

Crumbs – Good News for the Diaspora!

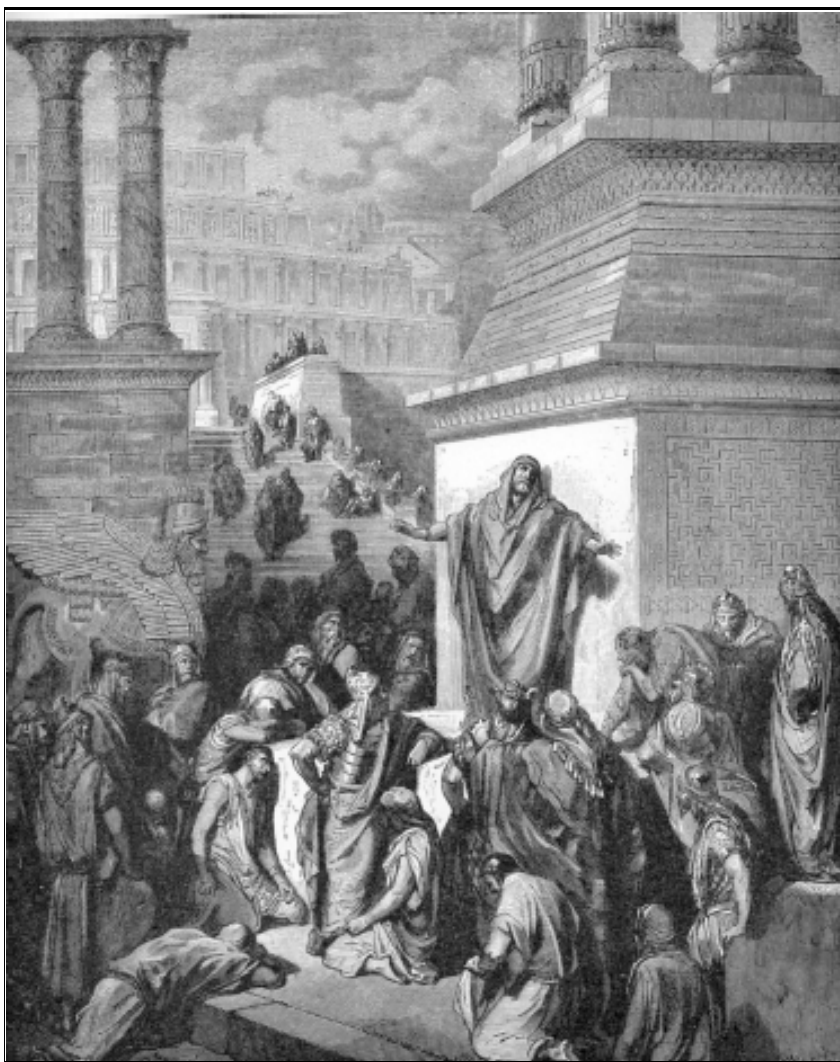


Illustration: Jonah Calling Nineveh to Repentance

A Devotional for the
Week of the Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

SUNDAY.

I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.
– 2 Timothy 1:12.

We have heard so much about believing. What is meant by *believing*? In order to believe in God through Christ Jesus, our Lord, it is necessary, first, to have a *knowledge* of the Gospel. One must be able to say: "I know whom I have believed." For "how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" (Romans 10:14.) And then one must *accept* the Gospel as *true*. He that imagines the Gospel to be a lie naturally cannot believe. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John 3:36.) But, Christian, the devils surely have a knowledge of the Gospel, and they also hold it to be true; and still they do not, in the true sense of the word, believe. "The devils also believe, and tremble." (James 2:19.) Therefore the third and foremost, the most essential part of faith is *confidence*, trusting with firm confidence in that God whom the blessed Gospel has taught us to know.

If you can say: "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day"; if you can say: I know God from the Gospel; I know His grace which is in Christ Jesus, my Lord; I know what by grace, through Christ, He has committed to me, and am persuaded that through it He shall on that great day save me, a poor sinner, – then you truly believe. May God give you such faith and keep you in such faith by grace, through His Word and the Holy Spirit!

PRAYER. – I thank You, O Lord, that through Your Word You have plainly revealed Your divine majesty and Your gracious will toward me, a sinner, as well as what Your great mercy has prompted You to do toward my salvation and that of the whole world. Enlighten me, I pray You, with Your Holy Spirit, that I may firmly trust in Your bountiful grace, relying and depending upon it in life and death, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, my only Savior. Amen.

Hymn 120, 4.

Abiding, steadfast, firm, and sure,
The teachings of the Word endure:
Blest he who trust this steadfast Word,
His anchor holds in Christ, the Lord.

MONDAY.

I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

– *Romans 8:38-39.*

Mark well how confident the Apostle Paul was of possessing the grace and love of God and of obtaining eternal salvation! His was a confidence that excluded all doubt whatsoever. So unshakable was his confidence that many expositors of Scripture think he must have had a special revelation. But just see what he said! Does he speak only of himself? Does he not say "us"? Does he, therefore, not speak of all Christians? Certainly, he does.

Every *Christian* may and must be just as sure of the forgiveness of his sins and of eternal salvation as St. Paul was. Every Christian, I say. I am not speaking of unbelievers. And what must such confidence be founded on? *On God's Word and promise.* God says that for Christ's sake He daily and richly forgives all your sins to you. You know that God says so. Does God lie? That is impossible. Hence you may and must be altogether sure of the forgiveness of your sins. And where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

Hence you may and must be altogether sure of your salvation. But, do you say, what if I fall from faith? Indeed, if you fall from faith, you are lost. But God has promised and assured you that He will keep you in true faith. "Ye are kept by the power of God

through faith unto salvation," says the Holy Ghost. (1 Peter 1:5.) Read once more what the Holy Spirit has inspired Paul to write in the text above. So you must be altogether sure, my dear Christian, that God will preserve your faith. Such confidence, alas! is often clouded within us by the diffidence of our flesh. But always consider again the Word and promise of God. Then this confidence will ever again burst forth like a light; you wilt always regain the assurance of the forgiveness of your sins and of your salvation.

PRAYER. – My God! It is certain that for Christ's sake You do forgive my sins and You do save me. For You say it and You promise it. Therefore, give to me, I implore You, Your Holy Spirit, that I may have full assurance of the same. Help me to have regard to nothing else than solely to Your sure Word and promise. And comfort me and fill my soul with joy over this blessed assurance, so that I may gladly walk in newness of life. Amen.

Hymn 356.

JESUS, Shepherd of the sheep,
Who Thy Father's flock dost keep,
Safe we wake and safe we sleep,
Guarded still by Thee.

In Thy promise firm we stand,
None can pluck us from Thy hand,
Speak – we hear – at Thy command,
We will follow Thee.

By Thy blood our souls were bought,
By Thy life salvation wrought,
By Thy light our feet are taught,
Lord, to follow Thee.

Father, draw us to Thy Son;
We with joy will follow on,

Till the work of grace is done,
And from sin set free –

We in robes of glory dressed,
Join th' assembly of the blest,
Gathered to eternal rest,
In the fold with Thee.

TUESDAY.

I will run the way of Thy commandments when Thou shalt enlarge my heart. – Psalm 119:32.

No man as he is by nature delights in doing according to God's commandments; neither, indeed, can he; for sin has taken possession of him. But it is quite different with one who is justified through faith in Christ. Such a one knows that he is loved by God. And knowing that God loves him, he realizes his sinfulness all the more. In the light of the loving grace of God his sinfulness appears so much darker to him. And that pains him. And notwithstanding all this, he knows that God loves him, and that He sees and desires to see nothing upon him but the righteousness of Christ. And his heart becomes enlarged in view of this great and wonderful grace of God. His heart is filled with consolation, and being comforted, it opens wide toward God and the love of God towards him: and in a heart thus comforted and opened the love to God is born, the love towards Him who loved him first.

And then, yes, then man begins to run the way of God's commandments. "I will run the way of Thy commandments when Thou shalt enlarge my heart." Then there is no need of the rod of the Law, no need of an oppressor, of any compulsion. Within the justified sinner there is a new law, the law of love to God; he is mightily impelled by the Spirit of Christ. And the love of Christ constrains him - it is a sweet compulsion - to do what is well pleasing to Christ, to God. The Law of God no longer needs come to

him from without, as a stranger, with insistent demands; no, it is written in his very heart and mind: he wants to, he really, truly, wants to do it. Justification through faith in Christ is the means, the only means, and the strong and sure means, through which man becomes desirous of doing according to God's commandments.

My dear Christian, do you know this from experience? Do you know what this means: "I will run the way of Thy commandments when Thou shalt enlarge my heart"?

PRAYER. – O Lord, this is my life and my only consolation, that You daily and richly forgive all my sins and thus justify me, a poor sinner, for Jesus Christ's sake. How great, O God, is Your love and Your compassion, which You have promised me to know through Your Word and Holy Ghost. My poor heart can hardly realize it, But, O Lord, I love You and delight in Your commandments after the inward man. O that I might love and serve You better! Help Your poor child – O faithful God – help me! Amen.

Hymn 348, 5.

O Love, who thus hast bound me fast
Beneath that gentle yoke of Thine;
Love, who hast conquered me at last,
Enrapturing this heart of mine –
O love, I give myself to Thee,
Thine ever, only Thine to be.

WEDNESDAY.

The just shall live by faith. – Romans 1:17.

Man is justified before God and saved, not through any work, action, or conduct, but alone through faith in Jesus Christ. This is what our text teaches. This article of justification and salvation

through faith is the chief article, the very heart of Christian doctrine. This is the only saving faith.

This, therefore, is the faith of all the children of God, both before and after Christ's incarnation. This is what Adam believed, and Abraham, and David, and many thousands. This the robber on the cross believed, and Peter, and Luther, and many thousands. This is the doctrine of the Prophets and of the Apostles. By this article of faith the Christian Church distinguishes itself from all false religions. By this faith all true Christians distinguish themselves from false Christians.

If you would be a Christian and be righteous in the sight of God, and obtain eternal salvation, you must hold fast to this article. If, as a Christian, you would be a useful member of God's kingdom, you must do your utmost to have this article retained and preached in the Church in all its purity. As your eye cannot bear to harbor a grain of dust, just so impossible must it be for you to allow this article to be darkened, obscured, attacked, or injured in the slightest degree. By this article alone all true glory is given to God. By this article alone true and enduring comfort is afforded poor sinners who long for salvation.

It is awful how furiously Satan rages against this article through his servants, the false teachers. It is awful how people, both young and old (pity on them!) are led away from this faith. Hold fast, hold fast to this blessed truth, that you are justified before God, and will be saved, not through any work, action, or conduct of yours, but solely through faith in Jesus Christ. "The just shall live by faith."

PRAYER. – Lord, this is Your word of grace for all sinners from the beginning until the end of the world: "The just shall live by faith." This I will wrap about me, as it were; I will hold fast to it; I will die trusting in it, yes, and appear before Your judgment-seat and obtain life everlasting. So help me, O faithful God! Let this Word be proclaimed to the end of days, O merciful God! Amen.

Hymn 311, 2.

By grace! Our works are all rejected,
All claims of merit pass for naught;
The mighty Savior, long expected,
To us this blissful truth has brought,
That He by death redeems our race,
And we are saved alone by grace.

THURSDAY.

Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and to everlasting contempt. – Daniel 12:2.

Everything, yes, everything, and for all eternity, depends on the forgiveness of sins – upon justification.

Think of the great day of resurrection, of which you have heard so much particularly in the Easter season. Then shall the many, the innumerable many that sleep in the dust of the earth, awake. Some to everlasting life; those, namely, who have been justified through faith in Christ. Some to shame and to everlasting contempt; those who died with their sins unforgiven, in unbelief, God-fearing Lazarus was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. The ungodly rich man was cast into hell and torment. The justified shall rise with glorified bodies. (Philippians 3:21.) Those whose sins were retained shall be an abhorring unto all flesh. (Isaiah 66:24.) The justified shall awake unto everlasting life. The unjustified shall awake unto everlasting shame and contempt; and "their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched." (Isaiah 66:24 & Mark 9:44.)

O Christian, always think of the awakening on the day of resurrection! At any moment you may fall asleep in death. Then the awaking! How unutterably awful it must be when one awakes to shame and everlasting contempt! How glorious beyond measure it shall be when you awake to everlasting life! Christian, every evening let forgiveness of sins cover you; every morning wrap the robe of

salvation about you, the righteousness of Christ. Then, then, shall you awaken to life everlasting.

PRAYER. – My Lord and Savior, You do offer me the forgiveness of sins: I accept it; You do give me the robe of Thy righteousness: I put it on. So will I go to sleep when my last hour comes; so will I awaken when Your hour comes. So will I enter eternal life. Lord, let me never fall away from true faith and the comfort it gives. Amen.

Hymn 326, 1. 6.

JESUS, Thy blood and righteousness,
My beauty are, my glorious dress.
‘Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

When from the dust of death I rise
To claim my mansion in the skies,
E’en then this shall be all my plea:
Jesus hath lived, and died for me.

FRIDAY.

I give unto them eternal life. – John 10:28.

Thus says Jesus concerning His sheep, the believers. And what do the Scriptures teach concerning eternal life? They teach that the souls of all believers are with Christ the moment they leave the body in death, that body and soul shall be reunited on the day of resurrection, and that the believers shall thus live with Christ in everlasting joy and glory. To the dying thief the Savior said: "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise." (Luke 23:43.) Dying Stephen said to the Savior: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" (Acts 7:59.) And the voice from heaven said: "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth." (Revelation 14:13.)

And concerning the eternal consummation which the last day shall usher in, when all the dead shall rise, the Apostle says by inspiration of the Holy Ghost: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3:2.)

In the night in which He entered upon His suffering, the Savior prayed: "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold my glory which Thou hast given Me." (John 17:24.) And through David the Holy Ghost prophesies concerning eternal life: "In Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore." (Psalm 16:11.)

– Ah, my dear Christian, let us always cling to these words of life, and trust in them, "though the night of death be fraught still with many an anxious thought." May these and similar words of life awaken in us a fervent longing for the life everlasting! Let us hold fast to the forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ, through which alone, but most assuredly so, we shall inherit eternal life. Ah, yes, let us hold fast to the forgiveness of sins; then we need not be anxiously concerned about obtaining everlasting life.

PRAYER. – Lord, my God, forgive my sins to me for Christ's sake; forgive my sins to me until I shall depart this life. Amen, I know You will do it. And then give to me eternal life! Amen! I know You will do it. O Lord, You beckon me, You call me through Your Word to life everlasting. And You will not disappoint me. O no, Lord, You abide by Your promise. Amen.

Hymn 556, 3.

Exult, O dust and ashes!
The Lord shall be thy Part:
His only, His forever,
Thou shalt be and thou art!
Jesus, in mercy bring us
Soon to that land of rest:

Who art, with God the Father
And Spirit ever blest!

SATURDAY.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us into the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved. – Ephesians 1:3-6.

We know of a certainty that God, in great mercy, with great earnestness, and with great power, through the Gospel and His Holy Spirit seeks to convert and to save every one who hears the Gospel. Hence we know of a certainty that it is man's own fault exclusively if he is not converted and saved. And with like certainty we know that when man is converted and saved, this is exclusively by the grace and working of God, without any merit or co-working on the part of man.

"For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:8-10.)

And from the text at the head of our lesson we learn that we Christians, whom in this present time He has through the Gospel, by grace, made His believing children, and whom He will bring to salvation, have from eternity been chosen and predestinated by God to such adoption of children, and that by grace alone, for Christ's sake, according to the good pleasure of His will. Yes, indeed, when a sinner is converted and saved, it is due exclusively to the grace and working of God, and not to any merit or co-working whatsoever on the part of man. What God in this present time works and effects in us by grace alone, He has determined to do from eternity, moved thereto solely by His grace. How sure we may and should be of our

salvation! God has chosen and predestinated us to this from eternity.

And since you now experience the gracious working of God in you, my dear Christian, you must also be confident that from eternity God has chosen and predestinated you to salvation.

PRAYER. – Lord, my God, it is all Your grace. By Your grace You have drawn me to You and made me Your child. By Your grace, according to Your promise, You will keep me in the faith and give me eternal bliss. By Your grace You have from eternity chosen and unalterably predestinated me, a poor sinner, to the adoption of children and to salvation. Complete Your gracious work in me, O Lord, and keep me in true faith, and let me inherit eternal life for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen, You will do it. Amen.

Hymn 348, 2.

O Love, who ere life's earliest dawn
On me Thy choice hast gently laid;
O Love, who here as man wast born
And like to us in all things made –
O Love, I give myself to Thee,
Thine ever, only Thine to be.

These devotions are adapted from *Crumbs* by C. M. Zorn (1914).
The hymn stanzas are from *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* (1918).
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