

Crumbs – Good News for the Diaspora!

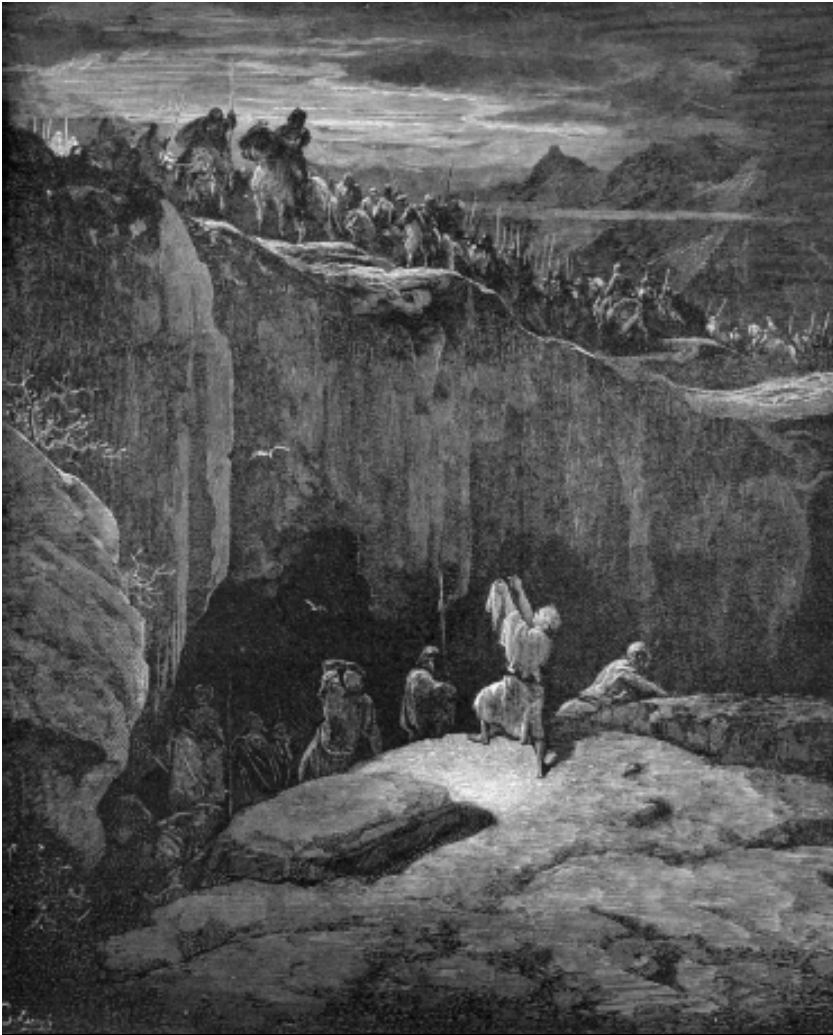


Illustration: David Spares Saul

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

SUNDAY.

Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. – Matthew 5:10.

True Christians, God's children, are righteous, upright, and honest in all their dealings, and they avoid and reprove all unrighteousness and dishonesty. For this reason they are an eyesore to the children of the world, who feel a sting in their conscience when they see them. And the world persecutes them, and refuses to tolerate them, and harms them. But they are blessed, for the Kingdom of Heaven, the blessed kingdom of the eternal God, is theirs.

But *who* in this world is hated and reviled most of all Jesus Christ. And *what* is hated and reviled more than anything else? The Word of Jesus. True Christians, God's children, stand by their beloved Savior, and they profess and proclaim and defend His Word, and follow Him in all things. And so the hatred and reproach which meets Jesus and His Word is turned against them. Men revile and persecute them and say all manner of evil against them. Ah, let them but see to it that there is not a grain of truth in all the evil things that are said about them. Then they may rejoice and be exceeding glad; for just so were the Prophets and the Apostles persecuted, the men who foretold the coming of Christ and witnessed of Him. Blessed are the Christians in such persecution. For then it is evident that the Spirit of Christ rests upon them, and manifests Himself through them, that Spirit whom the Christless world and also the false church cannot bear. And in heaven, which to them is no far-off dream, but a reality near at hand, they shall find abundant solace and reward for every contempt and persecution they had to suffer here on earth. (Matthew 5:11-12.)

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus, my only Salvation, help me to take my stand with You firmly, freely, and frankly, and to profess Your Word, and to let it guide me into all righteousness in this world of

unrighteousness, where You and Your Word are hated so bitterly. And if I suffer contempt and persecution on account of it, then give me courage and the solace of Your Holy Spirit, that with great rejoicing I may wait for heaven, where my home is and the eternal rest awaiting me. Amen.

Hymn 351, 3. 4.

While life's dark maze I tread,
And griefs around me spread,
 Be Thou my Guide;
Bid darkness turn to day,
Wipe sorrow's tears away,
Nor let me ever stray
 From Thee aside.

When ends life's transient dream,
When death's cold sullen stream
 Shall o'er me roll;
Blest Savior, then, in love,
Fear and distrust remove;
O bear me safe above,
 A ransomed soul!

MONDAY.

Ye are the salt of the earth. – Matthew 5:13.

Salt keeps meat from decay and ruin, and makes it palatable. The Savior has prepared and appointed His Christians to be the salt of the earth. They are to keep decaying and ruining mankind from eternal ruin, and to make God's children of them, in whom God takes delight.

How and by what means are Christians to be the salt of the earth? By bearing witness of the Savior in word and deed. Every one

that believes in the Savior should bear witness by word and deed that in Christ there is salvation and righteousness and true holiness. Every Christian should be a constant and active witness of mankind's only Savior. This is the exalted and glorious calling of the Christians here on earth. The Savior says this very distinctly. He says: "Ye are the salt of the earth." But if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? The Savior Himself no longer sojourns visibly on earth. Nor does He send His angels, to do this.

When Christians become unfit for their calling, when, instead of being the salt of the earth, they become inveigled into imitating the ways of the world, then they are henceforth good for nothing; God will then cast them out to be fully trodden under foot by the world; they then become amalgamated with the Christless world and will perish with it. O Christian, be aware of your calling! See to it that on your part you be the salt of the earth!

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus, I am Yours. And because I am Yours, I must be Your witness. And You have made me sufficient to this by giving me the Spirit of faith. Now help me, O Jesus, to rightly know my calling and to fulfill its duties sincerely and faithfully. And grant Your blessing that through my testimony men may be brought to living faith in You. Guard me against losing my savor, like salt will, lest like it, I be cast away. Hear me, O Savior! Amen.

Hymn 366, 2.

Yea, Lord, 'twas Thy free bounty gave
My body, soul, and what I have
 In this poor life of labor;
O grant that I may through Thy grace
Use all my powers to show Thy praise,
 And serve and help my neighbor.
From all false doctrine keep me, Lord.
From Satan's lies and malice ward,
In every cross uphold Thou me,

That I may bear it patiently,
Lord Jesus Christ!
My God and Lord! My God and Lord!
In death Thy comfort still afford.

TUESDAY.

Woe to that man by whom the offense cometh!
– Matthew 18:7.

The word "offense" really signifies an obstruction, a stumbling-block placed in the way which causes one to fall. In a spiritual sense it signifies a temptation, a falling from grace, a seducing from the path of righteousness to a life of wickedness. To "give offense," or to "offend," therefore means to tempt and seduce one to do evil, to become wicked.

When it is said that "offenses come by" some one, it means that one tempts and seduces others to become wicked. No offenses should come by us Christians, by children of God; we should give offense to no one, offend no fellow-man. Neither by word nor by behavior, neither by speech nor by example, should we offend any one, that is, tempt, or seduce, one to become wicked, to fall into unbelief and sin, or to remain in unbelief and sin and be hardened therein. On the contrary, we have learned that we should be the salt of the earth.

The Apostle says: "Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good, to edification." (Romans 15:2.) Hence, if we offend any one, we set ourselves in direct opposition to our Christian calling. And our Savior says: "Woe to that man by whom the offense cometh!" And furthermore: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matthew 18:6.) Let us, therefore, beware of giving offense to anybody! And if by reason of the weakness of our flesh and blood

we have in any way done this, let us hasten, *hasten*, HASTEN to remove the offense by a penitent and unreserved confession.

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus, grant Your grace, I beg You, to me, a poor sinner, but who, nevertheless, is Your own by faith, that I may walk circumspectly so as to give offense to no one, but rather please my neighbor for his good, to edification. And if ever I have offended any one by word or deed, grant to me Your Holy Spirit that I may immediately confess my wrong and make due apology, and thus still prove myself a Christian. Amen.

Hymn 333, 1.

LET us ever walk with Jesus,
Follow His example pure,
Flee the world, that would deceive us
And to sin our soul allure.
Ever in His footsteps treading,
Body here, yet soul above,
Full of faith and hope and love,
Let us do the Father's bidding.
Faithful Lord, abide with me,
Savior, lead, I follow Thee.

WEDNESDAY.

It must needs be that offenses come. – Matthew 18:7.

"It must needs be that offenses come," says our Savior. In this wicked, bad, and sinful world it cannot be otherwise. By word and behavior, by speech and example, there are abundant, yes, thousandfold temptations and enticements to wickedness. You surely know this, my dear Christian. Are you not surrounded by false teachers of all description, by apostles of unbelief and by

scoffers, coarse as well as refined, by sects and fanatics of every hue and color, by followers of Antichrist, by men and women who lead a life of vice and shame, who drink iniquity like water? Must it then not need to be that offenses come? Most certainly!

All the world is full of offenses, of temptation and enticement to evil. And you are brought face to face with these things. But do not *take* and *receive* such offense! Even as you must not give offense, so also you must not suffer others to offend, that is to say, to seduce you, to lead you into sin. Arm yourself in faith with the Word and Spirit of God! Fight the good fight of faith, otherwise you will be lost! Call upon the Lord; He will give you power to conquer all your spiritual assailants.

You must also remember that offenses given you are caused by your own heart, by the members of your own body, and by things most near and dear to you. Pluck them out, cut them off, and cast them from you! With might and main you must renounce everything that would make you wicked. It is better for you to enter into life poor and afflicted than, enjoying all temporal goods to the full, to be cast into eternal hell-fire. (Matthew 18:8-9.)

PRAYER. – O Lord Jesus, offenses compass me about, but in Your name will I destroy them. They compass me about, yes, they compass me about, but in Your name will I destroy them. They compass me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns; but in Your name I will destroy them. They thrust sore at me that I might fall; but You, O Lord, help me! O Lord Jesus, You are my strength and song, and are become my Salvation. And in the eternal tabernacles of the righteous I shall lift up the voice of rejoicing and salvation. Amen.

Hymn 347, 3.

O God, forsake me not!
Lord, hear my supplication!
In every evil hour
Help me o'ercome temptation;

And when the Prince of hell
My conscience seeks to blot,
Be Thou not far from me –
O God, forsake me not!

THURSDAY.

Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him, lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the Judge, and the Judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily, I say unto thee: Thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. – Matthew 5:25-26.

Every one against whom or in whose presence you have sinned, hence, every one who justly has anything against you, is your adversary. Personally he may be ready to forgive and to overlook thy sin, possibly from indifference; but in the eyes of God he nevertheless is your adversary and your accuser. (Genesis 4:10.) And you are his debtor. You owe him an apology, and you must remove the offense you have given; indeed, a truly penitent heart will prompt you to do so. Pay him what you owe! Agree with him! Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are in the way with him." What "way" is meant here? The way to the judgment, which, as far as you are concerned, is immediately consequent upon your death.

How much time, therefore, is left for you to agree with your adversary? You do not know in the least. Death and the judgment may come today; your life or his may end today. And if you have not agreed with your adversary, "on the way," if, in impenitent willfulness, you have allowed the time while you are in the way with him to expire, then your adversary – or, let me say, your guilt – will deliver you to the judge, and the judge will deliver you to the officer, and you will be cast into prison. "The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that

offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 13:41-42.) And you shall by no means come out thence till you have paid the uttermost farthing. But then it will be too late, for then the time of grace will have been spent.

PRAYER. – O Lord Jesus, help me, a poor sinner, who sins so much against his neighbor, to repent this very day, before sudden death take me away, and to prove my penitence by doing to my neighbor as You have commanded me to do. Let me not come into Judgment, O Jesus! Amen.

Hymn 55, 4.

Hasten, O sinner, to be blest,
And stay not for the morrow's sun,
For fear the curse should thee arrest
Before the morrow is begun.

FRIDAY.

But I say unto you, That ye resist not the evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not away. – Matthew 5:39-42.

These words of the Savior are often ridiculed and badly misunderstood. Let us apply them to the life of the Christians, God's children, which they lead among one another. Perhaps your fellow-Christian, possibly by some fault of yours, is overcome with anger, and strikes you on your right cheek. What then is your Christian duty? Should you take revenge? By no means! Right meekly turn to

him the other cheek also. Surely, he will soon see his wrong and love you. And then all will be well, will it not?

Or your fellow-Christian, in the heat and zeal of disputatiousness, positively thinks that he has a right to your coat, and would go to law with you about it. Why, Christian, let him have your cloak also! In so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head and gain your brother, which will be the greatest gain.

Or, perhaps, your fellow-Christian, with an importunity that savors much of arrogance, compels you to go with him a mile. Go with him two! That will tend more to make your brother modest in future than if you would quarrel and remonstrate with him, or flatly refuse his request.

Or your fellow-Christian may be in trouble and wishes to borrow money from you. Should you say: My money belongs to me, and I owe you nothing? No, do not turn away from him in this manner, but give to your brother!

Do you note that what the Lord Jesus says here only emphasizes that brotherly love which is born of true faith?

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus, through Your Holy Spirit grant me that tender consideration and heavenly wisdom of true brotherly love which is born of true faith in You, that I may not in any way be a hindrance to my brother and neighbor, but be serviceable to him on our mutual way to eternal life. Amen.

Hymn 247, 7.

O gentle Dew, from heaven now fall
With power upon the hearts of all,
Thy tender love instilling:
That heart to heart more closely bound,
Fruitful in kindly deeds be found,
The law of love fulfilling;
Then, Lord, Discord

Shall not grieve Thee; We receive Thee;
Where Thou livest,
Peace, and love, and joy Thou givest.

SATURDAY.

Love your enemies. – Matthew 5:44.

It is against our natural inclination to love our enemies. But we Christians no longer are what we were by nature. We no longer are natural men who cannot be subject to the Law of God, but we are new-born men, and through the Spirit of Christ that which the Law demands, all commandments, including that which enjoins us to love our enemies, has become our second nature.

But since we still have the old Adam within us, our inborn sinful nature, therefore the Savior demands our second and new nature to come forth by saying: "Love your enemies." Ah, yes, just because the love of our enemies is so contrary to our old nature, we should remember all the more that we are new creatures, and should listen to the Word of Jesus: "Love your enemies."

For, surely, we wish to do the will of God. It is the duty of Christians, God's children, to love their enemies, to bless them that curse them, to do good to them that hate them, to pray for them that despitefully use them and persecute them.

They should be like to their Father in heaven, who makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust, yes, who caused His Son to die for His enemies. For if we love them that love us, what do we more than even unbelievers are doing? And if we salute our brethren only, what do we more than others? Do not even the children of the devil do so? We must strive after that perfection which we observe In our Father in heaven, and must love our enemies.

PRAYER. – Lord God, dear Heavenly Father, who has made me Your dear child through Jesus Christ, my Savior, and has given me a new heart through Your Holy Spirit, so that now I may know Your holy will and gladly do according to it: help me to overcome the old Adam, the sin that clings to me, and quicken the new man within me through Your Word, that the enmity of wicked men may not excite me to hatred, but that I may love my enemies as You did love me when I was Your enemy. Amen.

Hymn 205, 13.

From them shall I be learning,
How I may be adorning,
My heart with quietness,
And how I still should love them
Whose malice aye doth move them
To grieve me by their wickedness.

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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