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Outlines for Funeral Sermons

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Outlines for Funeral Sermons.

FEEBLE-MINDED CHILD.

JOHN 9, 1—3.

We are assembled to commit to the grave the body of a child who throughout her nine years of life was physically and mentally abnormal, unable to use her limbs, unable to walk a single step, to speak a single word, to grasp the meaning of any but the simplest words and actions. Why did God afflict this child, why require the parents to bear so burdensome a cross? Briefly relate the incident of the text which led to the question of the disciples. As the disciples turn to the Savior, so let us follow their example, He will answer us and fill our heart with heavenly comfort.

In answer to the question of the disciples, Christ says v. 3. Christ does not mean to deny original sin nor the sinful depravity of either parent or child. Jesus knew full well that all sickness and sorrow are due to sin. The pitiable condition of this child also was due only to the fact that sin has entered the world, a constant sermon on the havoc wrought by sin, the ruin brought about by man's fall. What the disciples had implied and what Jesus denies is the view that special misfortunes are due to special sins. That may be true in some instances. Cp. Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen. 18; Gehazi, 2 Kings 5, 27. But it is not the rule in God's government, nor would such an explanation satisfy, since in many instances there is no apparent special cause for special punishment. Rather we are told: "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." Cp. Job and Paul. Hence we should not look upon special misfortunes and trials as tokens of God's disfavor. Neither should we attach any blame to our fellow-Christians so afflicted. If God has given us healthy children, let us be grateful and lead them to our Savior. If God has given us sickly, feeble children, let us not grumble, nor let us doubt God's loving-kindness, but from the Word of God endeavor to understand at least in a measure His strange ways and judgments.

Our text gives *one* answer which already satisfies to a great extent our inquiring spirit. Christ says that the works of God should be made manifest in this blind man. He was born blind for a purpose. His ailment was not due to blind fate. So the ailment of this child is not due merely to a mistake of nature. True, there may have been natural causes. But, after all, the all-wise God, who has from eternity planned all His actions, has sent this cross to both child and parents for wise purposes.

In the case of this child we see that God's strength indeed is made perfect in weakness, 2 Cor. 12, 9. In this frail, puny body there dwelt

a remarkable vitality. Several times almost on the point of death, it regained health. Although during the last weeks it had partaken of very little nourishment, still with remarkable tenacity, which astonished even the physician, it clung to that slender thread of life. Why? God showed that even in weak bodies He can accomplish marvelous things.

Again note the wonderful grace of God. This poor child could not be made to understand anything concerning its soul's salvation, could be taught no prayer. Apparently heaven was closed against her. Behold the wonderful works of God. Through Baptism He created faith in her. How that was possible we do not know. We know only that Baptism is the water of regeneration, Titus 3, 5. We thank God that He has instituted this Sacrament, by which our children can be made children of God and heirs of eternal life.

This little body will be raised just like other bodies, 1 Cor. 15, 42—44. It is already a miracle that our vile bodies shall be glorified. Still greater the miracle becomes when even such poor, frail, undeveloped bodies rise in perfection and glory. When on the Last Day your daughter will be restored to you, no longer will your heart ache at seeing her deficiencies. Then she will take as keen a delight in the beauties of heaven and sing God's praises as sweetly as any other child.

The works of God are manifest in you also, the parents. In this child God has given you a blessing. What a shock when you realized that all was not well! What bitter tears flowed when you came to the conviction that no cure was possible! What a disappointment when spite of all efforts no improvement was noticeable! Still, behold the works of God. He worked in you submission to His will. You have learned to pray, "Thy will be done." You accepted this child also as a precious gift in accordance with the word of your Savior, Matt. 18, 5. You served this little child as you would have served your Savior, devoted more time and more care to it because of its ailment, and soon found that you became attached to this little child and loved it just as dearly as your other children.

You understand better God's strange ways and judgments and have learned to trust in His love, even though that love did not appear on the surface. Now the Lord has taken your child, has relieved you of all worry for its future, especially if you should be taken away and should be no longer able to provide for its welfare. Truly, in the life and death of this child the wondrous works of God are made manifest. Though a God that hideth Himself, our God is still our Savior. Though Rom. 11, 33 remains true, we praise Him for His power and grace. To Him be glory forever! T. L.

A PATIENT SUFFERER.

Is. 43, 1. 2.

Christians are children of God and as such possess glorious privileges; not the least of these privileges is that of which Hymn 395 speaks. You have made use of this privilege during the past years, during the long sickness of your mother. In your present grief you have come to the house of your Savior, looking to Him for comfort and consolation. He is ready to hear your prayer. He tells you:—

**Fear Not; when Thou Passest through the Waters, I will
Be with Thee.**

These words speak to us—

1. *Of great sorrows;* 2. *Of a greater salvation.*

1.

V. 2. The prophet speaks not merely of shallow waters, but of rivers of sorrow, which threaten to carry one away to death and destruction; not only of one river, but of many. He has in mind sorrows which smart and pain like fire, whose flames leap up and at you, eager to devour you. Such would be the fate of Israel in the Old Testament, such, according to God's will, the fate of all Christians, Acts 14, 22; Rom. 12, 12. Such the experience of our deceased sister. Her life was indeed an almost continuous passing through waters and rivers of sorrow, a walking in the midst of fiery flames of trials and temptations. While in many instances God grants to His children after the stormy day at least a quiet eventide, her last years were years of especially severe suffering. She could indeed exclaim: Ps. 69, 1—3. And despite her prayers her trials were not removed. Or if God rescued her out of the river of sorrow, it was only to cast her into the fiery furnace of even severer trials.

You children have during the past years gone with her through fire and water. To see her suffering without being able to help, to see all your efforts fail, was certainly going through deep waters. Now the grief of losing her who at all times, in spite of her tribulations, was a Christian mother to you. We can well understand that you feel as though you were walking through fiery flames. But fear not! Our text speaks not only of great sorrows, but of greater salvation.

2.

The Lord says: v. 2. Over against the fourfold description of great sorrow He places a fourfold expression of an even greater salvation. "The Lord that hath created thee," to whom you owe your very existence, v. 1, who has planned and determined your life and guides and leads you according to His counsel, is with you. He is the God of your salvation, who has redeemed you and is constantly redeem-

ing you. How often have you experienced His magnificent redemption and deliverance! He has called you by your name. How many endearing names did He give to Israel, and in the New Testament, how many names does He give to His believers, calling them His friends, His sheep, His brothers and sisters, His children! How, then, can we doubt that we indeed are His own? If this mighty God is with us, there are no waters so deep and no rivers so rushing that must not obey His word, no fires so hot and no flames so fierce that will not submit to His command, no sorrow so great, no tribulation so crushing, that must not cease at His bidding. This Lord loves you. You are His own, and no man shall pluck you out of His hand. That is the promise which God gives to all His believers. This promise He fulfilled in the life of our deceased sister. The rivers of sorrow could not overwhelm her, could not tear her out of the loving grasp of Him who was with her. He had given her a cheerful disposition, and many a fiery arrow of the old Foe was turned away with a hearty laugh, many a bitter experience shaken off with a bright smile. Especially in her last days her faith rose triumphant, Ps. 73, 23—26. Even the river of death could not swallow her up. The Lord helped her safely through this river to the shores of Canaan. That same Lord has been, and shall be, with you also. At this very moment He is applying His healing balm; the fire of sorrow, far from harming you, shall by His direction rather cleanse and purify you. Rom. 8, 28. Hence fear not.

T. L.

Miscellanea.

Der Paraklet im Johannesevangelium.

über dieses Wort in seinem technischen Sinn schreibt S. Nowinkel in „Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft“ (Heft 2/3, 1933):

„Der Wortsinne des griechischen παράκλητος ist vollkommen klar. Der übliche Sinn im Profangriechisch ist ‚der zur Hilfe Herbeigerufene‘, das heißt, der Fürsprecher, derjenige, der mit Worten für einen andern auftritt und ihm dadurch hilft; im weiteren Sinne kann das Wort ‚Helfer‘ überhaupt bezeichnen. Dieser Wortsinne genügt auch überall im Neuen Testament, wobei es zunächst hingestellt sein mag, ob er mehr nach ‚Fürsprecher‘ oder nach ‚Helfer‘ hin akzentuiert wird. Das Problem entsteht erst dadurch, daß zwischen dem Wortsinne des Titels des Parakleten und den ihm im Johannesevangelium beigelegten Funktionen ein in die Augen springender Unterschied besteht; das berechtigt aber nicht dazu, den Wortsinne des Titels ändern zu wollen. — Hier ist nun aber zu bemerken, daß dem weiteren und allgemeineren Sinne ‚Helfer‘ doch immer etwas vom Charakter des bildlichen oder übertragenen Gebrauches anhaftet; der eigentliche Wortsinne des lebendigen Sprachgebrauches ist Fürsprecher, Anwalt, mit ausgesprochener Neigung in die Richtung des Begriffes ‚Verteidiger‘ hin. Zwar ist der technisch-forensische Gebrauch ‚ratgebender Bei-