentially controls the affairs of His children."¹⁸

Hollaz wrote in a comprehensive way about the involvement of God in the sins of people. He enumerated acts of Providence preceding sin, "Foresight, aversion to the sin foreseen, and hindering."¹⁹ As Divine acts attending sin, he listed, "Support of the nature acting wickedly, concurrence with the remote material of a vicious action, permission of the atazia adhering to the sinful action, limiting determination of the sin, direction to a good end."²⁰ Acts following sin, according to him, are "Imposing of the divine penalties. . . remission of sins."²¹

When people sin, God hates their sin, but He still loves them. Because the Bible both speaks of God "hating" and "loving" someone, it is important that this distinction be maintained. In Psalm 5 David converses with God and says, "thou hatest all evildoers. . . .the Lord abhors bloodthirsty and deceitful men" (Ps. 5:6b, 7b). Speaking of sinners of all kinds, Jesus told Nicodemus "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (John 3:16a). Paul said to the Ephesians that God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ" (Eph. 2: 4, 5). He wrote to the Romans, "God showed his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). In this matter Pieper wrote of a twofold attribute in God. There is "God's trait of inviolable holiness and righteousness, according to which He demands that men keep the Law He has given them and is wroth with transgressors." He also speaks of God's trait of a most wonderful love, which prompted God to give

His Son to the world and through His obedience and suffering to reconcile the world to Himself."²² Armand Ulbrich says

Because people are sinful they are under the wrath and condemnation of a holy and righteous God. . . .there is nothing they themselves can do about their sins and the condemnation they deserve. By themselves they are helplessly and hopelessly lost.

Then he states of God, "in spite of the way they are and the things they do, God loves them and wants them to be His."²³ The authors of the Evangelism Workbook, prepared for use in the Missouri District of the Missouri Synod, speak of God and sin in this way, "God is holy and just and therefore must punish sin. Being holy, He cannot have fellowship with unforgiven sin, and being just, He must condemn the guilty sinner."²⁴ Later in the workbook they say, "If He were only justice, we would all be condemned. However, He is loving and merciful. Although He must punish sin, He loves us and therefore doesn't want to punish us. . . .He is both holy and loving."²⁵

It is the will of God that sinners should turn away from evil and be saved. God asked the prophet Ezekiel to tell the wicked

As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil way, for why will you die, O house of Israel? (Ezek. 33:11).

Lenski notes that God is so intent in making this invitation that He speaks it in the form of an oath,

"As I live." He says, "Every oath of God is for us the ultimate of assurance, thus calling for our faith with the supreme effort God Himself can make."²⁶ He comments on the doubling of the words of invitation "turn back, turn back" and likens it to the words of Jesus, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" and "Martha, Martha!" writing "Here is a potent appeal from the mighty God of grace, surely penetrating in its effect."²⁷ When preaching on this text Samuel P. Long said

It ought to be enough to melt our hearts to find that God so loves us that He would tell us that He does not find any pleasure in the death of anyone, but when He who cannot lie, comes with His oath and declares that He is so deeply concerned in our salvation that He cannot get one bit of pleasure out of the damnation of anyone, it ought to make us swim in our tears of repentance.²⁸

With reference to turning from sin in repentance, David prayed, "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:17). In a sermon Edwin C. Munson cited Biblical examples saying, "Our Lord's own approval of the penitence of the prodigal son and the publican is. . . .proof that repentance is in harmony with the will of God."²⁹

God works in a variety of ways in calling sinners to repentance. Sometimes He sends and permits sufferings to bring them to their senses. This is vividly illustrated by the history of God's people in the Old Testament era. Frequently when they strayed from Him, God would permit enemies and catastrophies come upon them to bring them to their knees in repentance. The invitation in

Psalm 2:12 is in this vein. "Serve the Lord with fear, with trembling kiss his feet, lest he be angry and you perish in the way; for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him." In a manual advising pastors on how to deal with individuals in the sickroom, William A. Lauterbach is cognizant of the role of suffering in leading to repentance. He says that

Very often the sickbed tends to make 'those who have ignored God' more receptive to the Word of God, and where the patient may have refused to give heed to instruction from the Word in health, he may give a ready ear in sickness.³⁰

He also states that

God uses various means to arouse. . . .The sickbed has probably been used in this way more often than any other means. Many a person has by means of it been brought to ask. . . .'What must I do to be saved?'³¹

Often God directly sends His spokesmen to those who are living in sin; to witness to them, and to call them to repentance. Thus the Old Testament prophet Jonah was called by God to preach repentance to the people of the city of Ninevah. His call was, "Arise, go to Ninevah, that great city and cry against it; for their wickedness has come up before me" (Jonah 1:2). When he preached they repented. The Scripture reports, "And the people of Nineveh believed God, they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them" (Jonah 3:5). Numerous prophets, and the Lord Jesus Himself, were sent to witness God's repentance call to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. In divine frustration, Jesus wept over that city saying

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! (Matt. 23:37).

In other cases the Scripture mentions the suffering of the ungodly simply as punishment for their sins.³² Isaiah says tersely, "the Lord has a day of vengeance" (Is. 34:8a). In a more extended statement David writes, in part, "If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword; he has bent and strung his bow; he has prepared his deadly weapons, making his arrows fiery shafts" (Ps. 7:12, 13). Leupold says that God's indignation for sin "expresses itself in acts. . . .such as those described."³³ God is to be "regarded as having already bent the bow and taken aim. So directly imminent is the punishment of the evildoer. We often fail to realize how perilous the position of the impenitent really is."³⁴ Koehler writes

The Holy God hates sin, and therefore pronounces His curse upon all transgressors of His Law, which curse includes all manner of punishment and suffering in this life, as sickness, misfortune, the results of drunkenness, of licentiousness, etc.³⁵

Some massive Biblical examples of this are the destruction of the wicked world by the Deluge at the time of Noah (Gen. 7); Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction because of the gravity of their sins (Gen. 19); and the destruction of Jerusalem brought about by the wickedness of the Jews (Luke 19:43, 44). In the Small Catechism Luther urged the threat of punishment as an incentive to avoid sinning. "God threatens to punish all that transgress these

Commandments. Therefore we should fear His wrath and not act contrary to them."³⁶

People who remain ungodly; who do not repent of their sins and turn to Christ for forgiveness, will suffer punishment for their sins in eternity. Pieper says, "whoever rejects this full and complete payment must pay it himself in eternity."³⁷ They will be consigned to hell. The Psalmist says, "The wicked shall be turned into hell" (Ps. 9:17 K.J.V.). There they will endure never ending anguish of body and soul. Hollaz views this as "a perpetual exclusion from the beatific enjoyment of God, united with constant and most excruciating torments."³⁸ Pieper considered this to be the true punishment for sin saying, "the true punishment for sin is not this or that temporal misfortune, but eternal damnation."³⁹ Paul had people who enter eternity with unforgiven sin in mind when he wrote, "There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil" (Rom. 2:9). Jesus described the place of damnation variously as "the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth" (Matt. 8:12), and "the hell of fire" (Matt. 5:22). Describing the fate of the rich man in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus has the rich man saying from hell "Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame" (Luke 16:24). In the Book of Revelation hell is pictured as a "lake of fire and sulphur where. . . they will be tormented day and night forever and ever" (Rev. 20:10). In the last verse of his book of prophecy, Isaiah says of the damned "their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh" (Is. 66:24b). The angel of Revelation says "the smoke of their torments goes up for ever and ever; and they have no rest, day or

night" (Rev. 14:11a). Matthew Hafenreffer, a dogmatician of the period of Lutheran orthodoxy, wrote

The future torments of the damned far surpass all the penetration of the human mind, so that we are not sufficient to ever comprehend in thought their greatness; therefore, what they will be, or of what nature cannot at all be expressed in words.⁴⁰

Chapter 9

THE WILL AND PROVIDENCE OF GOD WHEN CHRISTIANS SUFFER

Lutheran writers frequently refer to this world as "a vale of tears."¹ This is a way of saying that there is much suffering in the world. Christians are included among those who suffer in this present life. They are not immune to suffering, simply because they are in union with Jesus Christ by faith.² Leslie Brandt says, "As long as we inhabit this globe and this mortal shell, we shall endure suffering of one kind or another."³

Suffering is a part of human life. Mildred Tengbom writes that "It is the nature of man to suffer."⁴ Long ago the patriarch Job said, "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7), and, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble" (Job 14:1). Alvin N. Rogness goes so far as to say, "We are not fully human until we have known suffering. . . . As members of the human family, we are not to be spared pain."⁵ Tengbom states that "Pain and

suffering do not come in the same form or in the same measure to all people, but they do come to all."⁶

The basic cause of suffering, also in Christian lives, is sin. J. Sheatsly writes, "The chief cause of sickness and of all other affliction is sin."⁷ He quotes Romans 6:23a "the wages of sin is death," and then says, "not only death itself, but all other evils as precursors of death have their ultimate origin in sin."⁸ In view of the root cause of suffering, Tengbom remarks, "Pain is right for me. . . .since my body is of the dust of the earth and shares in the destiny of the old creation."⁹ Lauterbach states

the Lord has never promised the perfect bliss of heaven for our earthly life. Our sin-scarred bodies are subject to many ills and diseases; our sin-infected hearts are filled with evil desires; our sinful minds entertain evil thoughts. From the time of birth our bodies harbor the germ of death. Not until the sinful flesh is shed and the soul is released from all earthly bonds shall we enjoy a perfect and tearless existence. Till then the Lord's words apply: 'In the world ye shall have tribulation.'¹⁰

Carl W. Berner says

Trouble is here because this is a broken world. It will stay that way until God puts the pieces together again and builds a new one. He promised He would, along with a new heaven.¹¹

Conscious of the fact that suffering is a result or side effect of sin, Christians frequently ask themselves whether God is punishing them for some

specific sin when suffering comes in their lives. Sheatsly writes, "Such may be the case. Some sins bear their own necessary fruit. But such is not always the case."¹² In the ninth chapter of John there is the story of the man born blind. The disciples of Jesus asked, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2) They thought that his blindness was the result of some particular sin which he or his parents had committed. Jesus told them that such was not the case. He replied, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents" (John p:3a). Then he indicated an entirely different reason for the man's blindness, saying, "but that the works of God might be made manifest in him" (John 9:3b). Jesus then performed a miracle. The blind man received his sight. God was glorified thereby. Jesus indicated much the same reason for sickness and temporary death of His friend Lazarus. While Lazarus was still alive, and before He journeyed to Bethany and raised him from the dead, Jesus said, "This illness is not unto death, but it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it" (John 11:4). Appropriately Sheatsly states that

when we become sick or some other evil befalls us, we are not to think that God is punishing us for some particular sin. There are many other reasons why He lays crosses upon us. . . we should not think that God is angry with us, but rather that in love He is seeking to draw us nearer to Himself.¹³

Lauterbach states that "Even if you have some natural and logical explanation" for the cause of an accident "the fact remains that fortune and misfortune are not the result of blind chance, but that they come to us by the will and consent of Almighty God."¹⁴ Jesus is very explicit about God's provident

governance in the details of human lives. He says

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's will. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows (Matt. 10:29-31).

Sheatsly asks, "If. . . a worthless sparrow or a hair of the head does not fall to the ground except by the will of God, how could a Christian be cast upon the bed of sickness without the heavenly Father's knowledge and will?"¹⁵ Brandt declares, "there is design and purpose. . . in our suffering."¹⁶ In a prayer for the communion of the sick, Lutheran pastors speak to God on behalf of the sick person in these words

Cause him (her) also to recognize in this present visitation Thy fatherly hand that he (she) may bear his (her) cross in cheerful submission to Thy holy will; and do Thou deal with him (her) according to Thine infinite mercy as Thou alone knowest best.¹⁷

Christians frequently suffer simply because of their Christian faith. Walter A. Maier told his Lutheran Hour radio audience

the rule of the Kingdom is, 'From cross to crown.' and sometimes it seems that those who have pledged themselves to Christ suffer an overwhelming share of life's sorrows, fulfilling the prophesy of St. Paul, 'We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.'¹⁸

Lenski writes that, "The thorns prick us as we climb upward to that kingdom, but the roses await us there. Here the cross, yonder the crown."¹⁹

Christians suffer at the hand of the unchristian world. Jesus talked about this. He made it plain that His followers could expect to experience persecution. He said, "they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake" (Luke 21:12-13). Caemmerer says, "The Savior promised a special type of suffering. . . .which would specifically reveal the Christian's faith in God through Christ. This is persecution."²⁰ Lenski writes, "all this would strike them because of one thing only, because of Him."²¹

The history of the Christian church has been a story of persecution and martyrdom from the earliest days until the present, and will so continue. In modern times millions of Christians have suffered much at the hand of godless atheistic communists in lands behind the Iron Curtain. Many Lutherans have been included in the persecutions of this century. When the communists took over Russia, there were over one and a half million Lutherans in that country. After 1929 a policy of persecution was instituted. The Lutheran seminary was closed in 1931. Most of the pastors were imprisoned or exiled. One large group of Lutherans on the Volga escaped to Manchuria. They were aided by the Lutheran World Federation to relocate in Brazil. By 1935 the once flourishing Russian Lutheran Church had been dispersed and largely destroyed.²² The Lutheran experience in the Baltic lands of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia was much the same. In Estonia, for instance, the state deposed the bishop in 1939. Religious instruction was forbidden, as were religious broadcasts and publications. The seminary at Tartu was closed. Religious books were confiscated. Church property was nationalized. Eighty thousand Lutherans fled the country. Half of clergy scattered to Sweden, Canada, Germany, and Australia.²³

Not only have Christians suffered by treatment received from those outside the church, but much of the story of persecution and martyrdom has to do with what Christians have done to other Christians in the name of Christ. The words of Jesus in John 16:2b "the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God" were literally fulfilled when men like Girolamo Savonarola of Italy and John Hus of Bohemia were burned at the stake for their proclamations based on the Word of God.²⁴ When Luther was summoned before the Diet of Worms and ordered to recant his Bible-based teachings, he declared, "Unless I am convinced by the testimonies of the Holy Scriptures. . . .I am neither able nor willing to recant."²⁵ The united powers of church and state were bent on his destruction. Luther was declared an outlaw. The order was given that, if possible, he should be seized and delivered to the authorities for persecution. He could legally be killed on sight.²⁶

Among the early Lutheran settlers of the Southern states of our country are the Salzburg immigrants of Georgia. Their persecution experiences are a sad chapter in the history of the church. The Roman Catholic bishop of Salzburg in Austria had tried in vain to exterminate the Lutheran Church in his diocese. In frustration he resorted to intrigue. Claiming to be tolerant he asked everyone to put their confessional preferences on record. In this way he "discovered" thirty thousand Lutherans. On October 31, 1731, he issued a decree of emigration. All those refusing to become Catholics were ordered to emigrate and leave behind their children who were not of age. Torn from their children the Salzburg Lutherans wandered through the cities and villages of Germany. As they made their way they sang:

An exile poor, and nothing more
This is my sole profession;
Banished from home, of God's pure Word
To make a clear confession.

O Jesus mine, I know full well
This is the way Thou wentest
Thy steps we'll follow, dearest Lord,
And bear what Thou has sent us.

So forth I go from my dear home,
O Lord, the tears are starting;
As through strange streets I press my way
I think of the sad parting.

A country, Lord, I ask of Thee,
Where I Thy Word may cherish,
Where, day and night, within my heart
The fruits of faith may flourish.

Eventually some of these persecuted Lutherans came to the state of Georgia, where they established a colony at Ebenezer.²⁷

Gloria Jahoda, in her history of the state of Florida, tells how Pedro Menendez de Aviles, the Spanish Catholic founder of the city of St. Augustine, led his soldiers in the massacre of a colony of French Lutherans at Fort Caroline. She quotes Menendez as saying that the colonists were slain "Not as Frenchmen but as Lutherans!"²⁸

God not only permits evil men within and outside the church to plague His people, but in His will and providence He allows Satan to afflict His people. Satan plays a definite role in the suffering of Christians. In his Large Catechism, Luther writes

since the devil is. . . .a murderer, he constantly seeks our life, and wreaks his anger

whenever he can afflict our bodies with misfortune and harm. Hence it comes that he often breaks men's necks or drives them to insanity, drowns some, and incites many to commit suicide, and to many other terrible calamities. Therefore there is nothing for us to do upon earth but to pray against this arch-enemy without ceasing. For unless God preserved us, we would not be safe from him, even for an hour.²⁹

We must never underestimate the power of Satan and his role in Christian suffering. In the Book of Revelation Jesus said, "Behold the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation" (Rev. 2:10). Berner writes

Satan. . . .can control the weather, our health, the lives of our children, the thoughts of our friends. Sometimes we murmur against God for misfortunes and disasters for which Satan is to blame. So powerful and intelligent is this old evil foe that, in the perversion of His pristine perfection, he challenges even God's best efforts.³⁰

Tengbom says, "Scripture openly declares that Satan and demonic powers deal in pain. Demons can stir up storms of fear, anxiety, resentment, or despair that may bring ulcers, heart attacks, headaches, and a myriad of physical troubles."³¹ Jesus traced illness to the power of Satan. When the ruler of a synagogue faulted Him for healing a crippled woman on the Sabbath, Jesus asked, "Ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?" (Luke 13:16). Paul had a "thorn. . . .in the flesh" which he regarded to be "a messenger of Satan, to

harass me." God used Satan's "messages" for Paul's benefit. Paul realized God's purpose and said that it served to keep him "from becoming too elated by the abundance of revelations" which he received (II Cor. 12:7).

Why does God allow His people to suffer? Brandt says that suffering in the lives of Christians "does not come by God's intent and direction but only by what is termed His permissive will."³² He writes, "Though God may not intend suffering, He may support it."³³ Tengbom relates the suffering of Christians to their relationship with Jesus Christ. She states

usually following Him will involve a crossThis involves suffering, but the fact is that God prepares His people through suffering, pain, disappointments, set-backs. Only thus can character be produced. Only thus do we learn to know God. Strangely enough, though, this way of the cross and of suffering leads to deep satisfying joy.³⁴

Bente observes that "The fact that Christians are called upon to bear crosses does not mean that God has become their enemy." He says, "It means that God has special uses for them, sees in them special values, and that He goes to great lengths and takes unusual pains with them to present them to Himself without blemish or spot."³⁵ Tengbom writes that "the cross of Jesus demonstrated how God uses pain, loss, evil and death to bring about good. . . .God takes afflictions that come into our lives and turns them into routes of blessing."³⁶

Thus those who love God, and are loved by Him, are not kept immune from suffering. Sheatsly says, "God does not spare even those whom He loves most."³⁷ When Lazarus was sick unto death his

sisters, Mary and Martha, sent word to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill" (John 11:3). As God permits, and even sends, a variety of experiences into Christian lives, He deals with them in love. In a sermon, Sieck said

His sheep know what they may expect of their Good Shepherd--nothing but love, grace, mercy, kindness. . . .At times He permits trials and afflictions to harass His dear children, but they know it is for their own eternal good, that with the unbelieving world they should not be condemned.³⁸

Even when God becomes angry with those who are His, His underlying emotion is love. Through Isaiah, God said to His people

For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you (Is. 54:7, 8).

Lauterbach states

God's children. . . .have been reconciled unto God through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. God has nothing against them, but loves them dearly. When he permits misfortune to strike them, it is not a sign of wrath, but of love and mercy.³⁹

Brandt makes the statement that "between suffering that comes our way and our great and loving God is the promise that nothing will touch us save it first pierce the circle of His tender love."⁴⁰

To the Romans, the Apostle Paul wrote the assuring words, "We know that in all things God works

for good with those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28). In the New American Standard version this verse is translated "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose." Preaching on this text, J. H. Witte told his congregation that "all things" is a very comprehensive statement, made without any exception. He further elaborated

'all things' whether to us they seem to be good, bad, or indifferent. . . .Some things we consider to be always of benefit to usOther things we commonly call misfortunes. . . .Then there are also many things which, we ordinarily imagine, have practically no influence on our welfare.⁴¹

Lenski mentions that "all things" includes "every kind of painful experience in Christian lives, all those that press groans from our lips and make us groan inwardly in unuttered and unutterable distress."⁴² In a radio sermon Maier expresses it this way, "All eventualities in a Christian's life are part of a harmonious whole in which every occurrence, no matter how hard and bitter and heart-breaking, leads up to the sublime climax of our salvation."⁴³ He also says

the fires of affliction and the incisions of misfortune often are but disguised blessings, which clear the way for better and happier things; so in your regenerated life everything works together, cooperates for greater good and more bounteous blessings.⁴⁴

Lenski writes that "work together" means "work hand in hand, one thing working in mutuality with the

rest to bring about good for God's lovers." He says that

when we look at the final beneficial outcome for ourselves, the strangest, often the most contradicting occurrences seem to have cooperated to produce this unanticipated result. Of course, God's hand was behind the cooperation; the good result is due to Him.⁴⁵

Sheatsly briefly comments, "God never inflicts evil of any kind without intending thereby to effect some good."⁴⁶

While Christians realize and believe that "all things work together for good" in their lives, they, in the midst of affliction frequently ask for more specific answers. Personally and individually they ask searching questions. "Why me Lord?" "How does it happen that I have been singled out as the victim of these multiplied afflictions? "What is this particular trouble all about?" "What is God trying to say to me?" Maier reminds us that "Even Christ, when nailed to the cross, asked in His human limitations, 'why?'"⁴⁷ Our Savior's words were, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46b). Brandt comments that "Some people get no further than the excruciating query and live the rest of their lives under the shadow of that twisted question mark. They make for themselves a veritable hell on Earth."⁴⁸ In regard to the question "Why did this happen to me?" he also says, "It really isn't so important that we find the answer to that question."⁴⁹ However, he feels that "We must find meaning in our suffering if it is going to be kept from destroying us."⁵⁰ He explains that "Suffering that has meaning is endurable, no matter how sharp the pain or how deep the hurt. Suffering without

meaning is the most atrocious and destructive type of suffering one can experience."⁵¹

We cannot always determine whom God is trying to reach when He permits a Christian to suffer. His primary concern may be with the one who suffers, or the afflicted one may be an instrument through whom God works in the life of another person, or in the lives of many others. The sufferings of Christ were on behalf of others. Bente says of the Christian sufferer that "Perhaps others are to draw comfort and inspiration from his experiences as the Christian world has for thousands of years drawn from the experiences of Job, David, and Paul."⁵²

God has varied purpose in the sufferings of Christians.

He may use suffering to correct Christians when they sin. Lauterbach says, "The misfortunes and calamities which God permits to come upon us may be. . . .corrections."⁵³ In a meditation prepared for a Christian youth who was injured in an accident while seeking objectionable pleasures, he wrote

You have willfully and deliberately disregarded all well-meant warnings. And now you are reaping as you sowed. Misery and pain are the result of your disobedience. But even now God has been gracious and merciful to you. He might easily have permitted you to perish in the accident, as has happened to so many others under similar circumstances. Instead He has given you time and opportunity for reflection and repentance. Since you would not listen to His Word or heed His warnings God has intervened in a manner that you cannot ignore,

and is speaking to you in language you cannot fail to understand.⁵⁴

Then having spoken of the results of the accident in this light, he further says

Come then, dear friend, to your Lord and Savior, and penitently confess your transgressions, and with a contrite heart ask His pardon and forgiveness. He is your friend and loves you. He loves you so dearly that He shed His lifeblood for you. He will accept you and forgive you.⁵⁵

The Bible speaks in numerous places of suffering being used by God for correction when His people sin. When His chosen people sinned by complaining and murmuring against Him and Moses in the wilderness, God sent fiery deadly serpents into the camp. This action on the part of God brought forth a confession from them. They said to Moses, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you" (Num. 21:7). The Psalmist told God "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I keep thy word" (Ps. 119:67). David prayed, "For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to thee, and I did not hide my iniquity" (Ps. 32:4, 5).

The author of Hebrews puts the thought of corrective affliction into the framework of the father-child relationship and says

My son do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor lose courage when you are punished by him. For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives. . . .God is treating you

as sons; for what son is he whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline. . . .then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this we have had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time at their pleasure, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it (Heb. 12:5-11).

L. Buchheimer said on the basis of these verses

when a person becomes a Christian, he has reasons to believe that his afflictions are only corrections. . . .God does not punish His Christians--He has punished His Son instead--but He corrects them, disciplines them, chastens them.⁵⁶

William Grauman asks, "What is meant by the chastening of the Lord?"⁵⁷ He answers, "All afflictions and sufferings which God permits to come upon Christians for the purpose of correcting their mistakes and curbing their passions."⁵⁸ According to Buchheimer, "All the trials of God's children are paternal, the expressions of His love."⁵⁹ Grauman agrees saying, The chastisements which God sends are. . . .evidences not of His anger but of His love. God does not want us to feel that He is condemning us, but that He is lovingly correcting us."⁶⁰ Berner says, "The treasured ones are chastened."⁶¹

Other Scriptures which indicate that God uses suffering to recall and draw Christians close to Himself include Deuteronomy 4:30, 31; and Hosea 2:6, 7; 6:1.

The author of the Book of Proverbs and the prophet Isaiah speak of God using suffering to purify His own. They employ the illustration of the smelting process used in refining precious metals. In Proverbs 17:3 we read, "The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the Lord tries hearts." Through the prophet Isaiah, God says it this way, "Behold I have refined you, but not like silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction" (Is. 48:10). Maier asked his radio audience, "Have you ever peered into the roar of a smelter and seen the white heat fuse pieces of iron into the strength of the refined metal?"⁶² He further asks, "May we not regard this as a crude symbol of the miraculous process by which God often removes the side issues of life, so that our strength and interest are directed toward spiritual growth?"⁶³

God uses suffering in the lives of His people to build character. Some of the qualities include patience, endurance, and steadfastness. Peter writes, "If when you do right and suffer for it patiently, you have God's approval" (I Peter 2:20b). James says, "you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness" (James 1:2). Paul told the Romans "we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance" (Rom. 5:3).

By way of afflictions and trials God makes Christians aware of their dependence on Him. Jesus invited "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). Maier viewed losses in life as "necessary discipline, which kept us from pride of arrogance, boastful

security, and idolatrous trust in ourselves."⁶⁴ Suffering shows the Christian how desperately he needs Jesus.

The Scriptures teach that God with purpose uses suffering to humble those who belong to Him. Moses told Israel

he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know; that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord (Deut. 8:3).

Sheatsly says, "one purpose God has in view in sending afflictions is to make us humble."⁶⁵ He sees far-reaching results from such humbling by God. He says

especially He is so leading us that we may not look to ourselves for salvation, for forgiveness of sins and righteousness, but to His own mercy and grace and to Jesus Christ through whose name alone we can be saved from sin and death.⁶⁶

Bible verses which emphasize the humbling function of suffering are Deuteronomy 8:16; II Chronicles 7:12-14; Lamentations 3:17-21; and II Corinthians 12:7-10.

Sometimes God teaches Christians His will through their suffering. Tengbom speaks of pain and says that it "is often a corrective for distorted vision. Our eyes get out of focus. Big things grow dim and hazy. Little things loom up as big."⁶⁷ God supplies needed instruction and guidance through crosses

and afflictions. He thereby helps those who are His to gain or regain understanding and perspective. The Psalmist said to God, "It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." This thought is supported by Isaiah 26:9 and Micah 6:9.

God employs affliction and suffering to test Christians. He sometimes tests their sincerity, not for His sake, but for their benefit. Sheatsly says that "God does this not for His own sake, for He always knows what is in our hearts, but for the sake of ourselves."⁶⁸ Job stated "he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). God tries the faith of His people. Bible verses which show God's way in testing and trying include Genesis 21:1,2; Exodus 15: 23-25; Deuteronomy 8:2, 16; Psalm 66:10; Hebrews 11:17; I Peter 1:7; and Revelation 2:10.

Testing by God includes delay in carrying out His promises. Caemmerer writes, "To reinforce the foundation of. . . faith and hope, the heavenly Father frequently inserts delay into the carrying out of His promises and forces the Christian to renew the bases for such faith and hope."⁶⁹ There are many passages in the Scriptures encouraging Christians to hang onto the promises and encouragements from God's Word. The Psalmist says, "Wait for the Lord, be strong, and let your heart take courage; yea, wait for the Lord!" (Ps. 27:14). God, Himself, says through the prophet, "I am the Lord, those who wait for me shall not be put to shame" (Is. 49:23). A promise is attached in the words, "They that wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Is. 40:31). Jeremiah penned the words, "The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him" (Lam.3:25).

God uses suffering to strengthen Christians in their faith. When the Russians bombed Luther Church in Finland on November 30, 1939, the entire building collapsed in ruins. However, on the altar there remained standing a glowing cross, and above it a painting of Christ with His arms extended in blessing. Lutheran Bishop Lethonen said

In this we saw a gripping testimony of the truth, mercy and compassion, the forgiveness of sins. . . .Only in this assurance are we able to endure. With the conviction that nothing can separate us from the love of God, we have peace in our hearts in the midst of the storm. God suddenly becomes living and real when all the supports to which we have become accustomed crumble to pieces and God alone becomes our Refuge and Strength.⁷⁰

Maier states, "God employs the sudden reverses of life. . . .to build up our faith."⁷¹ He also says, "The frictions of destiny add luster to our faith, and the fires of affliction strengthen our courageonce you are Christ's, everything that crowds into your life is designed to deepen your conviction."⁷² Bente says that

Both the Scriptures and experience teach us that a Christian is never so well armed against the danger of falling from grace as when he is afflicted and oppressed. Never is a Christian's confidence in God stronger than when he sees how vain and frail his own strength is.⁷³

Suffering is useful in exhibiting the power and faithfulness of God. This is attested in such Scriptures as Psalm 34:19, 20; I Corinthians 10:13, and II Corinthians 4:8-11.

Caemmerer asks us to "note the significance of . . . tests of faith in stimulating the Christian to the greater use of the means of grace--the Word and the Sacrament."⁷⁴ He reasons

All temptation for good seeks to stimulate the Christian's hold on God through faith, to make him conscious of his tremendous need for God's grace and that alone, and thus to have him replenish that grace through the use of the means of grace.⁷⁵

He also says, "Our heavenly Father is ceaselessly busy with the tests and trials that are to hold us to the one source of His life in Christ, namely the Gospel and the Sacrament of His blood."⁷⁶ "Every temptation for good should climax in the actual use of the means of grace."⁷⁷

The Christian may suffer trials and afflictions, because God is using these as preparation for special kingdom work. Bente writes that "God may have special work for him, work that requires unusual fortitude, and on that account puts him through the gymnastics of tribulation."⁷⁸ The Apostle Paul is an example of this. He was severely stricken at his conversion. After he saw the vision and heard the voice of Jesus, he was smitten with blindness and was unable to eat or drink for three days before the Lord sent help. The Lord, Himself, stated the reason when He gave instructions to Ananias, "he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name" (Acts 9:15, 16). Maier says, "the Almighty permits suffering in order to make us realize His power and prepare us through affliction for higher responsibilities."⁷⁹

Likening Himself to a vine, and the individual

Christians to branches, Jesus says that He "prunes" the branches that they may "bear more fruit" (John 15:2). Graumann writes that God permits afflictions to come upon His child "that it may bring forth the fruits of righteousness and that it may bear them more abundantly."⁸⁰ In a February sermon, Maier states, "The Seminary gardener this week began his spring pruning on our campus." He compares this to what God does through suffering saying, "In a similar way, Jesus says, we must be purged by critical, contrary forces, so that we bring forth more and better fruit."⁸¹ The author of Hebrews tells Christians, "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained for it" (Heb. 12:11).

God sometimes uses the sufferings of His faithful for the spreading of the Gospel. Luke writes in Acts that "Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word" (Acts 8:3, 4). Paul viewed his own imprisonment in this light, saying

I want you to know, brethren, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the Gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole praetorium guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ (Phil. 1:12).

Other Bible references in this regard include Acts 11:19-21 and II Timothy 2:9, 10; 4:16, 17.

We will not on this side of eternity know, in every case, why God permits Christians to suffer. One of Job's advisors said regarding the understanding of affliction, "As for me, I would seek

God, and to God would I commit my cause; who does great things and unsearchable" (Job 5:8, 9a). God says through Isaiah, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. . . .for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Is. 55:8, 9). Paul said to the Romans

O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways! 'For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor'? (Rom. 11:33, 34a).

Writing of the accidental death of his 24-year-old son, Rogness says of God, "Why He allowed it, perhaps I will learn when I get to heaven, but surely not before."⁸² Maier, using an illustration writes

As the great Flemish tapastries were often woven from the back and seemed to present a muddled confusion of loose ends and knots, until completed and viewed from the right side, so when we see the face of the finished and holy design created by Christ, the Master Weaver of our destiny, all doubt as to the wisdom and the love of God will vanish.⁸³

Lutheran Pastor Erling Wold of Garden Grove, California, was paralyzed as a result of receiving a broken neck in an accident. With his wife, Marge, he co-authored a book "What Do I Have to Do--Break My Neck?" In the book he gives an account of his physical suffering, and also shares the spiritual questions and thoughts that passed through his mind. With confidence he says of his experience, "No matter what happened to me, I was never outside of God's hands."⁸⁴ He writes

I would never have invited suffering. It is terrifying, shattering, life-changing. But once you've experienced it, the new dimensions of life are so profound--the new sensitivities and the new understandings--that one becomes deeply grateful that God even permits suffering to come as part of his training.⁸⁵

He tells us, "The secret hidden in suffering is not to let blind fate master one, but to grasp the offered hand of God and to find a nail hole there."⁸⁶ He says, "Suffering. . . becomes another avenue for celebrating oneness with Christ, who 'for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God'" (Heb. 12:2).⁸⁷

Resources are available to the Christian in suffering and affliction. To a Christian who was suffering from an incurable disease, Lauterbach wrote

Cling firmly to the blessed Word of God. . .
. . . Trust His glorious promises, and let your Lord and Master guide you through life's dark maze, and the gracious reward of glory will await you in heaven when your course here on earth is finished.⁸⁸

Wold says, "Power and strength came to me from several sources, all of them, comprehended in the Word of God."⁸⁹ Sheatsly urges the use of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper for strength and succor in time of trial. He says that God would not have given us this sacrament if we did not need it.⁹⁰ He writes "in the Lord's Supper Jesus gives us His body and blood to assure us that He actually died for us to save us from our sins, and to enable us better to remember Him and hold Him as our Savior."⁹¹ Paul said of the Corinthians that many among them

were weak and sickly because they did not make the right use of the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11:30).

God urges His people to bring their sufferings to Him in prayer. Lauterbach says, "The avenue of prayer is an open road to the throne of God."⁹² God invites, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me" (Ps. 50:15). James asks, "Is any one among you suffering?" He then advises "Let him pray" (James 5:14). There are many passages in the Bible relating to prayer and suffering including Psalm 34:4-6; Jeremiah 31:18; Lamentations 2:17-19; Hosea 5:14, 15; Philippians 4:6, 7 and I Peter 5:7. In a practical way, Tengbom suggests, "Be frank in telling God how you feel. It won't affect His attitude toward you. He loves you. If you can't put your thoughts and emotions into words, turn to God mutely."⁹³

Catherine von Schelegel wrote the hymn "Be Still My Soul." Lutherans sing it to the melody of "Finlandia" by Jean Sibelius.

Be still, my soul; the Lord is on thy side;
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
In every change He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul; thy best, thy heavenly Friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul; thy God doth undertake
To guide the future as He has the past.
Thy hope, thy confidence, let nothing shake;
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul; the waves and winds still know
His voice who ruled them while He dwelt below.

Be still, my soul, though dearest friends depart
And all is darkened in the vale of tears;
Then shalt thou better know His love, His heart,
Who comes to soothe thy sorrows and thy fears.

Be still, my soul; thy Jesus can repay
From His own fullness all He takes away.

Be still, my soul; the hour is hastening on
When we shall be forever with the Lord
When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.
Be still, my soul; when change and tears are past,
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.⁹⁴

Chapter 10

GOD'S WILL WHEN CHRISTIANS MAKE DECISIONS

When the writer of this treatise began his studies with Luther Rice Seminary, he was instructed to analyse himself, along with his life and ministry situations. He was to do this in order that he might reach a sound decision as to whether he should take this training, whether he should pursue this course of study. He was asked to answer a number of questions which were printed in the Doctor of Ministry syllabus. One of the questions was "Is this additional training a part of God's will in the development of my ministry."¹ Steps to decision were provided in the syllabus, the first being "If this training is God's will, I must do it. If this training is not God's will, I should drop it."²

Brattgard says, "Man is confronted by the will of God in all areas of life as it is lived here on earth."³ As they live their lives, Christians wish to do God's will. They want to do what He desires them to do. Nelson states that

A sincere desire to know God's will comes as a result of the lifetime decision to present oneself for service and to obey God. We who have presented ourselves to God for service logically need to know His will daily for the rest of our lives.⁴

But how does one determine God's will? How can a child of God know what life decisions God would have him or her make?

These questions, and others like them, are not merely academic. They are very real, and frequently troublesome, to sincere people who love God. They reach into all areas of life. In what city does God want me to live? Does God want me to take this job? Is it His will that I get married? Does He wish me to submit to surgery, the outcome of which will be doubtful?

We can never fully know God's will in advance. That is why the Apostle James wrote, "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such a town and spend a year there and trade and get gain,' whereas you do not know about tomorrow" (James 4: 13, 14a). By inspiration he advised, "Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and we shall do this or that'" (James 4:15).

Even though we cannot know with certainty what God's future will for us is; as our lives unfold each day, there are definite principles and guidelines which will aid us in making decisions compatible with His will.

Jesus was teaching in the temple in Jerusalem. Some in His audience questioned the source of His statements. Jesus claimed that His message was from God, and said, "if any man's will is to do his will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God"

(John 7:17). In essence Jesus was saying that if there were persons present who were truly endeavoring to do the will of God, they would be people who were conversant with what God had said previous to this temple occasion. He implies that they would be individuals who had an understanding of the Old Testament writings, and who used these as a guide for their lives.⁵ Today we could say that a first step in knowing the will of God is to become familiar with the Scriptures given by God. In an article in "The Lutheran Standard," Paul E. Little says that "there are two aspects to God's will. The first aspect is that which is already revealed in His Word and which applies to everyone. The vast majority of the will of God has already been revealed."⁶ A reformed author, Richard C. Sproul writes, "If you want to know the will of God for your life, if you want to know what is pleasing to God, what He delights in, enjoys, and approves, then you must meditate on His Word day and night."⁷ He further states, "The normal means by which God leads His people is through the clarity of His written Word. . . . Scripture reveals the will of God in several ways."⁸

Little says that "what God has commanded and forbidden are both equally clear in the Scripture."⁹ Sproul writes, "it limits our options."¹⁰ For instance, it is not optional whether a man becomes a bookie, or a woman a prostitute, as far as the Bible is concerned. God's Word gives clear direction in these, and many other matters. Both Little and Nelson illustrate this by using the example of marriage to a non-Christian. Little asks, "Are you praying about whether you should marry a non-Christian?"¹¹ He says, "Save your breath. Read II Corinthians 6:14 in which God clearly declares that it is not His will for us to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers."¹² Nelson says that there is

clear instruction in the Bible that a Christian is to marry only another Christian (I Cor. 7:39; II Cor. 6:14). In considering whom to marry, a Christian should consider this point as binding. . . .we can say that it is never God's will for a Christian to marry someone who is not a Christian.¹³

The Bible also gives us principles that will help us in determining the will of God. Sproul says that "This is necessary. . . .because at many points the Scripture has not limited the options available to us. The principles are there to guide us."¹⁴ Herbert Mjorud tells of a decision he made, and writes

Discovering God's will was not difficult or mysterious. Using the Bible as my resource, I learned principles and decision making. God puts each of us into different backgrounds and situations. It seems reasonable to best advantage. . . .Since we are 'new creatures in Christ,' eager to do His will and purpose, our thinking is guided by the spiritual principles we learn as believers.¹⁵

What are such Biblical principles which will aid us in making decisions in areas not specifically delineated in Scriptures?

We can begin by consciously committing ourselves to His leading. Little suggests a prayer which would be appropriate. "Lord, I don't know what your will for my life is, but I want it. I don't care what it is, as long as I know it's your will, I'll do it with joy."¹⁶ But what if a person trusts in God to guide him or her and then, perhaps by mistaken convictions, tries to proceed in a direction

contrary to God's will? Nelson states that

God can be relied upon to close the door. . .
. . .to block the way. Sometimes, although
the right course has not been decided upon
and the Christian is unsure about it, cir-
cumstances may force him to make some sort
of move, to do something. As long as the
Christian is moving, trying to find the
proper way, the Lord can actively guide
him, opening a door here, perhaps closing
a door there, until he arrives at the proper
place.¹⁷

David wrote in the Psalm, "Commit your way to the
Lord; trust in him, and he will act" (Ps. 37:5).

Mattson reminds us that "reason and common sense
are gifts of God."¹⁸ He said, "They should be em-
ployed in determining what the will of God is."¹⁹
Nelson writes that "The Lord expects us to use com-
mon sense and commands us to do so in the Bible."²⁰
The reference given is Titus 2:12, where we are told
to "live soberly and righteously in this present
age." The word "soberly" is the adverb of the ad-
jective sophron, which means "sound-minded."
According to Nelson "The real idea of the word is
about the same as our term 'common sense'. . . .
It means to be 'sensible.' To fail to be 'sound-
minded' or 'sensible' is to be foolish."²¹

In the twelfth chapter of Romans, the Apostle
exhorts us to make a sober analysis of our gifts
and talents. Sproul says on the basis of Paul's
words that we should do this "that we might not
think too highly of ourselves, not too lowly.
False humility does nothing in terms of leading us
in the stewardship of our lives before God."²²
Mattson states that "in determining what the will
of God is. . . .Our own particular talents and

gifts need to be taken into consideration."²³ He reasons that "These talents fit us for particular types of service and point to the lives of duty we ought to follow."²⁴

Taking all the above factors into consideration, how can one find direction from God in specific situations?

We can seek His guidance through prayer. Little states that "He guides us as we pray."²⁵ James writes, "If you want to know what God wants you to do, ask him, and he will gladly tell you, for he is always ready to give a bountiful supply of wisdom to all who ask him" (James 1:5 Living Bible). Mattson says that

Prayer is always necessary because through prayer we are 'put into tune with the Infinite' and enter into fellowship with God, and it is only in the light of such fellowship that we will really seek to do His will.²⁶

Little writes that

As we pray, God often--by the Holy Spirit--deepens a conviction of the rightness or wrongness of a particular course of action. This conviction differs from emotion which is undulant, up and down. Conviction is a deepening constant.²⁷

God also guides us through circumstances. Nelson says that "at. . . .times circumstances are meaningful and should be seriously considered in deciding about the Lord's will."²⁸ Ofttimes pastors are in a quandary when they receive a call from one parish to another. Lloyd H. Goetz advises that at such times they should ask the question, "Where can

I, in view of the various circumstances of my life, best serve my Savior?"²⁹ Nelson writes, "Circumstances should always be viewed as part of God's over-all plan. God is the ultimate primary cause behind the circumstances and He can either use them to a good purpose or He can overrule them, as He pleases."³⁰

We can seek God's guidance in the counsel of Christian friends. Little observes that "This is one of the most neglected dimensions in guidance today."³¹ He mentions that it is significant that in Acts 15:38 we are told "it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us."³² Sproul suggests that part of our "homework" is consulting "the elders of your Christian community" and asking "the whole body of Christ."³³ He says, "Finally we must go to the body of Christ and ask our friends to be honest with us."³⁴ Nelson gives a sound reason for seeking such advice, saying

Because you as a Christian may not know everything the Bible teaches and because your pastor or Christian friend probably knows some things that you do not know, it is very helpful to consider the advice of such persons. . . .you should consider their advice and try to profit from their experience. Sometimes they will point out something that you have never thought ofAny such advice. . . .should always be measured by the standard of the Word of God.³⁵

Little counsels, "When all these factors coincide--the Word of God, conviction in prayer, circumstances, and the counsel of mature Christian friends--we can be fairly certain that we are in the will of God."³⁶

Sometimes Christians must decide between rival goods. These are the most difficult decisions of all. When Christians have to make decisions between good and evil, the answers are clear from Scripture. It is God's will that we do what is righteous. "But," Sproul asks, "What if our options are both righteous, are both approved by God?"³⁷ He says, "That is a more difficult decision to make, but. . . it is less threatening."³⁸ He then answers the question which he raised, saying, "In the final analysis we are not responsible to know what the secret will of God is. We are free to choose either course, as long as they are both pleasing to God."³⁹ He then says, "The secret counsel of God is none of our business! I do not know any way to know the secret counsel of God until after the fact."⁴⁰

Christians should be careful of claiming to absolutely know God's will, especially in the lives of others. Little says, "I always get a little nervous when people imply that they have a private pipeline to God."⁴¹ Sproul cautions, "If you go to a person and say, 'I know that this is the will of God for your life,' you had better be careful."⁴² Nelson reports, "At several times in my life, friends of mine have received the call for me to become a medical missionary to a foreign land, But I've never received such a call."⁴³

Little warns us to "avoid certain common mistakes when it comes to discerning the mind of God."⁴⁴ He says that "one mistake is to think that if you want to do something, it can't possibly be God's will."⁴⁵ There is Scripture support for his statement. In Psalm 37:4 we read, "Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." Paul asked the Romans, "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?" (Rom. 8:32).

Another mistake is to think that just because something is the will of God, everything is going to go well. The disciples of Jesus got into a boat to cross the Sea of Galilee at our Lord's express command (Mark 4:35). They experienced a terrible storm at sea. Little says that sometimes we, too, experience "storms" when we are "in the center of the will of God."⁴⁶

Don't make the mistake of thinking that every decision you make must have a subjective confirmation. Such confirmation is simply not forthcoming in every instance.⁴⁷

Always be open to God's guidance and leading. Little says, "Don't make the mistake of deciding what you're going to do for the Lord."⁴⁸ He continues. "We are to allow Him the option of assigning us in the battlefield where He sees the need is greatest and where our gifts can best be used."⁴⁹

Christians wish to do God's will. Why? Nelson answers, "Because we love Him. . . .because in return for our obedience we will receive blessings in this life. . . .to be a good example to other Christians. . . .because in this way we will avoid being ashamed at Christ's second coming."⁵⁰

In 1640 Georg Neumark penned these words of assurance

If thou but suffer God to guide thee
And hope in Him through all thy ways,
He'll give thee strength, whate'er betide thee,
And bear thee through the evil days.
Who trusts in God's unchanging love
Builds on the rock that naught can move.⁵¹

REFERENCES

Chapter 8

1. (7:247)
2. (26:223)
3. (26:49)
4. (21,29: 256, 257)
5. (34, 5: pages in book not numbered - comment
in Matt. 4:45)
6. (55, 1:250)
7. (41:242)
8. (49, 2: 100, 101)
9. (12: 624) (42: 41) (49, 2: 159) (74: 192)
(82, 1: 490) (111: 435)
10. (49, 2: 101)
11. (5: 177)
12. (56, 2: 593)
13. (31: 92)
14. (72: 74)
15. (57, 1: 170)
16. (57, 1: 171)
17. (31: 92)
18. (56, 2: 1093)
19. (91: 193)
20. (91: 193)
21. (91: 193)
22. (82, 3: 249)
23. (102: 4)
24. (117: C - 3)
25. (117: E - 12)
26. (54: 275)
27. (54: 277)
28. (61: 145)
29. (75: 86)
30. (52: 26)

- | | | | |
|-----|--------------|-----|--------------|
| 31. | (52: 156) | 36. | (97: 8) |
| 32. | (82, 2: 397) | 37. | (82, 1: 458) |
| 33. | (58: 97) | 38. | (91: 238) |
| 34. | (58: 97) | 39. | (82, 3: 69) |
| 35. | (41: 100) | 40. | (91: 658) |

Chapter 9

- | | | | |
|-----|------------------------|-----|----------------|
| 1. | (11: 14) (65: 295) | 30. | (11: 21) |
| 2. | (14: 39) | 31. | (99: 84) |
| 3. | (14: 8) | 32. | (14: 10) |
| 4. | (99: 84) | 33. | (14: 43) |
| 5. | (90: 19) | 34. | (99: 19) |
| 6. | (101: 84) | 35. | (49, 2: 109) |
| 7. | (96: 11) | 36. | (99: 88) |
| 8. | (96: 11) | 37. | (96: 13) |
| 9. | (99: 87) | 38. | (95: 186) |
| 10. | (52: 54) | 39. | (52: 80) |
| 11. | (11: 13) | 40. | (14: 15) |
| 12. | (96: 68) | 41. | (103: 191) |
| 13. | (96: 69) | 42. | (55: 6: 551) |
| 14. | (52: 79) | 43. | (67: 76, 77) |
| 15. | (96: 11) | 44. | (67: 77) |
| 16. | (14: 13, 15) | 45. | (55: 6: 552) |
| 17. | (46: 105) | 46. | (96: 12) |
| 18. | (67: 76) | 47. | (67: 77) |
| 19. | (55, 5: 585) | 48. | (14: 13) |
| 20. | (49, 2: 190) | 49. | (14: 15) |
| 21. | (55, 3: 1014) | 50. | (14: 42) |
| 22. | (9: 252) | 51. | (14: 42) |
| 23. | (9: 251) | 52. | (49, 2: 110) |
| 24. | (63:945) (87: 193,194) | 53. | (52: 80) |
| 25. | (92: 504, 505) | 54. | (52: 82) |
| 26. | (92: 511, 512) | 55. | (52: 83) |
| 27. | (63: 942) (77: 35, 36) | 56. | (18: 271, 272) |
| 28. | (39: 26) | 57. | (21, 18: 340) |
| 29. | (8: 731) | 58. | (21, 18: 340) |

- | | | | |
|-----|----------------|-----|----------------|
| 59. | (18: 272) | 77. | (49, 2: 194) |
| 60. | (21, 18: 341) | 78. | (49, 2: 110) |
| 61. | (11: 73) | 79. | (68: 264) |
| 62. | (66: 121) | 80. | (21, 18: 344) |
| 63. | (66: 121) | 81. | (68: 265, 266) |
| 64. | (66: 119) | 82. | (90: 17, 18) |
| 65. | (96: 60) | 83. | (66: 123) |
| 66. | (96: 61) | 84. | (107: 31) |
| 67. | (99: 86) | 85. | (107: 37) |
| 68. | (96: 12) | 86. | (107: 37) |
| 69. | (49, 2: 190) | 87. | (107: 37) |
| 70. | (49, 2: 110) | 88. | (52: 98) |
| 71. | (66: 121) | 89. | (107: 62) |
| 72. | (66: 121, 122) | 90. | (96: 149) |
| 73. | (49, 2: 110) | 91. | (96: 150) |
| 74. | (49, 2: 192) | 92. | (52: 56) |
| 75. | (49, 2: 193) | 93. | (99: 29) |
| 76. | (49, 2: 193) | 94. | (85: 462) |

Chapter 10

- | | | | |
|-----|----------------|-----|----------------|
| 1. | (116: 6) | 16. | (113: 3) |
| 2. | (116: 6) | 17. | (76: 67) |
| 3. | (15: 180) | 18. | (69: 153) |
| 4. | (75: 44) | 19. | (69: 153) |
| 5. | (13: 108) | 20. | (76: 71) |
| 6. | (113: 2) | 21. | (76: 72) |
| 7. | (13: 107) | 22. | (13: 111) |
| 8. | (13: 108, 109) | 23. | (69: 153) |
| 9. | (113: 2) | 24. | (69: 153) |
| 10. | (13: 109) | 25. | (113: 3) |
| 11. | (113: 2) | 26. | (69: 152, 153) |
| 12. | (113: 2) | 27. | (113: 3) |
| 13. | (76: 62, 63) | 28. | (76: 74) |
| 14. | (13: 109) | 29. | (89: 47) |
| 15. | (73: 72) | 30. | (76: 74, 75) |

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 31. (113: 4) | 42. (13: 111) |
| 32. (113: 4) | 43. (76: 116) |
| 33. (13: 112) | 44. (113: 4) |
| 34. (13: 111) | 45. (113: 4) |
| 35. (76: 71) | 46. (113: 4) |
| 36. (113: 4) | 47. (113: 4, 5) |
| 37. (13: 110) | 48. (113: 5) |
| 38. (13: 110) | 49. (113: 5) |
| 39. (13: 110) | 50. (76: 8) |
| 40. (13: 110) | 51. (85: 361) |
| 41. (113: 4) | |

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. BOOKS

5. Aulén, Gustav, Faith of the Christian Church, The. Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1962.
7. Beck, Victor E., Hagg, G. Erick, Nelson, Clifford A., editors, Gospel We Preach, The. Second Series. Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Press, 1958.
8. Bente, F., editor, Triglot Concordia. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921.
9. Bergendoff, Conrad, Church of the Lutheran Reformation, The. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967.
11. Berner, Carl W., Why Me, Lord? Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1973.
12. Bodensieck, Julius, editor, Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church, The. 3 vols.; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965.

13. Boice, James E., editor, Our Sovereign God.
Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House,
1977.
14. Brandt, Leslie, Why Did This Happen To Me?
St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977.
15. Brattgard, Helge, God's Stewards. Minneapolis:
Augsburg Publishing House, 1963.
18. Buchheimer, L., From Advent to Advent. St.
Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1924.
21. Concordia Pulpit, The. 51 vols.; St. Louis:
Concordia Publishing House, 1929-1979.
26. Franzmann, Martin H., Follow Me: Discipleship
According to Saint Matthew. St. Louis:
Concordia Publishing House, 1961.
31. Graebner, A.L., Outlines of Doctrinal Theology.
St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1910.
34. Henry, Matthew, Exposition of the Old and New
Testament, 6 vols.; London: James Nisbet
and Co., n.d.
39. Jahoda, Gloria, Florida: A Bicentennial His-
tory. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., Inc.,
1976.
41. Koehler, Edward W. A., Luther's Small Catechism
--Annotated. River Forest, Illinois:
Koehler Publishing Co., 1946.
42. Koehler, Edward W. A., Summary of Christian
Doctrine. Oakland, California: Alfred W.
Koehler, 1952.
46. Kretzman, Paul E., Thy Word Hath Quickened Me.
Scribner, Nebraska: Northern Nebraska
District, Missouri Synod, n.d.
49. Laetsch, Theodore, editor, Abiding Word, The.
3 vols.; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing
House, 1946-1960.

52. Lauterbach, William A., Ministering to the Sick. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955.
54. Lenski, R.C.H., Eisenach Old Testament Selections, The. Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1925.
55. Lenski, R.C.H., Interpretation of the New Testament. 12 vols.; Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1942-1946.
56. Leupold, H. C., Exposition of Genesis. 2 vols.; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1972.
57. Leupold, H. C., Exposition of Isaiah. 2 vols.; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1968.
58. Leupold, H. C., Exposition of the Psalms. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961.
61. Long, S. P., Prophetic Pearls. Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1929.
63. Lueker, Erwin L., editor, Lutheran Cyclopedia. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954.
66. Maier, Walter A., Fourth Lutheran Hour. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1937.
67. Maier, Walter A., Lutheran Hour, The. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1931.
68. Maier, Walter A., Victory Through Christ. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943.
69. Mattson, A. D., Christian Ethics, Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1947.
72. Meyer, J., Dogmatics Notes. Mequon, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Mimeo Co., n.d.
73. Mjorud, Herbert, Dare to Believe. Carol Stream, Illinois: Creation House, 1975.

74. Mueller, John T., Christian Dogmatics. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1934.
75. Munson, Edwin C., Ancient Truths for Today's Needs. Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Press, 1962.
76. Nelson, Marion H., How to Know God's Will. Chicago: Moody Press, 1963.
77. Neve, J. L., History of the Lutheran Church in America. Burlington, Iowa: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1934.
82. Pieper, Francis, Christian Dogmatics. 3 vols.; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950-1953.
85. Polack, W. G., Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal, The. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1942.
87. Qualben, Lars P., History of the Christian Church, A. New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1942.
89. Reinboth, Oscar H., editor, Calls and Vacancies. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967.
90. Rogness, Alvin N., Book of Comfort. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1979.
91. Schmid, Heinrich, Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1975; rpt.
92. Schwiebert, E.G., Luther and His Times. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950.
95. Sieck, Henry, Sermons on the Gospels of the Ecclesiastical Year. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1906.
96. Sheatsley, J., Lord Thy Healer, The. Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1948.

97. Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism, A. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943.
99. Tengbom, Mildred, Is Your God Big Enough? Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1973.
- 101: Tietjen, John H., Which Way to Lutheran Unity? St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966.
102. Ulbrich, Armand, Presenting the Gospel. St. Louis: The Board for Evangelism. The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, 1977.
103. Vesper Sermons. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1919.
107. Wold, Erling and Marge, What Do I Have To Do - Break My Neck? Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974.

B. PERIODICAL ARTICLES

111. Hinrichs, E. W., "God's Direction in Our Lives and the Element of Chance." Concordia Theological Monthly, 17: 425.
113. Little, Paul E., "How Do We Know What God Wants Us To Do?" Lutheran Standard, July 2, 1974.

C. SPECIAL TYPES

116. Doctor of Ministry syllabus. Jacksonville: Luther Rice Seminary, 1976.
117. Evangelism Workbook. St. Louis: The Evangelism Department, Missouri District, Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, n.d.

H O M I L E T I C S

by

Prof. M. Otto

INTRODUCTION

This course is the one course towards which all the others are pointed. It is an important subject which the student will always use in his ministry. It means we are sharing with men the bread and water of life. We should only be satisfied with the best that we can produce. We cannot convert people through our sermons, but we can either make it easier for them to hear or we can erect barriers which prevent them from hearing the message. On this, read Lenski "The Making of a Sermon."

Etymology and History

The meaning of the word "Homiletics" (a Greek word) is "coming together" or is transferred to mean "crowd."

In the early history of the church, discourses were explanations of the Scriptures. Charlemagne prepared "homilies" for the priests to read before the congregations because they often did not have the training to write sermons and much of what was said was not pertinent. A "Homili" is taking the text and divining the meaning from it and making application verse by verse. A "Sermon" is a construction of a paper upon a section of the Bible.

In the Middle Ages there were many "Homilaries," which are books containing homilies--thus becoming the first sermon books. Such books were emphasized during the times of Charles the Great and Queen Elizabeth and we have some surviving books from those times. They used this as a device for reforming the church because the pastors were untrained. The term was first used in Germany in the Seventeenth Century.

Definition

Homiletics is a science which teaches: 1) the fundamental principles of public discourse; 2) as applied to the application and teaching of divine truth; 3) in regular assemblies gathered for the purpose of Christian worship.

This definition and the course limits itself to study just for the worship services. The important part is that it is a science of getting the message out of the Word to the ears of the people. We are to make it receivable, interesting, and palatable. The rules for preaching and writing of sermons came after the fact. That is, a study was made of the best sermons and then they looked for what ingredients made for good preaching. In this way we can obtain reliable methods from results. The student and minister should read good sermon books themselves to perceive these principles. From Luther we see that he expounded the text and we still want to do this in our own preaching.

The Importance of The Study of Homiletics

A. Evident from the importance of preaching itself: Preaching is important. In fact, it is the most important work the pastor does. For:

1. It is the one place people carry on a post-confirmation instruction. The whole flock is

there at one time and place. They worship together and together they are taught. Working together is how things are accomplished in the church. A pastor's hobby should not interfere with the sermon. Sermon preparation should be a primary concern during the week. Be anxious to share the Word with others.

2. It is ordained by God Himself. II Timothy 4:2 "Preach the word." The Word of God meets spiritual needs. Therefore the pulpit is No. 1 in our work and Ladies Aid, Men's Club are second to preaching the word.

3. The preacher speaks as the ambassador for God. II Corinthians 5:20 "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us." Luke 10:16 "He that heareth you heareth me."

4. Its purpose is unique and important. Preaching is important theologically as a means of conversion and edification of the people in order to get them to heaven. It is important psychologically in its influence upon the hearer. The people are not to be passive hearers. In this connection: a) the intellect must be caught; b) they must be aroused emotionally to be a part of the Holy Church; and c) preaching must influence his will to be through with sin and to grow in faith and grace. The person must be lead to make a decision, therefore we must come with logical reasons on which to make a decision. This refers to matters of changing one's life, giving, missionaries, etc. Therefore, the purpose of preaching is to persuade people. This means backing up evidence on a subject, presenting both sides of the case, being enthused yourself, being concerned about the way you do it, not being legalistic but evangelical preachers. We are to persuade them with the Gospel. Aesop's fable about trying to get a coat off a man is applicable. A warm sun will achieve results

better than a cold wind. In preaching, the evidence should be piled up so much until there is nothing else to do but accept it. To persuade others requires real effort. On Sunday after church, C. F. W. Walther would read the text for the next Sunday so that he could begin to prepare for the next sermon. Any two sermons will take differing amounts of time.

B. Evident from the difficulties to be overcome in preaching: There are several barriers which must be overcome:

1. The nature of Biblical truth. Many truths are difficult to grasp because the being behind those truths is hard to grasp. God cannot be apprehended by the mind. It is the abstractions which makes things hard to illustrate. This is stated in II Corinthians 2:14, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Thus man is in the dark about many things.

2. The necessity of repetition of these truths. We see this from Romans 15:4, "Whatever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Thus the Word of God must sink in and stay in ourselves.

3. The moral condition of the hearer. The hearer is hostile and indifferent to the Word. He is called an enemy of God. Morals aren't what people want to hear, so they may tune out your message.

4. The intellectual condition of the hearer. There is nothing in nature to prepare the people for the Gospel. They do not know what is coming from the sermon. People do not exert themselves as much today and are getting lazy in listening also. Make sure that you get the people curious and interested

at the beginning of the sermon.

5. The preacher talks to the same people. This means that the preacher must change the stories and ideas and presentation from week to week. He also must address himself to all the people at various times in the year. This means he must have something new to say.

6. The heterogeneous character of the congregation. There are different ages, occupations, interests. You are supposed to reach all of them. By their nature, women are more introspective and men are more secular and not so inclined to go to church. Man thinks that church-going is effeminate and the wife generally goes alone. Yet when we preach, we do not want to use a shotgun but a rifle in order to hit home the points. When we narrow the sermon to just a few points, it is easier to preach and to write.

7. The preacher has a handicap also. Many demands are made on the time of a preacher. The pastor is expected to do more today. Also the hearers know more than in the past. They do not live in isolation but read more and know what is going on in the world. This means the pastor must upgrade his preaching. Often a good introduction will take care of this problem.

Prerequisites For A Successful Study of Homiletics

A. A living faith. This is not a knowledge but a faith or conviction. As we are convinced, we want to share it with others.

B. A love for the work of the preacher. There must be a desire for this work.

C. A deep realization for a need from God. We are to ask for the Lord's blessing on the work which we do. The Lord has to help us to present

His Word, but we also must study and work. Without God's grace, we are not going to go very far. With His grace, it will be enough for us. This means that we must be aware of our need for God's grace.

D. Appreciation for the difficulties of preaching. This is discussed above.

E. Willingness to submit to kind criticism. This will come from teachers. Wives will also be a source of criticism. She should be concerned to help her husband to overcome his faults. And we should want to be the most effective preachers as possible. This means we should try and remove every barrier.

The Relation of Homiletics to Other Disciplines

The preacher is to pull in all the other disciplines in making his sermon. Exegesis, Pastoral Theology, Dogmatics, Symbolics, etc., are all tied to sermon-making. All this must be made relevant to the people in their everyday lives.

P A R T O N E

THE MAKING OF THE SERMON

I. Prayer

If we are to reveal God's Word, we must pray without ceasing. This is especially true when making a sermon. II Corinthians 3:5, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." I Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without ceasing." I Peter 4:11, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." Psalm 119:18, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out

of thy law." If we are aware of our weaknesses, then we must pray for help. As we do that, we will put forth effort to let Him help.

There are many prayers in the Bible. The Lord's Prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner." David, Abraham concerning Sodom and Gomorra, Moses, Solomon, Jonah, Hezekiah. We should note the behavior of Abraham as he told the Lord, "I am nothing but as dust." Luther could not come to the Diet of Augsburg, yet he prayed greatly nearby, saying, "We can't come God, but this is Your work and You must do it." One old saying is, "Well prayed is well studied." Erasmus said that it is incredible to see how much life and force is given to clergymen by deep personal prayer. Spurgeon has made many good comments on the value of prayer. See also Hymn 16, verse 2. We should teach the people to have more than bread and butter prayers. A praying pastor becomes an effective preacher. Also, he must have the confidence that these prayers are answered. It helps in this connection to get a good Bible and be familiar with it to know what it says. I Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without ceasing." II Corinthians 3:5, and Psalm 119:18 are important.

II. Text

A. Etymology: The word "text" comes from the Latin word *textus*, which means "That which is woven," "texture." The sermon is a presentation in which the text is interwoven throughout. The text cannot become a pretext; that is, just something to start the discussion. No, the sermon is woven around it. The text holds the sermon together. An example of a pretext: On Paul's troubles in Asia, to refer to the troubles in China.

B. Historical Note on the Use of Sermon Texts. Jesus also used texts for His messages. At Nazareth

(Luke 4:16-21), in the synagogue, Jesus read the text from Isaiah 61:1, 2. Then He said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." On Pentecost Day, St. Peter used Psalm 16:8-11. In Acts 13:15, St. Paul at Antioch in Pisidia, after the reading of the Scriptures, preached to them on the basis of the reading. In the early Church, it was a rule to preach on the text. Justin Martyr, about 169 A.D., spoke of reading from the writings and then expounding on what was read. This form was a running commentary of the text--or expository preaching. This was the main form of preaching up to the Thirteenth Century. It was based on the reading that was chosen. They had a reading for every day of the year. From the Thirteenth Century on, they picked out certain texts. During the mid Nineteenth Century, especially among the modernists, there was a move to preach on topics rather than on texts. This type made one tend to stick on one topic or subject from week to week.

C. Objections Raised Against the Use of a Text--Answered.

1. Texts cramp the preacher by confining him to a few words. Voltaire said that to speak a long time on a line is trifling labor. Reply: The texts are not limited to a few words. On Trinity Sunday, the text is the first fifteen verses on John 3. Even a few words can contain many thoughts, such as John 1:14, "The Word was made flesh." You can talk about God becoming man. Moreover, the text serves to tie everything together and the people know what things are being talked about. Therefore this is not a valid objection. Just the few words, "It is finished," one could not put into one sermon all the ideas which it contains.

2. Texts limit one's range of topics.
Reply: The preacher is limited to Biblical truth

anyway. He is to preach the Word. Also, the Bible supplies a wealth of material for sermons. And there are many topics for those who know their Bibles. We must always end up with what a wonderful Saviour we have.

3. Use of texts may end up in a sermon fatal to the intelligent treatment of Scripture. It is possible to twist the Bible and make it far more. Reply: The preacher is not to take the text out of context. For example, in Colossians 2:20-21, where it says in parentheses "Touch not; taste not; handle not," some want to use this against the use of alcohol. St. Paul really says not to listen to people who say such things. Again, in Psalm 73:23, "I am continually with thee," the preacher made it say that God was with us (instead of the psalmist). He has lost the context of the passage.

4. We are not supposed to judge. We cannot judge doctrine or any teaching. Such an argument needs no reply.

Erasmus said (to no. 3), that to get at the Scripture message, you must look where it came from, what was said before and after the time it was said, and the circumstances in which it was said. For example, Col. 2:20 cited above.

5. The use of a text is unnatural and artificial. Preaching is monstrous and unreal. Reply: The preacher is an ambassador for Christ. He is to apply God's Word only. He does not know anything else. "Thus saith the Lord" is what we should say in our sermons. If one cannot find a text for what one wants to preach on, don't preach on that topic.

D. Advantages of Using a Text.

1. It is a cure for aimlessness in the message. There is a definite body of material and a subject to speak on. If you were to speak on the Christian home, your text would give you the material.

2. It will provide you with a Spiritual subject. Ecology and politics are not sermons. It is also a guarantee of a message that comes from God.

3. A text will give the message a sense of authority. We are speaking in the name of God. "He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully" (Jeremiah 23:28). Thus we are to preach with authority on a text.

4. It introduces variety in your preaching. Topical sermons will soon bring preachers to choose the same topic. Nesper's Biblical Texts have fourteen different series of texts for the church year. We should start with the Gospel series first as a beginning preacher and at the first year in a new parish. It is very easy to make many Law sermons out of the Epistle series of texts.

5. The text helps get the attention of the audience. It is criminal to preach longer than twenty-five minutes constantly. If you have a striking text, do not lead them away from it in the introduction.

6. The text helps the listener to remember a sermon. It is a handle that they can go by, something they can grab on to. It is customary to use a text for a sermon on a special occasion. At a wedding, you may not have a text, but a brief one is easy to be remembered later on.

E. The Choosing of the Text.

Where are you to get a text from? They are

to come from the Canon and not the Apocrypha, which is not authoritative in the church. For a special service, one can use lines from the Creeds or the Small Catechism. But for Sunday mornings, stick to the standard texts from the Bible. What version should one use? Primarily the King James Version because the people are used to that version. The pastor should not do as he pleases in this matter. Besides, the King James Version does not present too great a problem for the preacher. Don't spring a new version on the congregation without consulting the members. The Conservatives made such an issue over the Revised Standard Version that they almost canonized the King James Version. People are willing to be lead if you do not strong-arm them. We must not venerate the King James Version. It was written 450 years ago. If other versions are used, show the difference to the people or tell them that such a version is the closest to the original Greek. Don't weaken the trust in any one version by your comments. The idea is to try to present the truth. No doctrine has been lost because of a faulty translation. We should encourage our people to read other translations. There are test passages in the Bible that one can check on to see if it is a good translation. One is Philippians 2:5ff which deals with Christ and the personal union. The Phillips paraphrase is the best we have for this passage.

1. Pericopic systems. These pericopi texts can be found in the Hymn books. They are a series of sermons. "Pericopic" means "to cut off, around." The Gospel and Epistle lessons are always the same. These are called Fixed Texts, which series the Roman Church drew up. Some series were chosen and approved us by a single church body. The Synodical Conference had a series on the Old Testament. There is one from Eisenach. These can all be found in Nesper's Biblical Texts.

2. Free texts. Here the individual is to choose his own text. A free text should not depart from the basic parts of the church year. One must plan ahead if one is to use free texts. If you are setting up a series of free texts, you will want to set up a scheme in which you set up a central thought which you wished to stress. Write down why you picked that text and what you were going to develop in the text. Also write down any illustrations that you had in mind.

3. Series of texts. Early in Church History, Origen referred to I Samuel 28:3-25 as consisting of four pericopies. In the Middle Ages, the term "Pericopi" was used for the Epistles and Gospels in the Eastern Church. In the Latin Church, they called them lessons.

a) A history of the Standard Series. From the beginning of the Christian Church, Scripture reading was an integral part of the service. Justin Martyr, c.150 A.M., spoke of how the people gathered together, read the Scriptures, and expounded on what was read. The lessons were taken from the Law, Prophets, Apostles, and Gospels. Such a practice is mentioned in other places in the Fathers. In the early days of the church, lessons were read every day and were called lectio continui, meaning those lessons read every day in a sequence. These readings were interrupted by special days like martyr days. Such readings were called lectio seletii. The first indication of a series comes from Gaul in about 450-500 A.D. In the Sixth Century they had the liber comicus in Spain. This was the first collection of texts. Selections were from the Old Testament, the Epistles, and the Gospels. It was the original lectionary. In Rome, Gregory the Great, who died in 604 A.D., formed the basis for the Roman system. His contained only the Epistles and the Gospels,

not the Old Testament. We follow the old Roman System which enumerates twenty Sundays after Pentecost. Charlemagne published some books of homilies which speeded the day towards regular lessons on each Sunday. He helped regularize it towards the end of the Eighth Century. It was divided into a Winter part from Advent to Easter Eve, and a Summer part from Easter to the end of the Church Year. For Advent, Charlemagne's book had 40 pericopies with 140 homilies; while for Easter he had 78 pericopies with 134 homilies. A similar collection in the Ninth Century had the Epistle Lessons in the Roman System. These constitute our own pericopic system. Today the Roman Church has more of the Word with these lessons being read in English during their services without comment. Thus it is a Christian Church. The Gospel Lessons follow the church year. The Sunday texts in Lent do not refer to Christ's passion. The Lenten services take care of that. It is not good to set aside the Sunday Gospel for a Lenten text.

b) The Eisenbach Series. Lenski wrote sermons in this series from Germany. They are very good. The Synodical Conference series is good for the Old Testament.

c) A short series of your own. Look at all the texts for the church year and see which ones you could let go without too much loss. This takes care, for you do not want to lose all the good texts. This must be planned ahead of time.

d) Starting a pericopic system. Usually you will be installed in the middle of the year. Continue with the one the church is on now and start another one at Advent. Think ahead as to why you should choose a particular series. Look at the texts and see what material can be presented to the congregation. It takes skill to preach on an

Epistle Series because it tends to emphasize the Law and sanctification. The Gospel must be brought in these texts too.

e) Special texts. Any time during the church year, one can depart from the series if there is a special day like Mission Sunday or Confirmation Day. Ephesians 6 does not always have to wait for October 31st to preach on it. Such a text can be used on a nearby Sunday. Watch for the extra Sundays of Trinity and Epiphany. There are from two to six Sundays in Epiphany, and the Trinity season could be 27 Sundays long. Pick three or four of the six texts for Epiphany which you can use, always ending up with the Ascension. In Trinity, make sure to end up with eschatology. One must plan it all out.

4. General rules for choosing a text.

a) The text must contain a complete thought. This does not mean only the chief thought. Romans 3:28, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," is a complete thought. But "Go and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:37) is not one. "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35) is a complete thought for it is a principle.

b) The text has to have some spiritual value for faith and life. This rules out Judges 16:22, "Sampson's hair started to grow again." What spiritual value? One could say that the Lord returned to him again. An admonition could be made from the context.

c) The text must not be burdened with archaeological details or geneologies. There are exceptions to this. In the table in Matthew 1, Jesus had some evil women and illegitimate children in His line. This saved one person.

d) The text must be a unity. Do not choose a text using the end of one incident and the beginning of another. It must be a complete thought.

e) The text must be pertinent to the subject of the sermon. The theme must come naturally out of the text. There should be no pretexts.

f) The text must be clear in language, structure, and thought. This rule is observed so that it does not require a long time to explain the text. For example, Philippians 3:12, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect..." Yet this does not mean that it should not be preached on. Could use a clearer translation. Also I Corinthians 15:29, "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?" (Baptizing for the dead is a Mormon rite. They get names of people from all over the world from newspapers and other sources so that they can baptize them. Greatest source of geneologies. But this passage cannot refer to that. The Greek word is ὑπέρ, which means "over" the dead, and not "for." Some say that it means some were baptized "in memory of" the dead. It cannot mean "for a dead one" or for a live one either.)

g) The text should not be too long. It is not that the people cannot stand that long, but that they become distracted by wondering how long it is or when will it end. If it is too long, as in John 6:1-15, then let them sit down for the reading. Stick to the verses you want them to remember and take home.

h) The text should not be too short. This would tend to take the preacher away from expository preaching. It would mean using the text to base a speech on a subject. Luke 2:21, "And when eight days were accomplished for the

circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb" is very brief and does not say enough.

i) The text should not contain a mutilated thought. It would then be possible to give it a wrong interpretation. The text is part of another context.

j) The text should not be odd or funny. It is too serious for that. We are preaching God's Word in the house of God.

k) The text should not be a mutilated thought. For instance, the text I Corinthians 2:9, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," is not to be used as a description of heaven. Paul does not refer to heaven but to salvation and the Gospel. To use a proposal at an installation, "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6) would be wrong because it would not fit. It is much better to use Proverbs 29:18, "Where there is no vision, the people perish; but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." There cannot be any accommodation.

l) Do not draw out a meaning that is not in the text. If you are looking for a subject and cannot find a passage to fit, then don't use the subject. Don't apply the term "Man of sorrow" to Lincoln. Lamentations 1:12, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." This passage is made to refer to Christ. But it really refers first of all to the people of Israel.

m) The text should not be too difficult for the congregation of the preacher. When

preaching to a mission congregation, you would not be ready to speak on election or the anti-christ, lodges, or unionism. We are to be all things to all men and to feed them with milk (Hebrews 5:12). Certain texts are also difficult for preachers. The Epistles for Christmas like Hebrews 1:1-9 is a lot of work. Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17 is also very difficult. You don't have to preach on them right away after Seminary. The book of Revelation is also hard to preach on. John 17:11, "that they may be one, as we are." The Lord didn't pray for unity in the Church but for unity of faith.

n) Don't feel that some texts are so hallowed that only they can be used on that Sunday. Luke 2 isn't the only Christmas text. Matthew 1 is also. Use as much of the Scriptures as possible.

III. The Study of the Text

A. Materials: Bible in vernacular and Greek, a Lexicon, Concordance, parallels and paper. Paper is very special and important. You should preserve your work. Do not go to a commentary first and don't use homilies. We are to study the Word.

1. Read the text in the vernacular. Get the rhythm of the text and see what it talks about. In the old days, the preacher would memorize the text. Today, it should be read intelligently and not absent-mindedly. The text is God's Word, read without comment. So it must be read to give meaning to the liturgy and the Scripture readings. Reading the text right in the pulpit on Sunday morning already conveys a message to the hearers. God speaks to us in the liturgy.

2. Context. The following are examples of how context is involved:

a) Isaiah 1:5-6. "Why should ye be

stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness of it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." Here is imagery used to show how spiritually sick Israel was.

b) Luke 16:1, "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured..." This is the context for His parable of the lost sheep. It is necessary to keep this in mind for the point.

c) I Corinthians 2:9, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." This is not a description of heaven. The context shows it describes the Gospel that is unknown to natural man.

d) Colossians 2:21 ("Touch not; taste not; handle not.") Often used by intemperance people, but the context shows that Paul forbids such ordinances.

e) John 6:66-69, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him...." Here there is a remote context. One must go back in the chapter (verses 22-30) to see why the people left.

f) Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." This verse and those after it are all about sanctification. But the first eleven chapters deal with justification completely and then he says, "Therefore you present your bodies...." You must take the first eleven chapters into

account for a sermon on this verse, otherwise you are preaching the law and not living a sanctified life.

3. Study the text in the original. You want to arrive at an exact meaning. There is only one literal sense in the text and that is what you are to find.

a) Look at the individual words of the text for their meanings. This is especially true of the key words.

b) Identify the construction in which the word is used. This helps often.

c) Recognize and identify and interpret the figures of speech, as in Matthew 10:27, "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops." This figure of speech means that you are to get in a place where people can hear you, and you can speak to them.

d) Identify the individual writer's use of a word. Paul has a special meaning for κοινωνέω. Romans 12:13, "Distributing to the necessity of the saints; given to hospitality." This is backwards English which says that you are to want to help the poor. The Greek word used there means to "share" or "be a partner with what others have." Thus we are to share the other fellows needs; not to give to them. The emphasis is on their need and not on your money. This is important also in Galatians 6:2, 5. "Bear ye one another's burdens." "Every man shall bear his own burden." The word "burden" is different in each verse. For this study, use Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, or Ginrich as lexicons. Strong and Young use the Greek and Hebrew words in their concordances also.

4. Parallel passages. This study is especially necessary with texts on the Gospels. Not every one of the four authors have the same materials and details.

a) Word parallels. The two sections of Scripture must have the same usage and meaning concerning a certain word. e.g., Galatians 3:16 and 29; "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." In these two passages, the word "seed" is not used in the same sense. One speaks of Christ while the other is the believer. In Matthew 5:31, "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement;" and Mark 10:11, "And he saith unto them, 'Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.'" These two are thought parallels on the subject of divorce. See also Luke 16:18. Another example: I Timothy 2:4, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth;" and II Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." These two passages talk about the same thing--that God will have all men be saved and not die, that is universal salvation. Be on guard for the center references in the Bibles, for they often are not reliable for thought parallels.

5. Concordance.

a) Word meaning in the Bible. Often the meaning of the Greek word is different, or the same word is translated differently and vice versa.

b) Proof texts. Using them, you can show that the promises made of old are answered. Also, you can show that a particular point is supported throughout the Bible.

c) Striking phrases or figures of speech can also be found. But the fact that some are listed as parallels does not mean that they are.

B. Procedure.

1. Establish the chief facts and thoughts. It is first necessary to ask the pertinent questions about the text, like Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Who is speaking? To whom? About what? Where? When? What are the circumstances? What is the effect? This passage means a lot to us and it shows that God presented to man the promise of the Saviour before He tells them what the consequence of their sin was. God has also told them the Law first. The Law and its effects are different. We must be curious about the text. Anything worthwhile knowing about it one should question concerning the context of a passage.

2. Use of Commentaries. We should use them to sharpen our own awareness to see what is in the text. Do your own digging in the text first. Then turn to the standard commentaries. Write down the special thoughts that are contained in them. Only occasionally would you want to quote from them.

a) Which Commentaries to use? For the whole Bible, there is Lange's; Kretzmann's, which gives a quick resume of the text; James, Faussett, and Brown's; and Matthew Henry's commentaries. For the New Testament commentaries, there are Alford's Greek New Testament; Vince's Word Studies;

Barnes' Notes. For individual books, you should have Arndt's Luke; Stoeckhardt's Romans and Ephesians. Kretzmann's Pastoral Letters; Meier on Corinthians. Lenski is a good commentary for all of them. Hengstenberg is strong on Christology; and Edersheim's Life and Times of Jesus. For the Old Testament, there are Keil and Delitsch as a whole set, Leopold on Genesis, Daniel; E. G. Young on Isaiah; Laetsch on Minor Prophets and Jeremiah; W. A. Maier on Nahum. Stoeckhardt on the Psalms. Look for other books. Don't need one for Judges, but for the prophets, Genesis, Psalms, etc. See also Feuerbringer on Job.

b) Use the commentaries to see if you have missed anything in the text. Do not quote large paragraphs from them. If you do use them, do not read it as your own ideas. One can get lazy if you start working with the commentaries right away. In the end, you will suffer for it because you cannot drag your commentaries all over the place.

3. Determining leading thoughts and natural divisions of the text. This is especially useful in analytic sermons. There you are operating with blocks of thoughts. In this step, you will want to end up with two or three leading thoughts.

4. Finding the chief thought of the text and its use. The chief thought should be able to be put in one concise statement. That is the aim of the study. Such study will leave an effect on you and must be stated. The exegetical study concerns the words and meanings. Homiletical study in the exposition of the text. We want to ask ourselves: How can this truth be used to the best advantage for the congregation? What are we to preach about? Sometimes it can be an outside element in the sermon.

But the choice of topics comes from the text.

For example: On Matthew 9:1-8 (Healing the man sick with the palsy), the leading thoughts are: Christ's care for the sick, forgiveness of sins, Christ is God, Evidence of faith, the objections of the audience, Omniscience, the effect, and the miracle. What then should we start with first? In this case we can use the order of the text.

1) the need -- why the man was brought to Christ; 2) His care for the sick; 3) the evidence of faith for the sick man and those who carried him; 4) forgiveness; 5) objections; 6) miracle; 7) Christ is God; 8) effect. We will want to reduce these to a few chief thoughts, such as: 1) the need, which is basic to the text; 2) how Christ dealt with the need; and 3) the miracle, which will reenforce No. 2. The chief thought for this text can be: Forgiveness. The application is: God's priorities in our relationship. The theme: CHRIST'S CONCERN or THE MOST COMFORTING WORD EVER SPOKEN. Both are pointed to the words: "thy sins be forgiven thee." From this we can get the following parts: I. How those words came to be spoken. We need them today too. II. How can I be certain it is true? Jesus said it and He performed the miracle. The second part is put there to show it means the congregation too. Another theme and parts could be: HOW CAN I BE CERTAIN THAT MY SINS ARE FORGIVEN? I. God said so; II. He proved that His word is efficacious. It must apply to the people.

IV. The Theme of the Sermon.

A. Definition of a theme. The subject of a sermon made specific enough to treat it. That is, the germ or nut of the subject. It is a proposition like: A Christian Day School is needed by the

congregation. Here you have something to prove. When a theme is stated, the development of the sermon should be such that it proves the theme. Every sermon must have a theme to know what you are going to talk about. You should make it as narrow as you can. Another way of looking at it is: It is the chief thought of a text as applied to the people.

B. Importance of the theme.

1. It is important to the preacher because he must know what to talk about. Until you have one, the sermon will just ramble. The more exact and relevant it is, the better the hearers will like it. It becomes a handle which the hearer can hold on to. Don't write a sermon until you have a theme.

2. It is important to the hearer because he has something to take home with him. It is a proposition he can concentrate on.

C. Desirable qualities in a theme.

1. The theme must be textual. It must be the main thought on the text. The text on the Wedding of Cana is not the time to talk on marriage. One should speak on the miracle and what He did.

2. It must be practical. The theme cannot be just a general statement.

3. It must be specific. The more specific the better. It should be narrowed down to one thing and something with depth to it. This will limit the range of discussion. Your attention can be concentrated to one thing. To "talk about faith" has no handle. Much better is: "How faith may be tested," or "How faith is strengthened." Some themes can be scriptural, but not very relevant. A title of a book or a phrase from a song

can be used for a theme. This enriches the pulpit style a lot.

4. It must be a unified theme. The parts must come together under one heading. A double theme is hard to unite and creates a topic.

5. It must be brief. Such is not the old German style. Strive for concentration in the theme in order to hit the nail on the head. We are to make a bullet out of it and not a shotgun shell.

6. It must be clear. When you promise something in a theme, you must deliver. The hearer should understand at once what the theme is. Therefore, you don't use abstract concepts or words, or hazy figures of speech. Like "New wine in old bottles." The words are clear but not the meaning. The theme is used in relation to the text. One can use phrases as long as they cover the subject. Any vehicle is proper if it fits in with the topic. But some people may not get the import of it, or the connection.

7. It must be interesting. This without being sensational, like "How Peter petered out." It isn't in good taste either. Shouldn't be funny.

8. It must be elegant. The theme deserves the best dress we can get it. The Word of God wants this. It should be attractive. Don't use poor English in the theme. Such considerations depend upon the preacher and his style, for each is different. Do not try to imitate another preacher ever.

9. It must be naturally and easily divisible. It should have a line of direction with reasons. The theme contains the marks of cleavage. The preacher must divide it in his sermon also. It must be logically presented so that the hearer can take something home. The theme is the key of the sermon. It incorporates the application for the people also.

D. Several kinds of themes.

1. Descriptive.

For example: For II Corinthians 12:9 "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness," could be "The all-sufficient grace of God."

2. Declarative.

This is an announcement. "Thy sins be forgiven thee" or "Unto you is born a Saviour."

3. Optative.

Such as a wish. "Oh that people were more thankful" for the Gospel on the Ten Lepers. Psalm 107:8, 15, 21, 31 all have the same words in the optative case. But "Be ye thankful" is imperative.

4. Exclamatory.

For example: "Christ is risen!" Put your exclamation point on it. One good sermon I heard a few years ago was entitled, "How do you punctuate your Easter message?" With a question, a comma, a period, or an exclamation point?

5. Hortatory.

This is an invitation to something. "Let us ever walk with Jesus."

6. Interrogative:

For example: "Why hast thou forsaken me?" or "What think ye of Christ?"

7. Imperative.

These are like the commandments: "Thou shalt."

8. Invitational.

For example: "Come and see."

E. The domination of the theme.

The purpose of the introduction is to lead into the theme so that it stands out in the

sermon. The hearer wants to know where we are going. That is what the theme does. Then the parts tell him how to get there. Thus, the introduction should not talk about the theme. It is important to ask yourselves the question: Is the theme evident throughout the outline? About statement, argument, and illustration -- do they relate to the theme? Do they fit? Sermons are not essays. An essay is a work in which one can go back to in order to refer to what is written down. But sermons must have handles that can be taken home.

(To be continued)

Corrections - Volume XXIII, No. 2, June, 1983

Page 34 - last paragraph, fourth word, "wished"

Page 36 - first paragraph, line four,
 . . . we are here confronted

Page 37 - third paragraph, first word,
 However

Page 73 - line six - "Our Sovereign God,"
 last line of same paragraph - occuru

Page 78 - Chapter 6, not 7