

TWENTY-FIFTH EVENING LECTURE.

(April 24, 1885.)

Manifold are the difficult and arduous tasks of a minister of Jesus . Christ; but the most difficult and arduous of all, beyond question, is the task of proclaiming the pure doctrine of the Gospel of Christ and at the same time exposing, refuting, and rejecting teachings that are contrary to the Gospel. The minister who does this will discover by practical experience the truth of the old saying: *Veritas odium parit* (telling the truth makes enemies).

If faithful Athanasius in his day had been content to proclaim his doctrine that Jesus Christ is true God, begotten of the Father in eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary; if he had not at the same time vigorously attacked Arius and the Arians, who denied this doctrine, he would undoubtedly have finished his life in honor and pleasant peace, for he was a highly gifted man. Had Luther followed the example of Staupitz of quietly teaching the pure Gospel to his brother monks without at the same time attacking the abominations of the Papacy with great earnestness, not a finger would have been raised against him. For even before Luther's day there had been monks who had come to understand the Gospel and made no secret of their

knowledge; but they did not come out in public to fight against the errors of the Papacy. Accordingly they were allowed to live in peace and quiet as long as they held to the cardinal point in the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church — the Pope.

Worldly men and all false Christians cannot but attack those who teach a faith and doctrine different from theirs and to regard them as disturbers of the peace, as peace-hating, quarrelsome, and malicious men. These unfortunate people have no idea of the blindness which enshrouds them; they do not know how gladly the boldest champions of Christ would have kept peace with all men, how much they would have preferred to keep silent, how hard it was for their flesh and blood to come out in public and become targets for the hatred, enmity, vilification, scorn, and persecution of men. However, they could not but confess the truth and at the same time oppose error. Their conscience constrained them to do this because such conduct was required of them by the Word of God.

They remembered that Jesus Christ had said to His disciples, not only: “Ye are the light of the world,” but also: “Ye are the salt of the earth”; that is, you are not only to proclaim the truth, but you are also to salt the world with its sins and errors; you are to sprinkle sharp salt on the world to stay its corruption. They remembered that Christ had distinctly said: “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword.” Matt. 10, 34. Not as though the Lord took pleasure in peace-destroying wars; not as though He had come into the world to start dissensions and discord among men; but He means to say: “My doctrine is of such a nature that, if it is properly proclaimed, thetically and antithetically, peace among men cannot possibly be preserved. For as soon as My Word is proclaimed, men will divide into two camps: some will receive it with joy, others will be offended by it and will begin to hate and persecute those who receive it.

Moreover, preachers of the right character remember that the Church is not a kingdom that can be built up in peace; for it is located within the domain of the devil, who is the prince of this world. Accordingly, the Church has no choice but to be at war. It is *ecclesia militans*, the Church Militant, and will remain such until the blessed end. Wherever a Church is seen to be, not *ecclesia militans*, but *ecclesia quiescens*, a Church at ease, that — you may rely on it! — is a false Church.

Moreover, an honest preacher knows that he is also a pastor, *i.e.*, a shepherd. Of what use, however, is a shepherd who leads the sheep to good pasture-grounds, but flees when he sees the wolf coming? The occasion that is to test his caliber is when he must go to meet the wolf that wants to devour the sheep. That means to fight for the kingdom of God.

Lastly, an honest preacher knows that he is to be a regular sower of seed. Of what use is it for him to sow good seed and then to look on while another sows the tares of false doctrine among his wheat? Soon the tares will outstrip the wheat and choke it.

Keep these facts stored up in your memory, my dear friends. If you wish to be faithful ministers of Christ, you cannot possibly become such without striving and fighting against false doctrines, a false gospel, and false belief. In the view of worldly men your lot will not be particularly enviable. Even wise Sirach says: "If thou comest to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation." He means to say: It is impossible for you to escape affliction if you wish to be a faithful servant of God. Any one who is without affliction may be ever so zealous in the discharge of the duties of his office, his zeal is nevertheless not of the right sort. Where there is genuine zeal, there not only planting, not only building, is going on, but the workmen also have the sword girded about them and are going out to wage the wars of the Lord. Let this be your slogan: —

Here men's scorn and frown,
Yonder glory's crown;
Here I'm hoping and believing,
There I'm having and perceiving;
For we reach our crown
Through men's scorn and frown.

Let this slogan be at the same time your comfort. For, as I have said, your cause will be spurned as an evil one, unless you connive at any contrary view that may be expressed in opposition to your teaching. But your cause will shine with all the greater luster in heaven. On the Last Day, God will say to you: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant! Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Matt. 25, 21. Then will come the times of your refreshing, when you will have quit this wicked world and the association of false Christians, who have shamefully vilified your best endeavors, calling them the worst abominations. Then your Lord Jesus will say to you: "Well done! You were right; you did not look for ease and comfort; you only strove faithfully to keep what was entrusted to you."

But remember in this connection that errors are the more harmful, the more they are concealed. It is therefore necessary that they be dragged into the light and fought. Of this duty we are reminded by our

Thesis XIV.

In the tenth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when faith is required as a condition of justification and salvation, as if a person were righteous in the sight of God and saved, not only by faith, but also on account of his faith, for the sake of his faith, and in view of his faith.

There are not a few people who imagine that a minister who constantly preaches that man is made righteous in the sight of God and saved by faith is manifestly a genuine evangelical preacher. For what else is to be required of him when everybody knows that salvation by faith is the marrow and essence of the Gospel and the entire Word of God? That is true. A minister who preaches that doctrine is certainly a genuine evangelical preacher. But that fact is not established merely from his use of these words: "Man is made righteous in the sight of God and saved by faith alone," but from the proper sense that must be connected with these words. The preacher must mean by faith what Scripture means when it employs that term. But here is where many preachers are at fault. By faith they understand something different from what the prophets, the apostles, and our Lord and Savior understood by faith. I pass by the rationalists, who used to preach that man is indeed saved by faith; but by faith in Jesus Christ they understand nothing else than the acceptance of the excellent moral teachings which Christ proclaimed. By accepting these moral teachings, they held, a person becomes a true disciple of the Lord and is made righteous and saved. Take up any rationalistic book of the radical type that was published in the age of Rationalism, and you will see that such was the preaching of vulgar Rationalism.

Nor are the papists averse to saying that faith makes a person righteous in the sight of God and saves him. In an emergency they will even say that faith alone makes a person righteous and saves him. But by faith they understand *fides formata*, faith that is joined with love. Accordingly, they manage to say many excellent things about faith; but by faith they always mean something different from what Scripture teaches concerning faith.

Moreover, in the postils and devotional writings of all modern theologians you may find the doctrine that man is made righteous in the sight of God and

saved by faith. But by faith they understand nothing but what man himself achieves and produces. Their faith is a product of human energy and resolution. Such teaching, however, subverts the entire Gospel.

What God's Word really means when it says that man is justified and saved by faith alone is nothing else than this is: Man is *not saved by his own acts*, but *solely* by the doing and dying of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the whole world. Over against this teaching modern theologians assert that in the salvation of man two kinds of activity must be noted: in the first place, there is something that God must do. His part is the most difficult, for He must accomplish the task of redeeming men. But in the second place, something is required that man must do. For it will not do to admit persons to heaven, after they have been redeemed, without further parley. Man must do something really great — he has to believe. This teaching overthrows the Gospel completely. It is a pity that many beautiful sermons of modern theologians ultimately reveal the fact that they mean something entirely different from the plain and clear teaching of Scripture that man is saved, not by what he himself does or achieves, but by what God does and achieves.

Hear, for instance, a statement from *Luthardt*, in his *Compend of Theology*, p. 202: "On the other hand, repentance and faith are *required of man as that part which he is to render*: μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε — *at every stage of the history of salvation*. The requirement of repentance can be met immediately by the person who is called by grace, Ps. 95, 7; Heb. 4, 7 ff., while *faith is a free act of obedience which man renders*."

Note the term "renders"; it refers to the fulfilment of a duty for which a person expects a reward. But faith is not an achievement of man. If it were, it would meet a condition which God had proposed to man; as if God had said: "I have done My share; now you must do yours. I do not ask much of you, but I do require that you repent and believe." Now, can you consider anything a present that is handed you on condition that you do something for it? No; it ceases to be a present when the donor stipulates one condition or another which the grantee must meet. Here in our country many donations are not valid; accordingly, to make a legally valid donation of something quite valuable, the donor will state that he has received one dollar for it. This is done in bills of sale by which property worth millions of dollars is conveyed. It is a circumvention of the law, which plainly shows the essential difference between giving and selling.

Believing the Gospel would be, in truth, an immeasurably great and difficult task for us if God were not to accomplish it in us. But suppose it were not so exceedingly great and difficult; even if it were an easy condition that God had proposed to us for our salvation, our salvation would not be a gift; God would not have *given us His Son*, but merely offered Him to us with a certain stipulation. That has not been God's way. The Apostle Paul says: "Being justified freely (δωρεάv) by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Rom. 3, 24. We are justified δωρεάv, that is gratuitously, without anything, even the least thing, being required of us. Accordingly, we poor sinners praise God for the place of refuge He has prepared for us, where we can flee even when we have to come to Him as utterly lost, insolvent beggars, who have not the least ability to offer to God something that they have achieved. All that we can offer Him is our sins, nothing else. But for that very reason Jesus regards us as His proper clients. We honor Him as our faithful Savior by making His Gospel our refuge; but we deny Him if we come to Him offering Him something for what He gives us. In view of the statement of Peter: "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," Acts 4, 12, you must regard it as an awful perversion of the Gospel to treat the command to believe as a condition of man's justification and salvation.

Suppose you say to a beggar who approaches you asking alms that you will give him something on one condition, and on his asking you what the condition is, you would tell him the condition is that he accept your gift. Would he not consider your condition a hoax and say, laughing: "Why, most gladly I shall meet your condition, and the more you give, the greater will become my joy in taking it"? True, if a person refuses to believe, nobody can help him. But he must not say that grace was offered with a condition attached to it which he could not meet. God attaches no condition to His grace when He proffers it to a sinner and asks him to accept it. It would be no gift if He were to attach a condition, just as little as it is a gift when I ask a tramp to work in my garden if he wants me to give him something to eat. Such a person I treat in accordance with 2 Thess. 3, 10: "If any would not work, neither should he eat," and thus keep him from vagrancy. You see, then, what a perversion of the Gospel it is to treat faith as a condition of salvation.

Our recent predestinarian controversy shows how easy it is to err in this matter. Our adversaries stumble at our doctrine that God has not foreseen anything in the elect that could have prompted Him to elect them, but that His election is one of unconstrained mercy. They are shocked because, in accordance with the Formula of Concord, we teach that there are only two causes of salvation, namely, the mercy of God and the merit of Christ. They imagine that God is partial, saying He elects some and neglects others, reprobating them. This is an inference which they draw, and it is one for which they deserve no commendation. Instead of trying to save God from the charge of partiality by assuming a difference in the person whom He elects when compared with the others, they should consider that man is justified and saved *by* faith, not *on account of* faith. Our old theologians have said that people who charge God with being partial deserve to be whipped.

The German theologians come out more boldly with their opinion, while our adversaries here in America are more wary. The latter adhere to the formula *intuitu fidei* of the old dogmaticians and say that God elected men “in view of their faith.” They seek shelter behind the old dogmaticians; but their stratagem is futile, because they use the formula in a sense different from that in which the old dogmaticians employed it. Our adversaries state plainly that God has decreed to elect certain men in view of their *conduct*, or they use similar terms. Turn and twist as much as they will, they declare that something which man does is the cause of his salvation. If John Gerhard and Egidius Hunnius were to rise from the dead and see that our adversaries in the present controversy on predestination appeal to them as their authorities, they would be amazed; for it can be plainly shown that they have rejected and abominated the doctrine of our adversaries.

John Gerhard, in his *Chapters in Theology*, writes (*Locus de Evang.*, § 26) : “We hold that the Law differs from the Gospel, in the third place, as regards the promises. Those of the Law are conditioned, for they stipulate perfect obedience and demand perfect obedience as the condition of their realization. ... Lev. 18, 5: ‘Ye shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments; which if a man do, he shall live in them!’” But the promises of the Gospel are gratuitous and are offered as gifts (*donative*). Accordingly, the Gospel is called the word of God’s grace, and Rom. 4, 16 states: ‘Therefore it [righteousness] is of faith that it might be by grace!’”

This citation shows the reason why this thesis was embodied in the present series. A person teaching that “faith is a condition which the Gospel stipulates”

makes the promises of the Gospel conditioned promises like those of the Law and removes the distinction between the Law and the Gospel. The Law promises no good thing except on condition that a person comply perfectly with its demands, while the Gospel promises everything unconditionally as a free gift. In short, the promises of grace demand nothing of man. When the Lord says, “Believe,” He does not utter a demand, but issues an urgent invitation to man to take, to apprehend, to appropriate what He is giving, without asking anything in return for it. The gift must, of course, be accepted. Non-acceptance forfeits the gift, but not because there was a condition attached to it.

Again, *Gerhard* says: “Faith is not placed in opposition to grace, even as the beggar’s act of accepting a gift is not placed in opposition to the free bounty of the giver.” A beggar would be insane if he were to say to the donor: “What? I am still to do the accepting?” and would be told to be gone with his silliness.

Gerhard continues: “The term ‘if’ is either etiological or syllogistic; that is, it signifies either a cause or a consequence. In the preaching of the Law the statement: ‘If you do this, you shall live,’ the term is etiological; it signifies the cause, or reason; for obedience is the reason why eternal life is given to those who keep the Law. But in evangelical promises the term ‘if’ is syllogistic; it signifies a. consequence; for it relates to the mode of application which God has appointed for these promises, and that is faith alone.”

If faith is called an achievement of man, the demand for it makes faith a condition that man must meet by his own effort. That is the reason why the aforementioned error of Luthardt is so great; it vitiates his entire theology.

Adam Osiander, in his *Collegium Theologicum*, tom. V, 140, writes: “Faith does not justify in so far as it is obedience in compliance with a command, — for thus viewed, it is an action, a work, and something required by Law, — but only *in so far as it receives* and is attached to justification after the manner of a passive instrument.”

This citation shows again that our thesis belongs in this series on the distinction between the Law and the Gospel. If faith is obedience, it is a work of the Law, and the Apostle Paul was altogether wrong when he declared that a person is justified without the deeds of the Law, by faith alone. However, it is not he that is wrong, but the modern theologians. Faith is merely a passive

instrument, like a hand into which some one places a dollar. The person receives the dollar provided he does not withdraw his hand; beyond that he does not have to do anything. The donor is doing the essential part by putting the gift into the hand, not the other party, by holding out the hand. Let a beggar approach a miser and see what his holding out of the hand to him will help him; the miser may set his dogs upon him if he annoys him too much.

To cite *Gerhard* once more, he writes (*Loc. de Justific.*, § 179): “It is one thing to be justified *on account of* faith and another to be justified *by* faith. In the former view, faith is the meritorious, in the latter, the instrumental cause. [There must be an organ by which I come into the possession and enjoyment of what some one offers me.] We are not justified on account of faith as a merit, but by faith which lays hold of the merit of Christ.” It is not my own merit that saves me, but the merit of Christ.

However, as regards the simile that has been adduced, the old axiom must be noted: *Omne simile est dissimile* (In every simile there is some element of dissimilarity). Otherwise it would not be a simile, but identity. When I hold out my hand, I make a motion. This point must not be pressed in the case of man’s faith. For it is God who prompts the holding out of the hand after He has prepared a sinner for the Gospel by means of the Law. Of course, God cannot prompt a person who continues, and is determined to continue, in his sinful life and makes a mockery of God’s Word.

John Olearius, who completed that splendid treatise of Carpzov, *Isagoge in Libros Symbolicos* (Introduction to the Symbolical Books), says (p. 1361): “In relation to salvation, faith is *not our work*, but it belongs to the order of salvation which God has laid down, and for this reason it is *not by any means a condition in the proper sense of the term*, depending on man, but it is a blessing from our Father in heaven, or a requisite which is furnished to a person who merely suffers it to be furnished him, or an instrument which lays hold of salvation. It is in no way the active cause that proceeds from man and has an influence, after the manner of a cause properly so called, in bringing about a person’s salvation.” Remember this well: In a certain sense it might be said that faith is man’s work, because it is not God that believes, but man. However, this is liable to be misunderstood, and therefore we should not speak thus. Faith is not an achievement of ours, but is wrought in us by God without our contributing anything towards that end.

The old dogmaticians built up their dogmatic treatises by the causal method, considering everything from the viewpoint of a cause. It was a dangerous method. When they came to the element of faith, they were perplexed about what kind of cause to call it and hit upon the term *causa instrumentalis*, instrumental, or organic, cause. Now, you may run through the whole Bible, and you will not find a single passage which states that man is justified *on account of* his faith. Wherever the relation of faith to justification is spoken of, terms are used which declare faith a means, not a cause. That is evidence sufficient to show what the Bible doctrine on this point is. You will either have to put the Bible aside and choose a different calling, or if you must enter the ministry because God constrains you, this is what you will have to teach concerning faith in strict accordance with God's Word.

The excellent Wurttemberg theologian *Heerbrand* wrote a compend of theology that was even translated into Greek and sent to the Patriarch of Constantinople. He says: "Faith is not a condition, nor is it, properly speaking, required as a condition, because justification is not promised and offered on account of the worth or meritoriousness of faith or in as far as faith is a work. For faith, too, is imperfect; however, it is a mode of receiving the blessing offered men through and on account of Christ." Now, it would be silly to call faith a condition nevertheless; for, says Heerbrand, "the hand is not called the condition, but the organ and instrument, for receiving alms."

To conclude, *Calov*, in his *Biblia illustrata*, commenting on Rom. 5, 10, says: "We have not been redeemed and reconciled, nor have our sins been atoned for, under a condition, but we have been absolutely redeemed in the most perfect and complete manner, as far as merit and efficacy of the act are concerned; although, as regards the actual enjoyment and appropriation of salvation, faith is necessary, which is nothing else than the appropriation of the atonement, satisfaction, and reconciliation of Christ; for, in the judgment of God, if One died for all, it is the same as if all had died. 2 Cor. 5, 14. This is a golden text, which shines with the radiance of the sun even in the luminous Scriptures. Since the death which Christ died for all is a death for the purpose of reconciliation, it is the same as if all had suffered death for this purpose. It follows, then, that, without entertaining the least doubt, I can say with perfect assurance: *I am* redeemed; *I am* reconciled; salvation *has been* acquired for *me*."