

# **Epistle and Gospel Sermons for the First Sunday in Lent**

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# Epistle Sermon for the First Sunday in Lent

## 2 Corinthians 6:1-10

### from Luther's *Church Sermons*

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## An Entreaty to Live as Christians

### 2 Cor 6:1-10

*We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.) Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*

1. This lesson is an admonition to the Corinthians calculated to stimulate them in the performance of the duties they already recognize. The words are easily enough said, but execution is difficult and

practice rare. For Paul gives a strange description of the Christian life, and the color and characteristics with which he exhibits it render it decidedly unprepossessing. First he says:

**"And working together with him we entreat also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."**

2. He calls the Corinthians co-workers, as in First Corinthians 3, 9, where he puts it: "We are God's

fellow-workers; ye are God's husbandry, God's building." That is, we labor upon you with the

external Word – teaching and admonishing; but God, working inwardly through the Spirit, gives the blessing and the success. He permits not our labor with the outward Word to be in vain. Therefore, God is the true Master, performing inwardly the supreme work, while we aid outwardly, serving him through the ministry. The apostle's purpose in praising his co-laborers is to prevent them from despising the external Word as something inessential to them, or well enough known. For though God is able to effect everything without the instrumentality of the outward Word, working inwardly by his Spirit, this is by no means his purpose. He uses preachers as fellow-workers, or co-laborers, to accomplish his purpose through the Word when and where he pleases. Now, since preachers have the office, name and honor of fellow-workers with God, no one may be considered learned enough or holy enough to ignore or despise the most inferior preaching; especially since he knows not when the hour may come wherein God will, through preachers, perform his work in him.

3. Secondly, Paul shows the danger of neglecting the grace of God. He boldly declares here that the preaching of the Gospel is not an eternal, continuous and permanent mode of instruction, but rather a passing shower, which hastens on. What it strikes, it strikes; what it misses, it misses. It does not return, nor does it stand still. The sun and heat follow and dry it up. Experience shows that in no part of the world has the Gospel remained pure beyond the length of man's memory. Only so long as its pioneers lived did it stand and prosper. When they were gone, the light disappeared; factious spirits and false teachers followed immediately. Thus Moses announces

(Deut 31, 29) that the children of Israel will corrupt themselves after his death; and the book of Judges testifies that so it really came to pass. Each time a judge died in whose days the Word of God obtained sway, the people fell away and became more wicked than before. King Joash did what was right so long as the high priest Jehoiada lived, but after the latter's death this had an end. And following the time of Christ and his apostles, the world was filled with seditious spirits and false teachers. Paul, in fact, declares (Acts 20, 29): "I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock." So also we now have the pure Gospel. This is a time of grace and salvation and the acceptable day; but should the world continue, this condition, too, will soon pass.

4. To receive the grace of God in vain can be nothing else than to hear the pure word of God which presents and offers his grace, and yet to remain listless and irresponsive, undergoing no change at all. Thus, ungrateful for the Word and unworthy of it, we merit the loss of the Word. Such as these are described in the parable (Lk 14, 16-24) where the guests bidden to the supper refused to come and went about their own business, thus provoking the master's anger until he swore they should not taste his supper. Similar is Paul's threat here, that we may take heed and accept the Gospel with fear and gratitude. Christ says (Jn 12,35), "Walk while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not." I should think we might have learned wisdom from experience – from the darkness we suffered under the Papacy. But that is all forgotten; we show neither gratitude nor amendment of life. Very well, we shall find out the consequences.

## **Salvation Wherever The Gospel Is Sent**

**"Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation."**

5. These words portray the richness of the salvation wherever the Gospel goes: nothing but grace and help; no wrath or punishment. Indeed,

these are words of unutterable meaning the apostle here employs. First, he tells us that it is an "acceptable time," as the Hebrew expresses it.

Our own way of putting it would be: "This is a gracious time, a time when God turns away his wrath and is moved only by love and benevolence toward us and is pleased to do us good." All our sins are forgotten; he takes no note of the sins of the past nor of those of the present. In short, we are in a realm of mercy, where are only forgiveness and reconciliation. The heavens are now open. This is the true golden year when man is denied nothing. So Paul says, "At an acceptable time I hearkened unto thee"; that is: "I am kindly disposed toward thee. Whatsoever thou shalt even desire and ask for, thou shalt surely receive. Be not neglectful, therefore, and ask while the acceptable time continues."

6. Second, Paul declares that it is a day of blessing, "a day of salvation." It is a day of help, wherein we are not only acceptable and assured of God's favor and good will toward us, but we experience even as we have been assured – that

God really does help us. He verifies his assurance, for his beneficence gives testimony that our prayers are heard. We call it a happy day, a blessed day, a day of abundance; for these two truths are inseparably related – that God is favorable toward us, and that his kindness is the proof of his favor. God's favor toward us is revealed in the first clause, which speaks of an acceptable time; that he extends help to us is revealed in the second clause, telling of a blessed day of succor. Both these facts are to be apprehended by faith and in good conscience; for a superficial judgment would lead to the view that this period of blessing is rather an accursed period of wrath and disfavor. Words like these, of spiritual meaning, must be understood in the light of the Holy Spirit; thus shall we find that these two glorious, beautiful expressions refer to the Gospel dispensation and are intended to magnify all the treasures and the riches of the kingdom of Christ.

### **"Giving no occasion of stumbling [no offense] in anything."**

7. Since this is a time of blessing, let us make right use of it, not spending it to no purpose, and let us take serious need to give offense to none; thus avoiding reproach to our ministry. It is evident from the connection to what kind of offense the apostle has reference; he would not have the Gospel doctrine charged with teaching anything evil.

8. Two kinds of offense bring the Gospel into disgrace: In one case it is the heathen who are offended, and this because of the fact that some individuals would make the Gospel a means of freedom from temporal restraint, substituting temporal liberty for spiritual. They thus bring reproach upon the Gospel as teaching such doctrine, and make it an object of scandal to the heathen and worldly people, whereby they are misled and become enemies to the faith and to the

Word of God without cause, being the harder to convert since they regard Christians as licentious knaves. And the responsibility for this must be placed at the door of those who have given offense in this respect. In the other case, Christians are offended among themselves. The occasion is the indiscreet exercise of Christian liberty, which offends the weak in faith. Concerning this topic much is said in First Corinthians 8 and Romans 14. Paul here hints at what he speaks of in First Corinthians 10, 32-33: "Give no occasion of stumbling, either to Jews, or to Greeks, or to the church of God: even as I also please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of the many that they may be saved." He takes up the same subject in Philippians 2, 4, teaching that every man should look on the things of others. Then no offense will be given.

## **”That our ministration [the ministry] be not blamed.”**

9. Who can prevent our office being vilified? For the Word of God must be persecuted equally with Christ himself. That the Word of God is reviled by unbelievers ignorant of faith in God is something we cannot prevent. For, according to Isaiah 8, 14 and Romans 9, 33, the Gospel is a ”rock of offense.” This is the offense of the faith; it will pursue its course and we are not responsible. But for love's offense, offense caused by shortcomings in our works and fruits of faith, the things we are commanded to let shine before men, that, seeing these, they may be allured to the faith – for

offense in this respect we cannot disclaim responsibility. It is a sin we certainly must avoid, that the heathen, the Jews, the weak and the rulers of the world may never be able to say: ”Behold the knavery and licentiousness of these people! Surely their doctrine cannot be true.” Otherwise our evil name and fame and the obstacles we place before others will extend to the innocent and holy Word God has given us to apprehend and to proclaim; it must bear our shame and in addition become unfruitful in the offended ones. Grievous is such a sin as this.

## **Marks Of Christians As Ministers Of God**

### **”But in everything commending ourselves, as ministers of God, in much patience.”**

10. The apostle here portrays the Christian life in its outward expression. Not that it is possible for anyone thereby to become a Christian, or godly; but, being servants of God, or Christians and godly people, we furnish in this manner, according to Paul's statement here, the evidence thereof as by fruits and signs. Mark his phrase ”ministers of God.” What a remarkable service for God is this wherein we must endure so much suffering, so much affliction, privation, anxiety, stripes, imprisonment, tumult or sedition, labor, watching, fasting, and so on! No mass here, no vigil, no hallucinations of a fictitious service of God; it is the true service of God, which subdues the body and mortifies the flesh. Not, indeed, as if fasting, watching and toiling are to be despised because they do not make just. Though we are not thereby justified, we must nevertheless practice those things, instead of giving rein to the flesh and indulging our idleness.

Caesar's.” Paul's meaning is that when we become victims of sedition on the part of others we should submit; just as we are not to inflict upon others privations, stresses, stripes or imprisonment, but rather to accept them at their hands. So Paul heads the list with patience; which does not produce sedition, but endures it. It is a consolation in these times when we are charged with raising seditions, to reflect that it is the very nature and color of the Christian life that it be criticized as seditious when the fact is it patiently bears sedition directed against itself. Thus was it with Elijah, who was accused by King Ahab of troubling Israel and exciting turbulence. I Kings 18, 17-18. Then, when we are charged with guilt in this respect, let us remember that not only did the apostles have to hear the same accusation, but even Christ himself, with all his innocence, was so accused. More than that, he was falsely reviled upon the cross with a superscription charging sedition; in fact, he was even put to death as a Jewish king guilty of opposition to Caesar and of enticing and inciting the people.

11. Paul also mentions sedition. Not that by our teaching or life we should be guilty of sedition against others; rather, we should be quiet and obedient. See Romans 13. Christ says (Mt 22, 21), ”Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are

12. The remaining marks of the Christian life – patience, affliction, necessities, distresses, stripes,

imprisonments, labor, watching, fasting, purity, etc., are easily interpreted; it is readily seen how they are instrumental in our service to God. God will not have indolent, idle gluttons, nor sleepy and impatient servants. Most adroitly does Paul score in particular our fine idle youths who draw interest from their money, have an easy life, and

imagine their tonsures, their long robes and their howling in the churches excuse them from labor. All men should labor and earn their bread, according to Paul. 2 Thes 3, 12. By labor, our text teaches, we serve God; more than that, our labor is testimony to the fact that we serve God.

### **"In knowledge."**

13. What is meant here? With Paul, knowledge signifies discretion, understanding, reason. He speaks of the Jews (Rom 10, 2) as having "a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge"; that is, a zeal without reason, without understanding, without discretion. His message here, then, is: "We should conduct ourselves in Christian affairs with becoming reason and moderation lest we give offense to the weak by a presumptuous use of Christian liberty. Rather we should, with discretion and understanding, adapt ourselves to that which promotes the neighbor's welfare. Likewise, when we labor, fast, or when we regulate our sexual relations, we are to exercise

reason, lest the body should be injured by too much fasting, watching and toil, and also by needless abstention from sexual intercourse. Let everyone take heed to remain within bounds by using reason and discretion. The apostle counsels the married (I Cor 7, 5) not to defraud each other too long, lest they be tempted. In all such matters, he would impose no measures and rules, no limits and laws, after the manner of the councils, the popes and the monks. He leaves it wholly to each individual's discretion to decide and to test for himself all questions of time and quantity bearing upon the restraints of his flesh.

### **"In longsuffering, in kindness."**

14. The meaning of these phrases has been stated in many other places, particularly in connection with Romans 2 and Galatians 5.

### **"By the Holy Spirit."**

15. What are we to understand here? The words may have one of two meanings: First, the apostle may have reference to the Holy Spirit in person, who is God. Second, he may have reference to the spirit of individuals, or their spiritual condition. "Holy Spirit" may be intended to stand for "spirituality," Paul's meaning being: "Beware of the professedly spiritual, or of things glittering and purporting to be spiritual; beware of them

who make great boast of the Spirit and nevertheless betray only a false, unclean, unholy spirit, productive of sects and discord. Abide ye in that true, holy spirituality proceeding from God's Holy Spirit, who imparts unity and harmony, determination and courage." As Paul expresses it elsewhere (Eph 4, 3), "Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." They, then, who continue in one faith, one mind and

disposition, give testimony by the reality and saintness of their spiritual life and by the presence of the Holy Spirit that they are servants of God.

For true spirituality, or a holy walk in the Spirit, means to be in heart and mind at one with the Spirit, through faith.

### **”In love unfeigned, in the word of truth.”**

16. As the apostle opposes the Holy Spirit to false sects and false prophets, so he opposes unfeigned love to indolent Christians who in true faith and unity of mind possess marks of true spirituality, but are nevertheless indolent, cold, in fact false as regards love. Again, he opposes the ”Word of Truth” to abusers of the Word of God, who misconstrue it and comment upon it according to their own fancy, and for their own honor and profit. While much that purports to be spiritual has not the Word as source and gives honor to the Spirit at the expense of the Word, the class under consideration profess to magnify the Word; they

would be master interpreters of the Scriptures, confident that their explanations are correct and superior. In condemnation of this class, Peter says (1 Pet 4, 11), ”If any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God,” and not his own word. In other words, let him be assured he speaks the Word of God and not his own. God's Word Paul here terms the ”Word of truth”; that is, the true Word of God and not our own misconstrued, falsified word palmed off as God's Word. In our idiom we would say ”the real Word” where the Hebrew has ”Word of truth,” ”true Word.”

### **”In the power of God.”**

17. Peter speaks also of this power, in the verse before mentioned: ”If any man ministereth, ministering as of the strength which God supplieth.” And Paul elsewhere declares (Col 1, 29): ”Whereunto I labor also, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily and again (Rom 15, 18): ”For I will not dare to speak any things save those which Christ wrought through me, for the obedience of the Gentiles.” Christians should have the assurance that they are the kingdom of God, and that in whatever they do, especially in undertakings of a spiritual character, which have the salvation of souls as

aim, they beware of everything not absolutely known as true, so that the work be not theirs but God's. In God's kingdom God alone is to speak, reign and act. Christ says (Mt 5, 16): ”Even so let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven” – may glorify him as the worker, and not yourselves. Seductive spirits, however, come cavorting in their own power, throw the pictures out of the churches and establish rules of their own, without caring whether it is done in the power of God. The consequence is that their work is neither permanent nor fruitful.

## **The Armor Of Righteousness**

### **”By the armor of righteousness.”**

18. This armor Paul more fully describes in Ephesians and in Thessalonians. Sufficient

explanation of it has been given in the lesson for Advent. There is the ”shield of faith,” the ”helmet

of salvation,” the shoes of ”the preparation of the Gospel of peace,” and so on. Paul includes them all under the term ”armor of righteousness,” and, in his epistle to the Ephesians, under the phrase ”armor of God,” to teach Christians to eschew and to forsake carnal, worldly weapons for these. He would have them know themselves a spiritual people, spiritually warring against the spiritual enemies enumerated here and pointed out on the right hand and on the left.

19. On the left hand he places dishonor and evil report, in that we appear to men as deceivers, unknown, in conflict with death, chastened, sorrowful, poor and needy. Scorn is hurled in our faces and the reputation accorded us is that of deceivers. The Christian must not only be unknown, friendless and a stranger, but men will also be ashamed of him – even his best friends – in consequence of the reproach and evil report under which he lies in the eyes of the great, the wealthy, the wise and the powerful of the world. He must be as one dying – continually expecting death by reason of the hatred and envy directed against him, and the various persecutions he suffers. He must be beaten and scourged; must at times feel the weight of the enmity and envy wherewith the world inflicts torment. He is like the sorrowful, for so ill does he fare in the world, he has reason to sorrow. He resembles the poor in that nothing is given him but injuries; he possesses nothing, for if he has not been deprived of all his possessions he daily expects that extremity. Lest he despair of his hope in God and grow faint, he must be armed on the left hand against these enemies with a divine armor: with a firm faith, with the comfort of the divine Word, with hope, so that he may endure and exercise patience. Thereby he proves himself to be a true servant of God, inasmuch as false teachers and hypocrites, with all their pompous worship, are incapable of these things.

20. On the right he places honor and good report, inasmuch as we are after all true, well known, alive, defiant of death, full of joy, rich, possessing all things. The Christian will have always a few to honor and commend him; some there will be to give him a good report, to praise him as true and honest in doctrine. And there will be some who receive and acknowledge him, who are not ashamed of him. Life remains in spite of death oft faced, even in scourgings. He rejoices when things with him are at the worst, for his heart remains joyful in God, that joy finding expression in words, deeds and manner. Though poor in the goods of the world, he does not die of hunger, and he makes many spiritually rich through the Word. Even though he have no possessions at all, he suffers no lack but has in hand all things; for all creatures must serve the believer. As Christ promised (Mk 9, 23), ”All things are possible to him that believeth.” For himself, it is true, he possesses nothing, and gladly he endures his need; but for his neighbor's sake he can do all things, and all he has he is ready to place at the disposal of his neighbor whenever need requires. These blessings also give occasion for a powerful armor, for we must guard against pride and haughtiness.

21. Thus the Christian is quite untrammelled. His eyes are fixed on God alone . Always choosing the safe middle path he steers clear of danger on the right and on the left. He permits not the evil to overthrow him nor the good to exalt, but makes use of both to the honor of God and the benefit of his neighbor. This, Paul instructs us, should be the manner of our life now while the season of grace continues; nor must we fail to heed this! This is the true service of God, the service well pleasing to him; unto which may God help us. Amen.



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# **Gospel Sermon for the First Sunday in Lent**

## **Matthew 4:1-11**

### **from Luther's *Church Sermons***

Source: Martin Luther, "First Sunday in Lent," from John Nicholas Lenker, ed., *Luther's Church Postil - Gospels - Epiphany, Lent and Easter Sermons*. Vol. II. Five Volumes. (Vol. XI of *The Precious and Sacred Writings of Martin Luther*). (Minneapolis, MN: Lutherans In All Lands, Co., 1906), pp. 133-147. "Translated now for the first time into English, with introduction, Walch's *Analyses* and Bugenhagen's *Summaries* by Prof. John Nicholas Lenker, D.D."

## **The Fast and the Temptation of Christ**

### **Matt 4:1-11**

*Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.*

### **I. The Fasting Of Christ**

I. This Gospel is read today at the beginning of Lent in order to picture before Christians the example of Christ, that they may rightly observe Lent, which has become mere mockery: first,

because no one can follow this example and fast forty days and nights as Christ did without eating any food. Christ rather followed the example of Moses, who fasted also forty days and nights,

when he received the law of God on mount Sinai. Thus Christ also wished to fast when he was about to bring to us, and give expression to, the new law. In the second place, Lent has become mere mockery because our fasting is a perversion and an institution of man. For although Christ did fast forty days, yet there is no word of his that he requires us to do the same and fast as he did. Indeed he did many other things, which he wishes us not to do; but whatever he calls us to do or leave undone, we should see to it that we have his Word to support our actions.

2. But the worst of all is that we have adopted and practiced fasting as a good work: not to bring our flesh into subjection; but, as a meritorious work before God, to atone for our sins and obtain grace. And it is this that has made our fasting a stench and so blasphemous and shameful, so that no drinking and eating, no gluttony and drunkenness, could have been as bad and foul. It would have been better had people been drunk day and night than to fast thus. Moreover, even if all had gone well and right, so that their fasting had been applied to the mortification of the flesh; but since it was not voluntary it was not left to each to do according to their own free will, but was compulsory by virtue of human commandment, and they did it unwillingly, it was all lost and to no purpose. I will not mention the many other evils as the consequences, as that pregnant mothers and their offspring, the sick and the weak, were thereby ruined, so that it might be called a fasting of Satan instead of a fasting unto holiness. Therefore we will carefully consider how this Gospel teaches us by the example of Christ what true fasting is.

3. The Scriptures present to us two kinds of true fasting: one, by which we try to bring the flesh into subjection to the spirit, of which St. Paul speaks in 2 Cor 6,5: "In labors, in watchings, in fastings." The other is that which we must bear patiently, and yet receive willingly because of our need and poverty, of which St. Paul speaks in 1 Cor 4, 11: "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst," and Christ in Mt 9,15: "When the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, then will they fast." This kind of fasting Christ

teaches us here while in the wilderness alone without anything to eat, and while he suffers his penury without murmuring. The first kind of fasting, one can end whenever he wills, and can satisfy it by food; but the other kind we must observe and bear until God himself changes it and satisfies us. Hence it is much more precious than the first, because it moves in greater faith.

4. This is also the reason that the Evangelist with great care places it first: Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, that he might there fast and be tempted, so that no one might imitate his example of their own choice and make of it a selfish, arbitrary, and pleasant fasting; but instead wait for the Spirit, who will send him enough fastings and temptations. For whoever, without being led by the Spirit, wantonly resorts to the danger of hunger or to any temptation, when it is truly a blessing of God that he can eat and drink and have other comforts, tempts God. We should not seek want and temptation, they will surely come of themselves; we ought then do our best and act honestly. The text reads: Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness; and not: Jesus himself chose to go into the wilderness. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Rom 8, 14. God gives his blessings for the purpose that we may use them with thanksgiving, and not that we may let them lie idle, and thus tempt him; for he wishes it, and forces us to fast by the Spirit or by a need which we cannot avoid.

5. This narrative, however, is written both for our instruction and admonition. First, for instruction, that we should know how Christ has served and helped us by his fasting, hunger, temptation and victory; also that whoever believes on Christ shall never suffer need, and that temptation shall never harm him; but we shall have enough in the midst of want and be safe in the midst of temptation; because his Lord and Head triumphed over these all in his behalf, and of this he is assured, as Christ says in John 16,33: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." God, who was able to nourish Christ forty days without any food, can nourish also his Christians.

6. Secondly, this is written for our admonition, that we may in the light of this example also cheerfully suffer want and temptation for the service of God and the good of our neighbor, like Christ did for us, as often as necessity requires it; which is surely accomplished if we learn and confess God's Word. Therefore this Gospel is

sweet consolation and power against the unbelief and infamy of the stomach, to awaken and strengthen the conscience, that we may not be anxious about the nourishment of our bodies, but be assured that he can and will give us our daily bread.

## II. The Temptation Of Christ

7. But as to how temptation takes place and how it is overcome, is all very beautifully pictured to us here in Christ. First, that he is led up into the wilderness, that is, he is left solitary and alone by God, angels and men, by all creatures. What kind of a temptation would it be, if we were not forsaken and stood not alone? It is, however, painful when we do not feel anything that presents its back to us; as for example, that I should support myself and have not a nickel, not a thread, not a twig, and I experience no help from others, and no advice is offered. That means to be led into the desert and to be left alone. There I am in the true school, and I learn what I am, how weak my faith is, how great and rare true faith is, and how deeply unbelief is entrenched in the hearts of all men. But whoever has his purse, cellar and fields full, is not yet led into the desert, neither is he left alone; therefore he is not conscious of temptation.

8. Secondly, the tempter came forward and attacked Christ with these very same cares of food for the body and with the unbelief in the goodness of God, and said: "If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread," as if he should say: Yes, trust thou in God and bake and cook nothing; only wait patiently until a roasted fowl flies into your mouth; do you now say that you have a God who cares for you; where is now your heavenly Father, who has charge of you? Yea, it seems to me he lets you in a fine condition; eat now and drink from your faith, let us see how you will satisfy your hunger; yea, when you have stones for bread. What a fine Son of God you are! How fatherly he is disposed

toward you in that he fails to send you a slice of bread and permits you to be so poor and needy; do you now continue to believe that you are his son and he is your father? With like thoughts he truly attacks all the children of God. And Christ surely felt this temptation, for he was no stock nor stone; although he was and remained pure and without sin, as we cannot do.

9. That Satan attacked Christ with the cares for daily food or with unbelief and avarice, Christ's answer proves, in that he says: "Man shall not live by bread alone;" that sounds as if he said: thou wilt direct me to bread alone and dost treat me as though I thought of nothing but the sustenance of my body. This temptation is very common also among pious people, and they especially feel it keenly who have children and a family, and have nothing to eat. Therefore St. Paul says in I Tim 6, 10 that avarice is a root of all kind of evil; for it is a fruit of unbelief. Do you not think that unbelief, care and avarice are the reasons people are afraid to enter married life? Why do people avoid it and live in unchastity, unless it be the fear that they must die of hunger and suffer want? But here we should consider Christ's work and example, who suffered want forty days and nights, and finally was not forsaken, but was ministered to even by angels.

10. Thirdly, behold how Christ resists this temptation of bread, and overcomes; he sees nothing but stones and what is uneatable then he approaches and clings to the Word of God, strengthens himself by it and strikes the devil to the ground with it. This saying all Christians

should lay hold of when they see that there is lack and want and everything has become stones, so that courage trembles, and they should say: What were it if the whole world were full of bread, still man does not live by bread alone, but more belongs to life, namely, the Word of God. The words, however, are so beautiful and powerful that we must not pass over them lightly, but carefully explain them.

11. These words Christ quotes from Deut. 8,3, where Moses says: "Thy God humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by everything that proceedeth out of the mouth of Jehovah doth man live." That is as much as to say: Since God permits you to hunger and you still continue to live, you ought indeed to grasp the thought that God nourishes you without bread through his Word; for if you should live and sustain yourself by bread alone then you must continually be full of bread. But the Word, that nourishes us is, that he promises us and causes it to be published that he is our God and desires to be our God.

12. Thus now, the meaning of Moses and of Christ is: Whoever has here God's Word and believes, has both blessings; the first, where he is in want and has nothing, but must suffer hunger, that Word will sustain him, so that he will not die of hunger nor perish, just as well as if he had abundance to eat; for the Word he has in his heart nourishes and sustains him without eating and drinking. But has he little to eat, then a bite or slice of bread will feed and nourish him like a kingly meal; for not only bread but the Word of God also nourishes the body naturally, as it creates and upholds all things, Heb 1, 3. The other blessing he will also enjoy, namely, that finally bread will surely be at hand, come whence it will, and should it rain from heaven like manna where none grows and none can grow. In these two thoughts every person can freely trust, namely, that he must in time of hunger receive bread or something to eat, or if not, then his hunger must become so moderate and bearable that it will, nourish him even as well as bread does.

13. What has been said of eating and feeding the body he understood also of drinking, clothing, house, and all our needs: namely that although he still permits us to become naked and suffer want for clothing, house etc., clothing must finally be at hand, and before it fails the leaves of the trees must become coats and mantles; or if not, then the coats and garments that we wear must never grow old; just as happened to the Children of Israel in the desert Deut. 8, 2-4, whose clothing and shoes never wore out. Likewise the wild wilderness must become their houses, and there must be a way where there is no way; and water, where there is no water; stones must become water. For here stands God's Word, which says: "He cares for you;" and St. Paul in 1 Tim 6, 17: "God giveth us richly all things to enjoy;" and Mt. 6,33-34: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow." These and like words must continue true and stand forever firm.

14. All this one may indeed learn from his own daily experiences. For it is held, and I almost believe it, that there are not as many sheaves of wheat grown as there are people living on the earth; but God daily blesses and increases the wheat in the sack, the flour in the tray, the bread on the table and in the mouth, as Christ did. John 6, 12 f. It is also noticeable that as a rule poor people and their children are fatter and their food reaches farther and agrees with them better than is the case among the rich with all their provisions. However that the godless at times suffer need, or in times of famine many die of hunger, is caused by a special plague as pestilence, war etc. In other ways we see that in all things it is not the food, but the Word of God that nourishes every human being.

15. Now that God sustains all mankind by bread, and not by the Word alone, without bread, is done to the end, that he conceals his work in the world in order to exercise believers; just as he commanded the children of Israel to arm themselves and to fight, and yet it was not his pleasure that victory should come through their own sword and deeds; but he himself was to slay

their enemies and triumph with their swords and through their deeds. Here it might also be said: The warrior was not victorious through his sword alone, but by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God, as David sings, Ps 44,6: "For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me." Also Ps 147, 10 and 33, 16-17: "He taketh no pleasure in the legs of a man. A mighty man is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a vain thing for safety." Yet he uses man and the horse, the sword and bow: but not because of the strength and power of man and of the horse, but under the veil and covering of man and the horse he fights and does all. This he proves in that he often did and daily does the same without man and the horse, where there is need and he is not tempted.

16. Thus he does also with the bread; since it is at hand, he nourishes us through it and by means of it, so that we do not see it and we think the bread does it; but where it is not at hand, there he nourishes us without the bread, only through the Word, as he does by means of the bread; so that thus bread is God's helper, as Paul says in 1 Cor 3,9: "We are God's fellow workers," that is, through and under our outward ministerial office he gives inwardly his grace, which he also could give and does give indeed without our office; but since the office is at hand, one should not despise it nor tempt God. Thus God sustains us outwardly by bread; but only inwardly he gives that growth and permanency, which the bread cannot give. And the summary is: All creatures are God's larva and mummery, which he permits to work with him and to help to do everything that he can do and does do otherwise without their cooperation, in order that we may cleave alone to his Word. Thus, if bread is at hand, that we do not therefore trust the more; or if there is no bread present, that we do not therefore despair the more; but use it when it is at hand, and do without it, when there is none; being assured that we shall still live and be sustained at both times by God's Word, whether there be bread or no bread. With such faith one overcomes avarice and temporal care for daily bread in the right way.

17. Christ's second temptation is opposed to the first and is repugnant to common sense. Its substance is that the devil teaches us to tempt God; as he here calls to Christ to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, which was not at all necessary, since there were surely good steps upon which he could descend. And that this temptation was for the purpose of tempting or making trial of God, the answer of Christ also clearly proves, when he says: "Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God." By this he shows that the devil wished to lead him into temptation.

18. And this very appropriately follows the first temptation. For where the devil feels a heart trusts God in times of want and need, he soon ceases his temptation of bread and avarice and thinks: Wait, wilt thou be very spiritual and believing, I will assist you: He approaches and attacks on the other side, that we might believe where God has not commanded us to believe, nor wills that we should believe. For example, if God gave you bread in your homes, as he does yearly everywhere in the world, and you would not use it, but instead you would cause need and want yourselves, and say: Why, we are to believe God; I will not eat the bread, but will patiently wait until God sends me manna from heaven. See, that would be tempting God; for that is not believing where all is at hand that we need and should have. How can one believe that he will receive what he already has?

19. Thus you see here that Satan held before Christ want and need where there was neither want nor need; but where there was already good means by which to descend from the temple without such a newly devised and unnecessary way of descending. For this purpose Satan led Christ to the top of the temple, in the holy city, says the Evangelist, and placed him in a holy place. For he creates such precious thoughts in man that he thinks he is filled with faith and is on the true way of holiness; and yet he does not stand in the temple, but is only on the outside of the temple, that is, he is not in the true holy mind or life of faith; and yet he is in the holy city; that is, such persons are found only in Christendom and among true Christians, who bear a great deal of

preaching about faith. To these persons he applies the sayings of Scripture. For such persons learn Scripture also by daily hearing it; but not farther than they can apply it to their erroneous opinions and their false faith. For Satan here quotes from the Psalter, Ps 91, 11-12, that God commanded the angels that they should protect the children of God and carry them on their hands. But Satan like a rogue and cheat fails to quote what follows, namely, that the angels shall protect of God in all their ways. For the Psalm reads thus: "For he will give his angels charge over thee to keep thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone;" hence the protection of the angels does not reach farther, according to the command of God, than the ways in which God has commanded us to walk. When we walk in these ways of God, his angels take care of us. But the devil omits to quote "the ways of God" and interprets and applies the protection of the angels to all things, also to that which God has not commanded; then it fails and we tempt God.

20. Now, this temptation seldom takes place in outward things as bread, clothing, house, etc. For we find many foolhardy people, who risk and endanger life, their property and honor, without any need of doing so; as those do who wilfully enter into battle or jump into the water, or gamble for money, or in other ways venture into danger, of whom the wise man says in Sirach 3, 27: "Whoever takes pleasure in danger, will thereby be overcome;" for in the degree one struggles to get a thing, will he succeed in obtaining it; swimmers are likely to drown and good climbers likely to fall. Yet it is seldom that those of false faith in God abstain from bread, clothing and other necessities of life when they are at hand. As we read of two hermits, who would not accept bread from the people, but thought God should send it to them directly from heaven; so the consequence was that one died and went to his father, the devil, who taught him such faith and left him fall from the pinnacle.

21. But in spiritual matters this temptation is powerful when one has to do with the nourishment not of the body but of the soul. Here

God has held before us the person and way, by which the soul can be forever nourished in the richest manner possible without any want, namely Christ, our Saviour. But this way, this treasure, this provision no one desires. Everybody seeks another way, other provisions to help their souls. The real guilty ones are those who would be saved through their own work; these the devil sets conspicuously on the top of the temple. They follow him and go down where there is no stairway; they believe and trust in their own work where there is no faith nor trust, no way nor bridge, and break their necks. But Satan makes use of and persuades them through the Scriptures to believe that the angels will protect them, and that their way, works and faith are pleasing to God, and who called them through the Scriptures to do good works; but they do not care how falsely they explain the Scriptures.

22. Who these are, we have identified often enough and very fully, namely, work righteous persons and unbelieving hypocrites under the name of being Christians and among the congregation of Christian people. For the temptation must take place in the holy city and one temptation is seldom against another. In the first temptation want and hunger are the reasons that we should not believe; and by which we become anxious to have a full sufficiency, so that there is no chance for us to believe. In the second temptation, however, the abundance and the full sufficiency are the reasons that we do not believe, by which we become tired of the common treasure, and every one tries to do something through his own powers to provide for his soul. So we do; if we have nothing, then we doubt God and believe not; if we have abundance, then we become tired of it and wish to have something different, and again we fail to believe. There we flee and turn against want and seek abundance: here we seek want and flee from the abundance we have. No, whatever God does for us, is never right. Such is the bottomless, wickedness of our unbelief.

23. Christ's third temptation consists in temporal honor and power; as the words of the devil clearly teach, when Satan shows and offers Christ all the

kingdoms of the world if he would worship him. To this class those belong who fall from their faith for the sake of honor and power, that they may enjoy good days, or not believe further than their honor and power extend. Such are also the heretics who start sects and factions in matters of faith among Christians, that they may make a great parade before the world and soar aloft in their own honor. Hence one may place this third temptation on the right, and the first on the left side. The first is the temptation of misfortune, by which man is stirred to anger, impatience and unbelief; the third and last, the temptation of prosperity, by which man is enticed to lust, honor, joy, and whatever is high. The second or middle temptation is spiritual and deals with the blind tricks and errors that mislead reason from faith.

24. For whom the devil cannot overcome with poverty, want, need and misery, he attacks with riches, favor, honor, pleasure, power and the like, and contends on both sides against us; yea, "he walketh about," says St. Peter in 1 Pet 5,8, so that if he cannot overthrow us either with suffering or love, that is, with the first temptation on the left or the third on the right, he retires to a higher and different method and attacks us with error, blindness and a false understanding of the Scripture. If he wins there, we fare ill on all sides and in all things; and whether one suffers poverty or has abundance, whether he fights or surrenders, all is lost. For when one is in error, neither patience in misfortune nor firmness in prosperity helps him; seeing that in both heretics are often powerful and the devil deliberately acts as if he were overcome in the first and last temptations, although he is not, if he has only won in the middle or second temptation. For he lets his own children suffer much and be patient, even at times to spurn the world; but never with a true and honest heart.

25. Now these three temptations taken together are heavy and hard; but the middle one is the greatest; for it attacks the doctrine of faith itself in the soul, and is spiritual and in spiritual matters. The other two attack faith in outward things, in fortune and misfortune, in pleasure and pain etc., although both severely try us. For it is sad that

one should lay hold of heaven and ever be in want and eat stones where there is no bread. Again, it is sad to despise favors, honor and possessions, friends and associates, and let go what one already has. But faith, rooted in God's Word, is able to do all things; is faith strong, then it is also easy for the believer to do this.

26. The order of these temptations, as they met Christ, one cannot absolutely determine; for the Evangelists give them in different order. The temptation Matthew places as the middle one, Luke places last, Luke 4,4 f.; and again, the temptation Luke places in the middle, Matthew places last, as if little depended on the order. But if one wished to preach or speak of them, the order of Luke would be the better. For it is a fine opportunity to repeat and relate that the devil began with want and misfortune; when that did not work, then he began with prosperity and honor; and last, when all fails, that he wantonly and wickedly springs forth and strikes people with terror, lies and other spiritual tricks. And since they have no order in practice and experience, but as it happens that a Christian may be attacked at one time with the last, and another time with the first etc., Matthew gave little attention to the order for a preacher to observe in speaking of this theme. And perhaps it was also the same with Christ through the forty days that the devil held to no order, but today attacked him with this and tomorrow with another temptation, and again in ten days with the first and so on, just as occasion was given.

27. At last angels approached and served him. This must have taken place in a literal sense, that they appeared in a bodily form and gave him to eat and drink, and just as at a table, they ministered to all his wants. For the service is offered outwardly to his body, just like, no doubt, the devil, his tempter, also appeared in a bodily form, perhaps like an angel. For, seeing that he places him on the pinnacle of the temple and shows him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment, he must have been a higher being than a man, since he represents himself as a higher being, in that he offers him all the kingdoms of the world and permits himself to be worshiped.

But he surely did not bear the form of the devil, for he desires to be beautiful when he lies and deceives, as St. Paul says of him in 2 Cor 11, 14: "For even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light."

28. This however is written for our comfort, that we may know that many angels minister also to

us, where one devil attacks us; if we fight with a knightly spirit and firmly stand, God will not let us suffer want, the angels of heaven would sooner appear and be our bakers, waiters and cooks and minister to all our wants. This is not written for Christ's sake for he does not need it. Did the angels serve him, then they may also serve us.



# Gospel Sermon for The First Sunday In Lent

## *Invocavit*

### Matthew 4:1-11

#### from Luther's *House Sermons*

Source: Martin Luther, “*Invocavit*,” from Matthias Loy, ed., *Dr. Martin Luther's House-Postil, or, Sermons on the Gospels for the Sundays and Principal Festivals of the Church Year*. Volume 1. Two Volumes. Second Edition. (Columbus, Ohio; J. A. Schulze, 1884), pp. 347-359. Translation by Rev. E. Schmid, A. M., Professor in Capital University.

#### **Matt. 4,1-11.**

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward a hungered. And when the tempter came to Him, He said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord Thy God. Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them: and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord Thy God, and Him only shalt Thou serve. Then the devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.

**W**e learn from this Gospel how the Lord Jesus subsequently to His Baptism was tempted in a threefold manner, after having been without food forty days and forty nights in the wilderness. According to the account given of this occurrence by St. Luke, these temptations continued throughout the forty days, so that He was molested by each one for several days, and

perhaps not in the same order in which Matthew mentions them.

This Gospel is exceedingly comprehensive, especially when applied to the entire Christian Church, which is also tried by hunger and persecution, by heresies and the kingdoms of the world, as can be plainly seen in all her history. We will however at this time not enter into such an extensive consideration of the text, but simply

learn from it a few practical lessons. The experience of Christ after His Baptism shall teach us, in the first place, how every Christian after he is baptized is enrolled in the army fighting against the crafty devil, who makes frequent attacks, and stirs up persecutions all the days of our life. If this bitter enemy does not succeed with his afflictions and temptations, to overcome Christians, he seeks to hang them upon the cross and to murder them as he did Christ.

This peril threatens all Christians. Nor ought we to expect anything else. If he did not spare Christ, but attacked Him so persistently, he will much less spare us, whom he knows to be weak and unprepared. We should therefore be ready to meet this danger when it comes, and learn of Christ how to repel the enemy. This however can only be done through faith in God and His Word. If we put on this armor and use it properly, we are secure against the devil and his attacks; but if we have it not, or are ignorant of its use, we are hopelessly lost, and will become a prey to our deadly enemy.

Every Christian should therefore earnestly read the Word of God and hear it preached, so that he may become well acquainted with it. Besides, we ought to pray incessantly to God to let His kingdom come unto us, to lead us not into temptation, but to deliver us from all evil.

We read in our Gospel that "Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness," that is, the Holy Ghost brought Him thither. This record is made by the Evangelist to caution against all self-imposed service; for Christ did not go into the desert by His own will, nor for the purpose of spending His time there in worship and in a conflict with the devil, as many now attempt to do without any divine command whatever. This ought not to be done. No one should undertake to serve God in a peculiar way, unless he is convinced that God has called him to do so, either by His Word, or by means of men who have, according to God's will, authority over us. He who does this without a proper call, ... does not only not serve God, but acts in direct opposition to His will.

That Christ did not go into the wilderness of His own accord, but was led up by the Spirit, is a fact of the greatest importance and should be well remembered. We should imitate this example, and never do anything through an impulse of our own feelings; but what we do must ever be done in obedience to the Word and command of God. Let us always first ascertain whether God orders us to do a thing, and when we are assured of this, then let us diligently do it, and do nothing without His Word.

The general duties and works of love need no new command; they are already laid down and ordered in the Ten Commandments. We are all enjoined of God to hear His Word, to love Him, to pray to Him, to be obedient to our parents, to love our neighbor, to shun all lasciviousness and to hold matrimony in high esteem. All this is God's will and institution; therefore no especial call of the Holy Spirit to enter matrimony, to become father or mother, is needed. Such matters have all been arranged and commanded of God. ... [If we wish to serve God, let us adhere to His Word only, and shun devotions which are not sanctified by His holy Word.]

We will now consider the temptations in their order. The first one takes place when the devil, seeing that Christ was an hungered, tells Him: "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." This would seem to be no severe temptation. How could it have been wrong for Christ to make bread out of stones? Did He not often perform greater miracles? True; but Christ did not comply with the will of the devil, because He knew well what the meaning of such language was. The devil did not care to have a miracle performed, but, as Christ indicates in His answer, he desired to rob the Lord of His faith and confidence in the mercy of God, and to implant into His heart the thought: God has forgotten and forsaken Thee; He will not even give Thee a piece of bread, and will let Thee die of hunger. Hence the Lord replies: Nonsense, devil! it is written: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

The purport of the devil's insinuation is, to make the care for daily bread the chief concern in life, to the utter neglect of the Word of God. This perverseness prevails in our day, and the devil is ever busy putting into the hearts of men such thoughts as these: If we are children of God He cannot be offended at us. Let us therefore keep on hoarding up our treasures, and engage with our whole energy in worldly pursuits; let us give nobody anything of what we have, but keep all for ourselves; this cannot be amiss nor a sin. God would be an unmerciful and unkind Father, if He would not allow us to enjoy our bread and to gather it. Such reasoning causes many a farmer and tradesman and mechanic to become miserly hypocrites; they continue in their avaricious dealings, supposing that God will not be displeased with their conduct, since they are engaged in securing their daily bread and support. Each one excuses himself with the thought that he must provide for his wife and children, &c.

The devil attempts to cover the wrong with the statement: "Thou art the Son of God." He means to say: It is impossible for Thee to sin or to make a mistake. The world is everywhere so disposed that it does not care for the Word, if it only has bread and raiment. Hence this temptation to make the Word of no account, and to urge people to strive after their bread with such avidity that everything else is forgotten, is the most common and the most successful.

One must therefore be ready to withstand such temptation and to say: Devil, thou shalt not deceive me nor steal the Word of God away from me. I would rather lose my bread, and die of hunger, than to be in want of the Word of God. For it is better that the body, which is nourished by the bread, should perish, than that the soul should be eternally lost. The devil earnestly endeavors to prevent such determination; waylays us with his afflictions and strenuously labors to make us forgetful of the Word of God, and careful only for our bellies, under the specious pretense that God our Father desires us to have and to enjoy food and raiment.

An effective weapon against this temptation is the knowledge of the fact, which Christ here mentions, that there are two kinds of bread. The first and best bread, which comes from heaven, is the Word of God. The other and inferior is our daily bread; this grows for us on earth. If I am well supplied with the former, with the good bread of heaven, and firmly adhere to it, my daily bread shall not be wanting as long as I am in need of it; sooner would stones turn into bread. They, however, who have discarded the heavenly food and busy themselves only for temporal supplies, when they have their fill lie down and die. Their money and farms and goods they cannot eat, but must leave them all behind, while they will endure everlasting hunger. It should not be thus. If therefore the devil torments us with persecutions and want, with hunger and sorrow, we should suffer patiently and fast as Christ did, because it is God's will; but never should we lose our confidence and faith in Him. Then will the blessed angels come to set the tables for us, as we read in the conclusion of our Gospel.

Thus we learn from this first temptation to esteem the Word of God most highly, to believe in it, and to rely on it in times of want and adversity, when thoughts are apt to arise as if God were offended and determined to help us no more. Amid such trials we can find no consolation except in the Word of God. There we have the true bread and nourishment. "He who eateth of this bread," that is, whoever believeth the Word, "has eternal life in Him." Let us never forget this. On the other hand, the food which this world gives, and after which men are so greedy, is of short duration, and vanishes with death. Eternal hunger will follow if man does not while in this world provide himself through faith with that imperishable food, the Word of God.

The other temptation was this: "The devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him: If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee." That is, because Thou art the Son of God no evil can befall Thee, for the angels will be sent forth to prevent it.

This is a severe and spiritual temptation of faith, which is here assaulted from another direction than the one already considered. If the devil cannot produce despondency by presenting to us our sins and the wrath of God, he tries his seductive arts in making us reckless, proud and presumptuous. The devil comes here with the challenge: If Thou desirest to dispute with me from the Word of God, well and good, I am ready! I will show Thee a declaration from this Word, hear it: "He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee;" they must construct a ladder for Thee, "and bear Thee up in their hands." Leap down then; let us see whether Thou hast confidence in this promise of God!

We must regard Christ in this connection as a man, who has His divinity concealed in His humanity. As He hangs upon the cross, a man in reality, full of infirmity, sorrowing and crying for help and release, so we also see Him here, a real man with the infirmities attending the human nature. Hence the devil thought he could persuade Christ to tempt God by the performance of a useless miracle. For this purpose he cites the 91. Psalm, as a proof of the propriety of his demand; but he omits the most important expression, "*in viis tuis*, the Lord shall keep Thee in all Thy ways." The knave thought he could with this quotation perplex Christ, and induce Him to do what He was not commanded. For Christ is now in the wilderness not to perform miracles, but in a state of humiliation, as a man destined to suffer. The devil, in view of this fact, proposes to seduce Christ from His path of duty, to the performance of an unnecessary miracle. But Christ understands the scheme and says: "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." He tells him: Here are steps and stairways, wherefore it is entirely unnecessary that I should leap down. Since I can descend by means of the stairs, it would be wrong to put myself in danger, without necessity and without the command of God. We must here heed this important lesson, that he who departs from the ordinary way of his calling and attempts to do something new and peculiar, without having the command of God to do so tempts God. Monks and nuns act thus when they, of their own accord, select for themselves a

peculiar mode of living, saying that Christ had ordered them to do so when He says: "Leave all and follow me." Thus it would appear that they had Scripture in their favor; but we see in our Gospel that the devil is also versed in the Scriptures, and thus deceives people. The great defect in his quotations is that he does not give them entire, but only so much as suits his purpose; as to the remainder, he is silent and rejects it.

The Anabaptists do the same thing; they quote much Scripture to prove that we ought not to rely upon anything created. Baptism, they say, is a created thing, for it is water merely; therefore we dare not have faith in it nor any confidence whatever. They will not believe that the grace of God is in Baptism, unless they can touch it with their fists. They have the Scriptures, but the mischief is that they do not use them properly. If the Word of God did not state distinctly: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," it would of course be false to look for the grace of God in Baptism. The Word of God is explicit in this when it declares: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Faith and Baptism, the word and the water, belong together and dare not be separated. This, however, these blind people cannot perceive.

Christ answers the devil in regard to his quotation from the Scriptures: I am well aware that the angels of God will be my companions and that they will defend and protect me as long as I follow the way which God has marked out for me. When parents fulfill their duties, when man-servants or maid-servants perform their prescribed labors, God will defend them all from threatening danger through His holy angels. But if they go astray there will be no angels there to protect them; the devil can then easily break their necks any hour of the day, as the providence of God often permits; and it is just right for them, too; why did they tempt God and go upon their own, self-chosen pathway?

No one can understand this temptation who has not experienced it. As the first tends to

desperation, so this leads to fool-hardiness and to deeds which have no word or command of God in their favor. A Christian must endeavor to avoid these two extremes; he ought not to despair, nor should he be recklessly venturesome, but should cling under all circumstances, in full confidence and faith, to the Word and promises of God. The holy angels will then be with us, otherwise not.

The third temptation is a mere *truditio humana*, exceedingly gross and palpable. The devil attempts to lead into idolatry by offering honor and temporal power. This temptation gains much strength from the fact that external holiness is so much admired by our reason, and glitters much more enchantingly than simply obedience to the Word of God. ...

[T]his is a most fiendish temptation; it is a false holiness, and does in no wise serve God. whom only, as Christ here says, we ought to serve. If we do not serve God alone we certainly serve the devil, who may indeed often reward, in the manner proposed by him to Christ, with luxury and ease, with rich incomes and great dominion.

If we desire to serve God we must do His will as revealed in His Word. If we are children we must honor father and mother; if servants, we must be obedient and faithful to our masters; if master or mistress, we ought not to offend our domestics in word or deed, but should endeavor to do what is comely and promotive of piety. Thus will we serve God and not men. His Word demands all this of us; and if the world should call this a service of masters, of parents or of children, of neighbors or of friends, it matters not; it is

nevertheless a true service of God. He Himself has said: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." ...

We cannot serve God except by obedience to His Word. Where this is wanting with its demands, we do that which is our own invention, and oppose the will of God. Hence we cannot hope for a reward from God. He says unto us: I did not tell you to do these things; some devil must have incited you, let him reward you. I the Lord have commanded you to love and obey your parents and superiors and to do good to your neighbors; instead of that you do what I have not ordained, and thus rebel against my regulations. This I will not regard as serving me. ...

We ought always to meet the devil's temptations as Christ did, with the ready and firm response : "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." That is, we should look only to God's Word for instruction, and obeying it we will institute no other worship than that which it teaches. Since we may at all times meet with these three temptations, we should learn from the Word of God how to defend ourselves against them. We must see to it that the care for our daily bread does not rob us of our faith; that we do not become indifferent to our safety by a false hope of security; and finally, that neither money nor wealth may seduce us from the true worship of God, but that we may remain firm in our faith and in the fear of the Lord. May Christ our Savior, who in our behalf endured these temptations and prevailed against them, give us also strength and ability through Him to overcome them, and to obtain eternal life. Amen.

