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# Homiletical Studies

## Epistle Series A

### THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

October 7, 1990

Philippians 1:1-6,11, 19-27

The letter to the Philippians was in all likelihood written during Paul's last imprisonment in Rome and from this setting presents one of the most uplifting and strength-giving testimonies of faith. If a single word theme were to be given to this letter and to this specific text, it would be "rejoice."

It appears that this letter was written to all of the congregations in Philippi (all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons) and therefore was meant to be shared among them. The purpose of the letter was not primarily to thank these saints for their help, though expression of thanks is present, but rather to assure them of the strength of God's love in Christ Jesus and encourage them to hold fast in the face of the trials ahead.

Verses 1-6,11: Following the epistolary opening (vv. 1-3) Paul speaks of the joy of the relationship in Christ that he shares with the Philippians (vv. 5-11).

Verses 12-18a: While these verses are not part of this text, they provide an insight into Paul's focus. In these verses Paul points out the conflict among the saints in Rome regarding his imprisonment. Paul points to two groups, one preaching the Gospel out of love and one preaching the Gospel out of envy, hoping to stir up trouble for Paul. It is at the end of this explanation that Paul gives his focus: "But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached" (v. 18a).

Verses 18b-27: Here is meat for thought. The conflict that Paul struggles with as to whether it would be better to die and be with the Lord or to live and assist the saints is one that every pastor and every Christian must struggle with at some point. Paul's resolution (v. 24) sets up the focus of the rest of this letter—rejoice and stand firm in faith.

*Introduction:* A young parish pastor was making visits to the members of the congregation during his first year. One of his visits was to an elderly lady, well into her eighties. This visit was, unlike many he had made, one to which he truly looked forward because this lady was so lively and happy and encouraging all the time. In the course of the visit the young pastor asked her to share some of the

events of her life. In the course of the next hour the young pastor heard how this woman had lost two husbands in war and four children (one murdered, one killed in an automobile accident, one killed by drug overdose, and one killed in a boating accident). The pastor heard how she had been ostracized by a congregation during a period when she was extremely poor and could give nothing.

As the litany continued the young pastor began to wonder how this woman could be so happy all the time. True, the woman also shared many of the joys of her life, but they were few and far between compared to the tragedies. Finally, the young pastor could not stifle the question any longer and interrupted: "With all you've been through, how can you be so happy all the time?" The old lady looked at the young pastor and with a smile on her face said, "Pastor, you're young yet; but I pray that, when you get to be my age, you will know that faith means being a Christian no matter what happens." It is this conviction of faith to which Paul encourages the Christians at Philippi and that I would share with you today.

### A CHRISTIAN—NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS!

- I. Paul's witness of steadfast faith.
  - A. Paul—a prisoner in Rome near the end of a ministry (v. 7) which included many beatings and imprisonments.
  - B. Paul—a victim of slanderous and envious preachers (v. 17).
  - C. Paul—a Christian happy for the Gospel (vv. 3,18a).
  - D. Paul—concerned about the quality of his witness to the Gospel (v. 20).
- II. The alternatives to steadfast faith.
  - A. From history.
    1. The first century saw many periods of persecution which caused many to forsake Christ in order to preserve their lives and property.
    2. The action of forsaking persecution and then returning to claim full rights in the church created controversy in the early church.
    3. The Spanish Inquisition represents a period when the external church supplanted Christ.
  - B. From our own lives.
    1. "One does not talk religion in the work place."
    2. Church and Bible study are treated as options.
    3. "God is always picking on Christians," or "God does not love us; look at all the problems."
- III. The expectation: a Christian—no matter what happens!
  - A. Faith is God's work and is continued by Him (v. 6).
    1. We need not fear our inadequacies, but may rely on God.
    2. As God's work, faith is victorious.

- B. Faith yearns to be with Christ and lives to witness.
1. The greatest expectation of faith is “to live is Christ—to die is gain” (vv. 21-24).
  2. Faith is witnessing in whatever situation—standing firm (vv. 27-28a).

*Conclusion:* Throughout our lives we will have our faith constantly challenged and find ourselves beset by problems. It is during these times that Paul’s joyous assertion of the power of the Gospel truly comes home to us. You have been given faith by God, and He continues to work in you. Martin Luther described faith in this way: “Faith is a living, resolute, total confidence in God’s grace, a trust so certain that it is willing to die a thousand deaths for its belief. And such a trust in God’s grace and knowledge of God’s grace make a man joyous, resolute and robustly cheerful over against God and all God’s creatures.” So, go ahead, be a Christian—no matter what happens!

G. Travis Downs  
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## THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

October 14, 1990

Philippians 2:1-5 (6-11)

This sermon study is based on all of the first eleven verses of Philippians chapter 2. The optional portion, verses 6 through 11, also happens to be the appointed reading for Passion Sunday, but when included here with verses 1 through 5, they become not only an affirmation of the humanity and divinity of Christ, but also the kerygmatic basis for a Christ-like lifestyle. Thus, orthodoxy and orthopraxis are brought together, as is so typical throughout the New Testament writings.

The New International Version (NIV) is quoted here because of its growing usage within the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. While the Revised Standard Version (RSV) refers to “being of the same mind” (v. 2), the NIV speaks of “being like-minded.” The RSV’s more familiar “have this mind among yourselves” (v. 5) is rendered “your attitude should be the same.” Paul’s appeal for a change of mind, attitude, and behavior is very much in keeping with the theme of repentance in the Old Testament lesson and gospel assigned to this day (Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32; and Matthew 21:28-32). Thus, the suggested title of this sermon outline is “Opting for a Christ-like Lifestyle,” pointing toward a change that is both internal and external, made

possible by God's cross-shaped love, revealed and bestowed in Jesus Christ. The central thought is that, in the midst of many conflicting choices, God enables us to opt for a Christ-like lifestyle—united in His love, practising His humility, and confessing His lordship.

*Introduction:* "What would John Wayne do?" That, someone jokingly claims, is what a former U.S. president would ask when making a tough decision. But before we laugh too loudly, we must confess that our own values are shaped in part by a bombardment of television images of greed, violence, and promiscuity which we are apt to receive subliminally as models of virtue. In a pluralistic world far removed from the like-minded Lutherans of Lake Wobegone, every ethical and theological choice appears to be up for grabs. St. Paul, in today's epistle, brings our Christian commitment into focus.

#### OPTING FOR A CHRIST-LIKE LIFESTYLE

- I. A Christ-like lifestyle means being united in His love (vv. 1-2).
  - A. In a very threatening world it is easy for us to become apathetic toward others and think primarily of our own survival.
    1. It is not necessarily that we are hateful or vicious, just indifferent.
    2. Rather than fostering a sense of community in our church or our family, we are tempted to go it alone (even though a "loner Christian" is a contradiction in terms).
  - B. But to be united with Christ is to be united also with one another in Christ-like love.
    1. This is that distinctive, cross-shaped *agape* love described in today's text (vv. 1-2) and received again this morning through the means of grace—God's proclaimed and sacramental word of love.
    2. This is the love that can change us from "loner Christians" into "lover Christians," united in spirit and purpose, reaching out to one another with compassion (vv. 1-2).
- II. A Christ-like lifestyle means practising His humility (vv. 3-8).
  - A. In a world of fierce competition we are caught up in the proud desire to get ahead of everyone else.
    1. St. Paul cautions us against "selfish ambition" and "vain conceit" (v. 3).
    2. Martin Luther went so far as to define sin as "the self curved in upon itself."
  - B. Christ-like humility can turn our self-centeredness inside out.
    1. Practising Christ's humility enables us to consider others better than ourselves (v. 3).

2. Applying His humility makes it possible for us to look not only to our own interests, "but also to the interests of others" (v. 4).
  3. The extreme extent of Christ's humility is demonstrated in His willingness to come down to our human level as a servant and to die a criminal's death (vv. 6-8).
    - a. Through His redemptive humility our self-centeredness is forgiven.
    - b. At the cross we discover a resource for changing our selfish ambition into an attitude that is more Christ-like (v. 5).
- III. A Christ-like lifestyle means confessing His lordship (vv. 9-11).
- A. In a religiously pluralistic world, there are many "lords" inviting our allegiance.
    1. Young people especially can be vulnerable to the "New Age" movement, a variety of cults, and Eastern religions.
    2. We must also be alert to the distortions of doctrine and practice within the church itself.
    3. We may face personal idolatries that come to us in the guise of "addictions."
  - B. But St. Paul points to our ultimate allegiance by inviting us to confess that the crucified and risen Christ "is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (v. 11).
    1. Christ's lordship is unique; His name is "above every name" (v. 9), even above the names of contemporary gurus.
    2. Christ's lordship is universal, evoking the all-inclusive response of "every knee" and "every tongue" (vv. 10-11).
    3. Confessing Jesus Christ as Lord with our lips and lives is an act of giving praise to God (v. 11b).

*Conclusion:* Surrounded by conflicting moral and theological choices, we cannot turn to our favorite popular hero or heroine for answers. Nor can we simply ask: What would Jesus do? Rather, we ask: What has Jesus done? At the cross he opted for us, enabling us to opt for a Christ-like lifestyle—united in His love, practising His humility, and confessing His lordship.

John George Huber  
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## THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

October 21, 1990

Philippians 3:12-21

In verse 19 there is no completely satisfactory way to translate where the KJV uses "belly," the NIV "stomach," and the GWN "feelings." A common problem among modern Christians is that we undervalue our heavenly citizenship. The goal of the sermon outlined here is to reinforce the joy of that citizenship. The method is to show the superiority of heavenly citizenship to earthly.

*Introduction:* Patriotism brings amazing results. Marine Lt. Col. William Higgins volunteered to serve his country in Lebanon knowing full well the risks. An unnamed, but well-known, Chinese student loved his country enough to defy a line of tanks. Your eternal citizenship is in heaven. How highly do you value your heavenly citizenship? Today Paul reminds us that

### HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP DETERMINES EARTHLY BEHAVIOR

- I. Heaven's citizens strive to keep their citizenship.
  - A. Jesus made you a citizen of heaven already now.
    1. Jesus signed your heavenly citizenship papers with His own blood on the cross.
    2. You are a fruit of the resurrection into eternal life of which Jesus is the first fruit.
    3. You are already a citizen of the perfect world to come.
  - B. You can endanger your heavenly citizenship.
    1. Attempts to wrap the Christian faith in the American flag can distract us.
      - a. America is a passing kingdom of this world.
      - b. America's imperfections are obvious.
      - c. America is as much as this world has to offer.
    2. Sometimes you form a "kingdom" about yourself.
      - a. Self-interest can come ahead of glorifying God.
      - b. Our own feelings determine our behavior.
    3. Those who neglect heavenly citizenship are destined for destruction.
  - C. The struggle in this world is to "keep our papers in order." Striving to attain final heavenly citizenship means the following:
    1. Daily renewal of your baptismal covenant.

2. Daily use of the Word of God by yourself and with your family.
  3. Regular reception of the body and blood of Jesus in Holy Communion.
  4. Living in imitation of Paul's redeemed life.
  5. Daily remembrance of your heavenly citizenship.
- II. Heaven's citizens focus on the Lord of heaven.
- A. You know who has made you a new creature.
1. As a new creature, you no longer worship your own passions.
  2. As a new creature, you know where Jesus has gone (John 14:1-4).
  3. As a new creature, you know who shall subordinate even this evil world to Himself.
- B. You rejoice in the victory of glorified life in heaven.
1. The shame of the cross is now your glory.
  2. Love of your heavenly home will cost you in this world, but already guarantees the joy of eternal life.
  3. The joy of heavenly citizenship is to serve others in this world as Paul and Jesus served.

*Conclusion:* In most of the world you need citizenship papers in good order to travel between countries. You are a pilgrim and stranger in this world. Strive to keep your heavenly citizenship papers in good order for the time when you cross into the Promised Land.

Warren E. Messmann  
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## THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

October 28, 1990

Philippians 4:4-13

The solution to fretful anxiety is two-fold for Paul: Christians need to enter into the intimacies of prayer and worship of God, clearly articulating their needs and looking for the promises of God's uplifting deliverance (both internal and external). The other is to reflect upon those incredible things which God has done for us, both in Christ and in the people and things that God has used to bring us to the faith (vv. 8-9). The text affirms the two-part division through a repetition of the peace formula after each section (vv. 7 and 9). The prior section on prayer forms the basis of the outline, but the latter



section on the “good things” of the kingdom of God is subsumed in the body of the outline.

*Introduction:* The Philippian congregation was upset—perhaps not by any one thing in particular, but probably by a composite of many things simply weighing them down. They had faced ridicule and persecution for their faith. They were being seduced by the compromising Judaizers. The beloved messenger whom they had sent to Paul had almost died in Rome. They had pressing financial needs of their own which were more than likely going unmet, especially when they were being continually asked to provide support for the Apostle Paul. Their spiritual laborers were beginning to fight between themselves. So to the Philippian congregation the Apostle Paul prescribes a remedy: “Rejoice in the Lord.” He says, in effect:

REJOICE IN WHAT THE LORD  
CAN DO FOR US—WHEN WE PRAY

- I. There is much about which to pray.
  - A. We have legitimate fears. There are many bad and fearful things going on about us. (The local newspaper will furnish a quick relevant list.)
  - B. Life does not easily go our way, especially when God’s Word get involved. The power of the Word of God can stir up a pot of trouble when it moves against evil. (An example is the story of the exorcism of the fortune-teller and the resulting beating and imprisonment of Paul and Silas in Philippi, Acts 16: 16 ff.).
  - C. We can become so anxious about our human lives. Our worries can be so tormenting, and often they do not have a specific object to which we can point or about which we can do anything. It is anxiety, perhaps more than any other thing, which drives Christians away from Christ and His kingdom (Matthew 6:32-33).
- II. We have reason to rejoice; we look at what the Lord can do for us when we pray.
  - A. Why do we worry? Anxiety stems from these things:
    1. A fear of weakness. We put our nose to the grindstone to meet tomorrow’s needs. Daily, even routine, matters—food, clothing, friends, work—fill up our day. We unwittingly allow ourselves to become the masters of our little world. One day we realize that we are not in control at all, that we are not gods, that we have no power to guarantee tomorrow’s bread.
    2. Indefiniteness about what is bothering us. We do not even know what it is. We know that something is wrong,

missing. We have moods and feeling without anything to which we can point as the cause or problem.

3. A feeling of abandonment. No one seems to care about us, or at least it seems that no one can break into our world and we feel alone.

**B. Our Lord is able to do so much for us when we pray.**

1. When we pray, we remember that He is the one who controls all things.
  - a. We need not fear tomorrow when we have no fear of the one who controls all things. (Here the gospel can be applied very specifically by the preacher: we have no fear because of Christ's redemption and the acceptance which we have been given by God through faith in Him.)
  - b. Certainly His control comes with a cross! Trouble comes, but God gives opportunities in our problems to see Him work for the good and salvation of others. (One could cite the Philippian jailor and the eventual conversion that took place when Paul and company sought God's help—in God's way—in their unjust imprisonment.) Can we look back and see how God has worked all things for the spiritual strengthening of ourselves and others?
2. When we pray, there is clarification and action. Anxiety breeds on panic, the inability to clarify problems and act appropriately in response to them.
  - a. Certain of God's control, we can calmly analyze every situation from God's point of view. God's Word leads us to see what we can confidently ask of God, as well as how we can respond to those trials.
  - b. We can think of the Christian parents and teachers and pastors that have stood by us in our troubles and worked and labored for our salvation. Have not those clear-thinking and tireless saints also been positive, joyful, praying saints? (Paul expresses joy in Romans 5:1-4.)
3. When we pray, we sing the praise of God, not the lonely blues.
  - a. There are many times that our problems are simply bigger than we are and beyond comprehension. We need peace in our souls just to endure and trust God's inscrutable working.
  - b. God comes to us in His Word and the sacraments of Jesus Christ. His presence communicates God's peace to our souls. In the Sacrament of the Altar, in a special way, God comes to us, forgives us,

communes with us, and gives peace to our troubled souls. We have reason, indeed, to rejoice.

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## THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

November 4, 1990

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5a

1 Thessalonians, probably Paul's earliest canonical epistle, was written to saints suffering direct physical persecution and was meant to comfort and encourage. Thus, it has immediate application and yet is eschatological. Paul's frequent use of "brothers" in the two epistles (28 times) is not based on a "brotherhood of man" as proclaimed by some today. Rather he begins with the fatherhood of God. Through God's choice we have been adopted into the family of God; we are now brothers and sisters in Christ.

In verse 3 the NIV and GWN, with "before God," are more limiting than the Greek. The KJV and, apparently, Paul himself include the whole concept of the verse within the scope of the prepositional phrase. The point is important because of its trinitarian implication. Note that "work," "labor," and "endurance" are epexegetical genitives. One may set the scene with a review of Acts 16 and 17.

*Introduction:* How could Paul think well of Thessalonica? He went there nursing wounds inflicted at Philippi. He was up against entrenched idols in a pagan port. After only about three weeks the Jews forced him to flee on the "nocturnal express." Yet he shows us how to be thankful:

### BE THANKFUL AGAINST ALL ODDS!

- I. Thank God for His gifts.
  - A. You have grace and peace in the Father and Son (v. 1).
  - B. You have the prayers of your pastor (v. 2).
  - C. Your faith is working (v. 3).
  - D. Your love is toiling (v. 3).
  - E. Your hope is enduring (v. 3).
- II. Thank God for the power behind His gifts.
  - A. God's love (v. 4) is powerful.
    1. His love sent His Son to the cross for you.
    2. His love sent His Word into your life.

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- B. God's choice (v. 4) is powerful.
1. He chose you against the odds of these three:
    - a. The devil.
    - b. The world around us.
    - c. Your own hostility toward Him.
  2. His choosing you has won you!
- C. God's gifts are more powerful than mere words (v. 5).
1. Preaching the Gospel is powerful (Romans 1:16).
    - a. The Gospel is explosive dynamite.
    - b. The Gospel is a continuing dynamo.
  2. Preaching the Gospel is empowered by the Holy Spirit.
  3. The Gospel is preached with full conviction.

*Conclusion:* After abruptly fleeing Thessalonica, Paul was very concerned for the newly planted church. He sent Timothy back when he "could stand it no longer" (3:1). When Timothy brought back the good news of the situation in Thessalonica, Paul's pen exploded with thanks to God for His gifts and the power of His gifts. You have the same gifts from your God and Father and His Son. God's gifts have as much power for you as they did for the Thessalonians. Thank God!

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## THE THIRD-LAST SUNDAY IN THE CHURCH YEAR

November 11, 1990

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

The Third-Last Sunday of the Church Year brings the minds of the faithful to dwell upon the so-called "last things," including the return of Christ. This selection lends itself to the concept of preparing for the return of our Lord.

1 Thessalonians likewise carries a strong eschatological flavor. The passing of time moved St. Paul both to act on his concern for these dear Christians at Thessalonica and to rejoice in the continued faithfulness which Timothy found among them. Thus, his words in the pericope encourage the mindset of preparation, both for the prospects of his arrival among them and for the certainty of the Lord's return. It is Paul's role as representative of Christ to facilitate the growth in their faith by proclamation of the word (3:2) and by his visit (3:10).

In chapter 3 Paul employs a typical “commendation and encouragement” format. Verses 6-9 express the commendation; verses 9-13 express the encouragement. As with most of his commendation-encouragement sections, Paul points to the incomplete nature of our life in Christ and, therefore, to the ongoing dependence on God’s grace in Christ. In the text the fulfilment which awaits us in Christ (v. 13b) is the final goal of the words of both commendation and encouragement.

Verse 11: Paul draws these words of encouragement out of his “theology of the cross” in which he sees God’s power revealed in suffering (vv. 3-4). Now Paul prays God’s blessings (even those found in sufferings, should God so decide) upon himself and the faithful at Thessalonica in order to bring about a personal reunion. God (*autos*) is both the focus of attention and the cause of Paul’s ability to be with them.

Verse 12: While the readers (*hymas*) are the focus of attention in this verse, this same Lord is the cause in them of growth in love, the kind of love that exists not only toward one another (since “love” can be a matter of familiarity) but toward all men, the kind of love which Paul assures them exists in himself toward them (v. 12b).

Verse 13: In such a manner (namely, by the working of God which produces love) God is working to establish the hearts of believers in the pure righteousness of Christ that avails before the throne of God and that makes for the holiness of all who are with Christ at His coming (*parousia*). The phrase *eis to sterixai* is an infinitive of purpose (or result; both types of infinitive meanings merge into one where the result is expected). Its source is found in the main verbs in verse 12. The meaning here is that the Lord’s work, which causes increasing and abounding love, has the ultimate purpose of the complete perfection of His saints. The cause of this perfection is not found in the love, but in the nature of the saints as those who are covered with the righteousness of Christ. If it were the love produced by the Lord in the faithful which caused the establishment of unblamable holiness, then Paul would have needed to employ an infinitive of cause (*dia to*). That this conclusion is correct is further supported by Paul’s only other use of *eis to sterixai*, which also is found in this letter (3:2), where clearly an infinitive of purpose is intended.

The text offers excellent fodder for legalists. It can easily be rendered as a prescription for motivating love by exhortations to love, especially if *eis to sterixai* in verse 13 is treated as if it were an infinitive of cause, so that love, even love engendered by the Lord, becomes the cause of establishing hearts in the righteousness of Christ. Such an understanding is simply a reworking of the traditional Roman Catholic view of “faith formed by love” (recalling the discussion of Apology IV). Since there are so many such legalistic

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messages impacting Lutherans today, the text offers the chance to protect one's parishioners from such legalism. The text refers to the return of Christ. Bearing in mind the liturgical calendar, the goal of the sermon outlined here is to prepare for Christ's return. The evangelical declaration of the sermon concerns the certainty of our relationship to Christ and His return for us in the light of our uncertain and fragile spiritual existence.

### THE RACE OF LIFE IS RUN BY THE WORKING OF GOD

- I. "God, we need help in the race that we are running!"
  - A. Christians sense the need for God's help in life.
    1. Unlike unbelievers, they know that they cannot run life's race alone! Therefore, they find explanations for how God helps them in life. They turn these explanations on one another, both explaining the help for the race and "motivating" the running of it.
    2. Out of this sense of need for help flows the almost constant emphasis on "Christian living" in both organized congregations and the "electronic church." This emphasis is demanded by the Christian hearers because of the sense of need.
  - B. But, like all sinners, Christians too think they know the kind of help they need.
    1. "Just a little boost, O God, is what we need!" "Just a little complement, O God, is what we need!"
    2. Moreover, going back to justification is not the help which the sinful nature treasures. "Oh, not that again; we already know that Jesus died for our sins; tell us what to do, now that we are Christians: 'fill us'; let us 'get fed' today!"
  - C. So the very help which God offers through Paul is offensive!
    1. Paul stresses the fragile and incomplete nature of our faith in this epistle (3:1-10). That he should worry about the continued faithfulness of those at Thessalonica, and breathe a sigh of relief upon hearing that faith still exists among them, is offensive to the Christian's sense of self-respect. His compliments are not designed to "boost" the Christian in running the race, but rather to serve as a new reminder of the continued need for the grace of God.
    2. Even here, where Paul's discussion focuses on the concept of "the Christian life," his words turn his hearers back to the actions of God, who, all by Himself, brings apostles to people, makes them love, and gives them confidence in their holy, justified state. To the sinful nature, this procedure remains offensive, even within the Christian.

## II. "God is your victory in the race that you are running!"

- A. The great need is to see your needs rightly.
  - 1. To see rightly is the effect of St. Paul's chapter 3. The needs which the Thessalonians perceived and the nature of Paul's concern which they experienced are refocused around the fragile and dependent state of faith in which they live. Their existence as Christians is spiritual, as also is their need.
  - 2. The Thessalonians needed certainty in the action of God and assurance of His intentions for them. Paul expresses answers to each of these needs both in his words and in the promise of his visit to the Thessalonians.
- B. The victory of justification is the answer to your needs.
  - 1. Justification not only initiates your relationship to God, but it sustains it.
  - 2. Justification has to do with your future, when Christ returns, and therefore your present life, which rests upon the future promise. So justification is an umbrella of the grace of God which covers your entire existence as a Christian and which answers all your needs in daily Christian living.
- C. In the Christian life God's power is at work, causing you to become what you are.
  - 1. Through the means of grace God reveals what you are as His power brings forth the dynamics of your new selves within the context of your present life. Your new selves are secure in the Lord until His return.
  - 2. Thus, you are not running behind your potential; you are not running behind your responsibilities to God; you are running behind yourself. You are already ahead of yourself, and that promise moves us not to sit but to run on with confidence and hope.

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