

“The Good That I Would”

Proverbs 11:13-24, Trinity Sunday XXIII

November 15, 2009

Beloved of the Lord.....St. Paul once said, “The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.” As children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, we are made up of two parts, the old man and the new man within. Whereas in the Gospel, God counts and declares us righteous through the merits of Christ, this glorious justification is a judicial act of God which takes place outside of us, apart from us. Justification is God’s work, not man’s, God’s declaration, not our own. As a Judge God counts us as something through Christ which we are not. In other words, though we are still sinful, God through Christ counts us as sinless. Though we are still unholy, God through Christ counts us as holy. Whenever this Gospel faith lives in the heart, there the new man also lives. “Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

What does this have to do with St. Paul’s statement, “The good that I would I do not”? It means that through faith the new man within you will always desire to keep and fulfill God’s laws, but to your great dismay you will find yourself, that old man within, often doing those things you don’t want to do. Hence “the good that I would I do not, but the evil that I would not, that I do.” However, though this be the case let us yet rejoice that FIRST, we are not justified in the sight of God by what we do or don’t do, but by all Christ has done, and SECOND, the Holy Spirit Himself will work with your spirit, “both to will and to do His good pleasure.” Don’t then be discouraged dear CHILD OF God, for a man is not justified by the deeds of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ and “I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me!” With such a background we then say with St. Paul, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man.” Let us now hear His law, that we by faith may do good that we would.

A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter. It is not our business to spread abroad the secret sins of our neighbor nor read all the dirty gossip in those dirty magazines. We should take no delight in our neighbor’s evil, but as much as possible conceal the matter. “We should speak well of our neighbor, that is, we should praise his good qualities and deeds so far as it can be done in keeping with the truth. We should put

the best construction on everything, that is we should cover up his faults and explain in his favor whatever can be so explained.” Jesus did not come to this earth to broadcast our sins to the world. Will we do this to others? Jesus came to blot out and erase our sins from God’s memory with His own blood. In the Gospel Jesus therefore says, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.”

Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety. When those in positions of leadership give ungodly counsel contrary to God’s Word, the people will suffer. But when there is a multitude of godly counselors there is both peace and safety. If we then as Christians struggle alone in life and need help with any number of problems, we should seek the godly counsel of truly Christian friends, our brothers and sisters in Christ, our pastor or elders. Our job is to counsel one another with God’s Word. We should also be sure not to seek advice from the counselors of this world who know not Christ. Psychologists are not of God if they deny original sin and the blood atonement of our Savior. How can they know or solve any problems if they do not know sin to be the cause and Christ the cure?

He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it. If a man with a gun jumps out of his car and asks you to watch it while he runs into the bank, will you do it? If your boss asks you to lie or file papers contrary to the laws of state, will you do it? The point is the devil through worldly friends or employers will urge you to agree to things you know you shouldn’t and then he’ll bring you before a judge in order to condemn you. Therefore don’t make quick or rash decisions when people pressure you to do so. God’s counsel is **He that hateth suretiship is sure.** If you are not sure about something, be sure not to agree. Don’t shake hands with the devil. This wisdom will keep you out of much trouble and your confidence and strength to resist evil will become more sure.

A gracious woman retaineth honour: and strong men retain riches. The love of a gracious woman for Christ will compel her to be kind, tender and gracious toward others. She will retain her honor by all she does or does not do. On the other hand the foolish man esteems strength and riches more important than honor, but on the Day of Judgment all the strength and riches of this world cannot buy one day in heaven. You know that you were not redeemed with gold or silver, “but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh. The merciful man here is the believing man who knows the mercies of Christ. Christ's mercies enable us to show mercy, love and compassion toward our neighbor. God in His grace then rewards the merciful soul, "but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." If we are cruel and mean to our neighbor, God will cause our own evil to fall upon our own head. Proverbs 24 says, "There shall be no reward to the evil *man*; the candle of the wicked shall be put out."

The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward. While it always seems for a time that the wicked have the upper hand in life, soon enough their own wickedness brings them to ruin. **He that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death.** As for the righteous who sow the Gospel seed, their reward comes by God's grace. The blessings we receive on earth from heaven, always comes through the merits of Christ. **Righteousness tendeth to life.** Those who are righteous by faith tend to do and say those things which build and strengthen spiritual life. "Faith worketh by love" and "love is the fulfilling of the law" and "by love serve one another" and "love worketh no ill to his neighbor." There is indeed a spiritual happiness and contentment in the doing of God's will, for "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." Our catechism says, "The new man comes forth and arises as we daily overcome sin and live in true godliness."

They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the LORD: but such as are upright in their way are his delight. The froward in heart are those hearts who delight to walk the crooked path contrary to God's will. Haven't we at times walked this crooked path? But the forward in heart are an abomination to the Lord, morally disgusting to God's holy presence. Those however who are upright and honest in all their ways, keeping God's commandments, such are His delight. Just as newlyweds are happy to do any little thing for one another, so the Lord delights to do for us big and little things. David said, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law *is* within my heart."

Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished. Crime doesn't pay. Sooner or later all criminals stand before the Judgment Seat of God and tremble. But for those who trust in the merits of Christ, **the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.** God will

not punish, but deliver our children! Our heavenly Father promises to guard and protect them from evil, "all this purely out of fatherly divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me."

As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion. Just as you cannot make a pig pretty by putting a gold ring in his nose, so a pretty woman is as ugly as a pig in God's sight if she has no modesty, if she reveals what ought not be revealed. As a rule Christian women are not the most beautiful women in the world, but in the sight of God by faith they are indeed most beautiful to the Lord above and precious. You are His beloved Bride dear Mary, dear Martha, dear Magdalene....and isn't He your Beautiful Savior? What is the beauty He desires of you....dear daughter of Zion? I Peter 3 answers, "the hidden man of the heart,.....even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. When we in faith give and scatter our monies to those in true need, we give to the Lord. Proverbs 19 says, "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again." When God gives us a gift, He at the same time tests our faith in His grace. Therefore when we hoard every cent out of fear of the future, how will we help those in the present? While it is not a sin to save, indeed it is wise, if we hold back more than is meet, God can bring poverty. It is by His grace alone we are able to scatter our monies in every direction yet "our cup runneth over", the well never goes dry, and the barrel of meal is not diminished.

Beloved of the Lord, by the words of our text today let us sincerely confess we have been unfaithful stewards of God's gifts and talents, but then let us receive by faith the merits of our Savior. Though there will always be within that struggle between the old man and the new "till death do we part", "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" and "He that believeth on Him is not condemned." Place your faith in His blood, His merits, and you will find all the strength you need to do the good that you would. "Blessed *is* the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Amen.