

Father and Foes

Repent.

What?

Repent.

That's rather negative.

Let me say it differently. Do an about-face ... you know, ... do a 180.

Do you mean turn around and look in the opposite direction?

Yes. It's not negative.

Right.

What do you see?

A long, winding, dusty road that disappears into the horizon beyond the east.

Well seen.

What is this road?

The way of the church.

What is all of this before me?

The past.

Oh, I see. The farther away from me is longer ago in time?

Yes.

Ugh, church history.

There is no history apart from church history.

But I don't care so much for history?

Why is that?

Well, I must be honest. I don't know how to say this?

Then say exactly what you mean.

History is boring.

Really?

Yes. But tell me, why is the road so narrow in places?

The way of the church is always narrow because broad is the way to destruction. The LORD is her God and He is her only Savior.

But look how thin the way is in places - a path rather than a road.

Yes. Look at the time way back there when there were only eight people in the church.

Is that Noah's ark?

Yes. The fallen ones and the heroes of this world had almost wiped out the church.

Look. There's Moses ... and over there is Elijah. Ahab! The Babylonian captivity. Daniel and the lion's den.

Fathers and foes. Confessors and deniers.

Why does the road zigzag so much?

It's because of doctrine.

Doctrine is boring.

Really?

Yes, but tell me more about doctrine being the reason for that zigzag.

Liars in the world deceived many in the church with false words that kill. False pastors in the church led her on deadly tangents of false practice.

So, the zigzagging is like a time of reformation in the church.

Yes, that's a good part of it.

There's more?

Yes, the LORD God choreographed history and led His Church away from the false gods and the lies of men. By His Word, Jehovah caused her to slalom around the treachery of King Saul and the license of Sodom ... around Pharaoh, Philistine and Pharisee ... through the waters of the Red Sea and over the rocks of the wilderness ... narrowly escaping the curses of Balak and Baal ... Herod and-

Look. There's the manger and the cross and the empty tomb. The Son of God was born. Jesus died to take away the sins of the world. Whoa, there's Easter morning and the risen Savior!

That's the whole point of history.

But the road continued and is heading in our direction. Zigging over there. Zagging back in another place.

Tell me who you see.

Uhh, John and Cerinthus ... Polycarp and Caesar ... Monica and Mohammed ... Athanasias and Arius ... oh no! Look at what happened to John Hus! ... Luther and the Romanists ... Gerhard and Paine ... Walther and Darwin ... Sasse and Nietzsche ...

Fathers and foes. Confessors and deniers.

The road leads here to my feet.

Yes, it does. What does this mean?

I am baptized. God has called me into His Church and made me His heir, giving me forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation.

Absolutely correct. This is the Gospel. God chose you in eternity and called you in time at a specific place to be here right now.

Is all of history just doctrine in practice?

Wow! Very good. To be precise, it is really doctrines in practice, some true doctrines, some false doctrines.

I understand.

Repent.

What? Okay. I was wrong. History isn't boring ... nor is doctrine. I might describe what I see before me as scary, awful, stunning, exciting, tense or breath-taking. But boring is not the word for all of this.

Repent.

What? Oh, an about-face ... a 180?

Yes. ... Now, what do you see?

Really, not much, other than that narrow door appearing on the horizon in the west.

Well seen.

What is that door?

That door is the Door.

Jesus! Jesus is the Door.

Right.

But I don't see the road, not even a path. How far is it to that narrow Door?

I don't know. Not one of us does. It is not for us to know. The Lord knows.

Then that is the future ahead of us.

Right. Is the future boring?

No. It's a bit scary and a bit exciting.

That's true, but the Lord is already there.

Will there be the others?

The others?

Fathers and foes. Confessors and deniers.

Most certainly.

But there is so much that is unknown.

Jesus is not only the Door, He is the Way. Even though the road is unseen, God knows you. He gives you faith to believe and confess the truth along the road ahead; that is, to remain faithful unto death and be given the crown of Life.

But what of the here and now?

Zig and zag. Be in the Word and tell others that Jesus is the Door and the Way.

Telling the Good News while slaloming the course?

Yes. Confess the Savior in a world where there are false gods and shameless liars, the doctrines of man and the false practices of these latter days. Adam's heart and man's will ... Dame Reason and Master Emotion ... unionists and universalists ... seekers and Sikhs ... Allah and Buddha ... synergists and syncretists ... CWs and JWs ... modalists and millennialists ... New Age-ism and old paganism ... civil religion and -

Wait! I don't even know what some of those words mean.

Right. That's why we get to learn not only what the truth is, but also what is not the truth. You will not defend the truth you don't know to be true; you wouldn't fight a lie you don't know to be a lie. This is not boring.

No, but what if now I get it wrong, or get all messed up and find myself, maybe even years from now, down the wrong path.

Repent.

A 180?

Yes, but repentance is more.

Do you mean to be sorry for your sins and to look to Christ for forgiveness?

Correct.

Then will I hear my pastor say, "I forgive you all your sins in the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit"?

I certainly hope so. In fact, insist that you do hear those words from his mouth.

Okay. Wait, I just thought of something.

What's that?

Today is a moment in tomorrow's account of history.

Excellent! You have taught me the truth.

You mean, doctrine?

Right. Thanks.

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