

The Victory of Christ For the Pastor and His Own Personal Warfare in the Light of 1 Timothy 3:1-7

[MN District Pastoral Conference, Resurrection Lutheran Church, Rochester, MN, May 3, 2000]

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One of my favorite mission festival texts is Mark 5:1-20. In this account Jesus drives a whole legion of evil spirits out of a demon-possessed man and then urges him to go back to his own people and to tell them how much the Lord has done for him and how he has had mercy on him. This account vividly demonstrates that there is a very real devil with very real power but that there is also a very real Christ with even greater power. He came into this world to do battle for us, to “destroy the devil’s work,” as St. John tells us (1 Jn 3:8). Christ’s empty tomb is God’s testimony to us that “the strife is o’er, the battle done” (CW 148).

Satan no longer has free reign over us. Yet all of us are well aware that, though the “Strong One” has prevailed (cf. Lk 11:22) and “the One who is in us is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 Jn 4:4), we still aren’t home free. The old evil foe still means deadly woe. Deep guile and great might are still his dread arms in fight, as he seeks to regain the territory Christ has conquered. Hence the need to claim the victory of Christ for ourselves daily.

If this is important for every Christian to do, it is doubly important for ministers of the gospel who are called upon to “set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity” (1 Tm 4:12). Appropriating and applying to ourselves the victory of Christ—that is the topic before us. Our intent in this paper is to make some personal, practical, and pastoral applications to this subject as we consider

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Quite correctly, the title of this presentation assigned to me puts the victory of Christ out front. That’s where it should be. As we engage in daily personal warfare with Satan and all the demonic powers residing in the world and right within our own sinful flesh, we will never want to forget that Jesus has already won the victory for us. We will want to remember that it is just a matter of appropriating that victory, claiming for ourselves by faith both the pardon and the power that is ours by virtue of our Savior’s perfect life and willing death as our Substitute and his triumph over death and the grave.

For the sake of a logical progression of thought, however, my intent is to begin with the second part of this topic first. We’re going to look first at the pastor’s personal warfare and then at the victory of Christ for the pastor in the midst of this warfare. As we make our way through our topic in this fashion, however, I urge you to keep Jesus’ victory in your minds and in your hearts at all times as a constant reminder that no matter how strong the enemy is, Christ is stronger, and no matter how deep the pit into which Satan might throw you, Jesus Christ is there to pull you out and set you once again on level ground.

First, then,

I. For the Christian Pastor There Is Warfare

It’s true, of course, that every Christian wages battle daily against Satan. Every Christian must say with the hymnwriter:

I walk in danger all the way;
The thought shall never leave me
That Satan, who has marked his prey,
Is plotting to deceive me.

This foe with hidden snares
May seize me unawares
If e'er I fail to watch and pray;
I walk in danger all the way.

As mentioned above, however, the pastor bears a double responsibility in this battle, for he is a shepherd of souls. How he responds to Satan's attacks will have an effect not just on himself but on the members of his flock, as St. Paul tells Timothy, "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself *and your hearers*" (1 Tm 4:16). The pastor, therefore, as he fights the good fight of faith, will do so aware of the fact that it is not just *his* soul that Satan seeks to destroy but the souls of the children of God whose lives will be affected by the things their pastor does or does not do.

With that by way of background, we look now at the warfare the Christian pastor faces. Those who assigned this paper asked me to approach this subject in light of 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Paul's well-known list of qualifications for the *ἐπίσκοπος, πρεσβύτερος*, the overseer/elder, an office in the early church that we can equate somewhat with today's pastoral office. As we look at the qualifications for ministry St. Paul sets down in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, remember that Satan's goal is to produce precisely the opposite of each of these traits so that he might disturb and ultimately destroy the faith of the pastor and of those whom he is called to shepherd. But remember especially that in Christ there is victory. After we have worked our way through 1 Timothy 3:1-7, we will explore how we can continually claim that victory as our own.

Verse I Πιστὸς ὁ λόγος. Εἴ τις ἐπίσκοπῆς ὀρέγεται, καλοῦ ἔργου ἐπιθυμεῖ, "*Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.*" (NIV translation here and throughout)

This is one of the five "faithful sayings" in the Pastoral Epistles. It is good and proper to set one's heart on (lit., "to stretch oneself out toward") being a spiritual leader, a pastor. Serving as a pastor, says Paul, is a *καλὸν ἔργον*, a "noble task." It is a splendid calling. What more splendid calling can children of God have than to be "entrusted" with the "glorious gospel of the blessed God" (1 Tm 1:11), to be called to serve as our Lord's own "teachers" and "heralds" (1 Tm 2:7)!

It is precisely because of what the pastor is called to do and be, of course, that Satan works feverishly to nullify the pastor's work. A pastor is a teacher (*διδάσκαλος*). A pastor is a herald (*κῆρυξ*). His message as teacher and herald is the gospel, the good news of "the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death, and has brought life and immortality to light" (2 Tm 1:11). This is the last thing Satan wants people to hear and believe. He knows he cannot defeat Christ directly. Our Lord's "It is finished!" on the cross and his empty tomb put an end forever to any illusions Satan might have had about destroying the One who had come to destroy him.

So, what does Satan do? He goes after the messengers. "Christ Jesus destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light *through the gospel*," says Paul (2 Tm 1:11). It all goes together, doesn't it? Christ's work of redemption will mean nothing apart from the transmission of the message of redemption. Satan, therefore, seeks to put barriers in the path of the transmission of the gospel. Think of the large percentage of the world's population today that lives in places where Satan uses the government to prohibit the gospel from being freely preached.

In nations such as ours, where the gospel does have free course, Satan uses other tactics to keep people from being set free by it. He isn't stymied when one avenue is closed to him. One of his tactics is to distort the message to such a degree that the gospel is no longer present. Then it will make no

difference how many people hear it and how persuasively it is proclaimed. If it's not the gospel, it will have no power at all to rescue people from Satan's clutches.

Where the gospel is permitted to be preached and where it is present in its God-given truth and purity, Satan uses yet another tactic to keep it from fulfilling its God-intended purpose: He works at discrediting the messenger. This is his roundabout way of getting back at Christ. If he succeeds in discrediting the messenger, this can result in doubt and denial of the message that comes from the messenger's lips. And if people doubt and deny the message, then Satan has won. For there is no freedom from Satan, there is no new life, apart from faith in the gospel, or, more precisely, faith in the Christ who is revealed only in the gospel.

This underscores the significance of the list of qualifications for the ἐπίσκοπὴ (office of overseer) Paul sets down in his first letter to Timothy. While, as has often been stated, we cannot make the gospel any more effective than it already is, we can get in its way. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians, "We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our [literally, 'the'] ministry will not be discredited" (2 Cor 6:3). Satan's desire, of course, is just the opposite. He rejoices when ministers of the gospel put stumbling blocks in people's paths so that the ministry (and the gospel, which is the heart and center of the ministry) is discredited. It can hardly be stated too often and too strongly that what is at stake in the pastor's personal spiritual warfare is not just his own spiritual well-being but that of his flock and potential flock as well. In that light let us now take a serious and sober look at the qualifications for ministry Paul sets down in 1 Timothy 3.

Verse 2 δεῖ οὖν τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνεπίλημπτον εἶναι, "*now the overseer must be above reproach*"

Note the present tense δεῖ. In what follows Paul is talking about ongoing qualifications. At the time of his call the minister of the gospel should be "above reproach," and he should also be "above reproach" as he carries out his ministry. "Above reproach" is a translation of the Greek word ἀνεπίλημπτος, a verbal adjective derived from ἐπιλαμβάνω, "to take hold of." Here it is used with an α (+ν), which negativises it. Literally, α(ν)επίλημπτος pictures one who "can't be taken hold of." Perhaps the translation that captures best the etymology of the word is "unassailable," with its dictionary meaning of "not capable of being seized successfully." Lenski describes the ἀνεπίλημπτος ἐπίσκοπος ("irreproachable overseer") as a man "of such a character that no one can rightfully take hold of the person with a charge of unfitness." George Knight, in his thorough commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, pictures the ἀνεπίλημπτον ἐπίσκοπον in the following way: He is "irreproachable, in the sense of not open to attack or criticism in terms of his Christian life in general and in terms of the characteristics that follow."

As Knight indicates, ἀνεπίλημπτος, "unassailable," "irreproachable," is the heading for this section. (In my Bible I have put a colon after ἀνεπίλημπτος to indicate this.) The thirteen qualities that follow describe what it means to be ἀνεπίλημπτος.

Qualification #1: μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἀνὴρ, "*the husband of but one wife*"

There are a number of interpretations as to what Paul means with these words. One interpretation: The ἐπίσκοπος must be a married man. Though possible grammatically, it is an unlikely translation since it in effect ignores the μιᾶς in μιᾶς γυναικὸς. In addition, such an interpretation is contradicted by the fact that Paul himself was unmarried.

A second interpretation: The *ἐπίσκοπος* can be married only once. Hence, he would not be permitted to remarry, even if he were the “innocent” party in a divorce or if his wife died. While once again the interpretation “married only once” fits grammatically, it does not square with the rest of the Scriptures, which do permit the “innocent” party in a divorce to remarry (Mt 19:9; 1 Cor 7:15) and do permit a person to remarry upon the death of his spouse (Ro 7:1-3; 1 Cor 7:39).

A third interpretation: The *ἐπίσκοπος* must not be a polygamist, i.e., he must be the husband of one wife at a time. Again, this is possible grammatically and may well be a part of what Paul means to say. Historians, however, tell us that polygamy was against the law and thus practiced by very few in the Roman Empire at that time and therefore was not a contemporary problem. In addition, Paul uses basically the same phrase in 1 Timothy 5 to describe the quality Timothy should look for in a woman who is called to serve in the church. She should be *ἐνὸς ἀνδρὸς γυνή*, “the wife of one husband.” Though there may have been some cases of polygamy, polyandry was not practiced in the first century Graeco-Roman world. It is clear, then, that Paul has something more in mind than polygamy.

A fourth interpretation, one that would include but go farther than being a prohibition of polygamy, is that Paul is requiring the *ἐπίσκοπος* to be faithful to the one wife God has given to him, that he is to be a “one woman man.” This interpretation does not do injustice to the grammatical construction and it fits in well with the tenor of Paul’s times. (Recall the exhortation given to the Gentile believers at the Jerusalem Council to “abstain ...from sexual immorality,” which so permeated the Graeco-Roman world, Ac 15:29.)

This interpretation applies to our time also. When we study this phrase with the Middlers in our Pastoral Epistles course, I usually put two words onto the chalkboard: “sex” and “money” (see verse 3, *ἀφιλάργυρον*, “not a lover of money”). And I tell the class, “In years to come one or more of you will no longer be in the ministry because you crossed the boundary God has set in one or the other of these two areas.” Relatively few of our WELS pastors are forced to resign because of false doctrine. Satan trips up a much larger number of them by succeeding in getting them to put their fingers into the till or to ignore the exhortation to be a “one-woman man” whose eyes are for his wife only. A new twist on this in recent times is Internet chat room unfaithfulness, where a woman other than one’s wife becomes in effect a husband’s “best friend,” the person in whom he confides those things that are properly reserved for conversation between husband and wife alone.

Is it purely by chance that Paul places this qualification at the very top of his list? I think not. No one has to tell you what failure of the pastor to be a “one-woman man” does to himself, his wife, his family, his congregation, and his community.

Qualification #2: *νηφάλιος*, “temperate”

νηφάλιος is derived from *νήφω*, which means “to be sober.” In light of the *μὴ πάροινον*, literally, “not alongside of wine,” that follows in verse 3, *νηφάλιος* here undoubtedly has the figurative meaning of “sober-minded.” It is the same word that Peter uses to warn all Christians against the attacks of the roaring lion, Satan, who seeks to devour them: “Be self-controlled [“sober-minded,” *νήψατε*] and alert [*γρηγορήσατε*]” (1 Pt 5:8).

Paul counsels Timothy and us here to watch out for spiritual “flightiness.” He exhorts us to keep our feet on the ground, to be careful that we don’t get caught up in every new wind of doctrine, in every “new and improved” way of doing things. A congregation should be able to trust its pastor to lead it on a solid path.

Qualification #3: σώφρων, “self-controlled”

This quality is quite similar to being νηφάλιος. In 1 Peter 4:7 the two words are put side by side: Πάντων δὲ τὸ τέλος ἤγγικεν. σωφρονήσατε οὖν καὶ νήψατε εἰς προσευχάς, “The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.” Literally, σώφρων means to be “sound minded.” It is used in its literal sense in the account of the healing of the Gerasene demoniac, who, after Jesus had driven the evil spirits out of him, is described as being “in his right mind,” σωφρονοῦντα (Mk 5:15). In the verses we are considering (throughout the Pastoral Epistles, in fact) the best translation of this word might be “of sound judgment.” It is a favorite word of Paul in the Pastoral Epistles. In fact, ten of the fifteen uses of various forms of σωφρονέω in the New Testament are found in the Pastorals.

Ἐπιεικὴ διδασκαλία, “sound, healthy doctrine,” found nine times in the Pastoral Epistles, and σωφροσύνη, “sound judgment,” being able to analyze what is called for in a given situation and then to shape one’s conduct accordingly, are Paul’s two major emphases in his letters to Timothy and Titus. The congregation rightfully looks to its pastor for sound judgment. Σωφροσύνη is a call to think before we act so we don’t have to backtrack on something we have said or done. One cannot do that too many times without losing the confidence of his people with the resultant inability to function well as their shepherd. In that, Satan would rejoice.

Qualification #4: κόσμιος, “respectable”

Κόσμιος is derived from κόσμος, “an apt and harmonious arrangement,” “order.” The International Critical Commentary links σώφρων and κόσμιος together as describing the “quiet, orderly citizen, the antithesis of ἀτακτος [‘disorderly’].” Paul is talking here about an organized, planned approach to one’s life and ministry, which, of course, will always at the same time humbly say, “d.v.,” “as God wills.” Satan likes to see pastors “winging it,” haphazardly flitting from one thing to another, consuming a lot of time and energy which could be used for nourishing souls with the gospel. An unkempt, disheveled personal appearance, an office and desk that are always in total disarray, as well as boorish manners and speech these are also forms of disorderliness and can get in the way of people taking seriously the message that the pastor is called to proclaim.

Qualification #5: φιλόξενος, “hospitable”

Literally, “a lover of strangers,” this qualification was of special importance to the early church as evangelists traveled from place to place to bring the gospel to people who had not heard it before. The Apostle John reminded his readers that “it is for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans,” lest they think that they were doing this for personal gain. He urges his readers “to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth” (3 Jn 7-8).

Since we are living in different times, we are not likely to have the opportunity to practice the exact same kind of hospitality as practiced in the New Testament church. What we can do, however, is display a warm and welcoming spirit toward all. We can take care that we do not exhibit partiality, that we do not favor certain groups or cultures or individuals, both in the congregation and outside the congregation, and by so doing erect a wall between ourselves and those who perceive that we find no great joy in ministering to them.

Qualification #6: διδακτικός, “able to teach”

The ἵκος suffix has the idea of fit, able, capable. It is the only *skill* that Paul mentions in these verses. All of the other qualifications are qualities, describing the kind of person the pastor needs to *be*. This qualification speaks of what he must be able to *do*.

When Paul says that the pastor needs to be διδακτικός, however, he is talking about more than the possession and use of a skill. The pastor teaches not his word, but God’s Word. He does not teach ideas that he dredges up from within himself (“We do not preach ourselves,” says Paul in 2 Cor 4:5), but truths that the all-holy, all-merciful God has revealed. The pastor is God’s conduit to the minds and hearts of the people of his flock and to the minds and hearts of “other sheep” God intends to bring into his flock. A διδακτικός pastor, therefore, will of necessity be constantly in the Word himself, for he knows that he cannot *give* from God that which he is not *receiving* from God, that he cannot pour *out* to others that which is not being poured *in* to him.

What about our soul-feeding time, our devotional life, brothers? Martha-like bustling with busyness rather than Mary-like engaging ourselves in the Lord’s business is an occupational hazard of pastors, one which Satan rejoices to see. He doesn’t mind seeing us hurrying and scurrying, hustling and bustling, putting in 60+ hour weeks, as long as we don’t spend too many of those over-stressed hours immersed in the “one thing needful.” The διδακτικός, “able to teach” pastor is the pastor who is also being taught. If the “being taught” part is deficient, the “teaching” part will be also.

Verse 3 μὴ πάροινον μὴ πλήκτην, ἀλλὰ ἐπιεικῆ ἄμαχον ἀφιλάργυρον, “not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money”

Qualification #7: μὴ πάροινος, “not given to drunkenness”

Literally, “not alongside of wine,” πάροινος pictures a person who does not properly control his use of alcoholic beverages. It is true that, as Paul tells Timothy, “Everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected” (1 Tim 4:4) This would include wine, which “gladdens the heart of man” (Ps 104:15). Yet how often don’t the Scriptures warn against the misuse of this gift of God! Paul lists “drunkenness” as one of the “works of the flesh” (Ga 5:21).

People will have trouble seeing a spirits-filled man as a Spirit-filled man, a man of God to whose words they need give heed. “‘Everything is permissible for me’—but I will not be mastered by anything” (1 Cor 6:12). If any of us recognizes that he has a problem in this area, that he is being mastered by something over which he should be exerting mastery, is he seeking help? If any of us recognizes this problem in a brother pastor, are we in love speaking to him about it?

There may even be times, as we all know, when we curtail totally the freedom we have to drink alcoholic beverages even in proper moderation. “‘Everything is permissible for me’—but not everything is beneficial” (1 Cor 6:12). “It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall” (Ro 14:21). Paul’s point, of course, is that we will want to permit nothing in our lives to hinder the gospel from doing its desired work, both in our own hearts and in the hearts of our hearers.

Qualification #8: μὴ πλήκτης, ἀλλὰ ἐπιεικῆς, “not violent, but gentle”

Derived from πλήσσω, “to strike a blow,” a πλήκτης is a pugnacious man, a bully. One can be a πλήκτης with words also, misusing his position as pastor by bullying people around to get his way. “Not

lording it over [κατακυριεύοντες] those entrusted to you,” says Peter, “but being examples to the flock”—that is the mark of a Christ-like shepherd (1 Pt 5:3).

Paul adds the words ἀλλὰ ἐπιεικής, “but gentle.” BAGD’s first translation of the word is “yielding.” This doesn’t mean being a “reed swayed by the wind” (Mt 11:7). It does mean one who does not insist on getting his own way on every issue, but only on those matters where God has clearly spoken. Then it’s not *his* way on which he is insisting, but *God’s* way. We think, for example, of how St. Paul refused to permit Titus to be circumcised but did not fight that same battle with regard to Timothy because the truth of the gospel was not at stake. An ἐπιεικής pastor saves his battles for when they are needed. He doesn’t waste all his ammunition to win minor, unimportant skirmishes.

Qualification #9: ἀμαχος, “not quarrelsome”

“Blessed are the peacemakers,” said Jesus (Mt 5:9). The μάχος (“quarrelsome”) man is just the opposite. He is argumentative. He is always looking for a fight. You can usually count on there being at least one such person in the congregation, the one who seems to be against everything, who always votes “No” when everyone else votes “Yes” and “Yes” when everyone else votes “No.” The pastor shouldn’t be a second such person in the congregation. He is called upon to be ἀ-μάχος, not quarrelsome or contentious, but rather one who will help to keep the peace.

Qualification #10: ἀφιλάργυρος, “not a lover of money”

In St. Peter’s well-known words, words that are read at every ordination and installation, “shepherds of God’s flock” are exhorted not to be “greedy for money [αἰσχροκερδῶς], but eager to serve” (1 Pt 5:2). As mentioned earlier, greediness for money (and the things money can buy) have led some pastors to go so far as to take for themselves money that is not theirs. When their crime has come to light, they have found themselves out of the ministry and the name of Christ has been sullied in the congregation and community. That is why students at the Seminary are urged not to put themselves into temptation’s path by handling congregational money. What you don’t have access to, you can’t take.

But there is, of course, something deeper in this quality of being ἀφιλάργυρος. It not only has to do with not being a swindler or a thief, but with being content with what God has given you. Paul talks about that just a few chapters later in 1 Timothy:

Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing [literally, “covering,” i.e., clothing to cover our body and a roof over our heads], we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs (1 Tm 6:6-10).

Lack of contentment with one’s lot in life, greed (πλεονεξία, a constant desire to have more), envy of another’s wealth or possessions or position, can consume a person and is idolatry (Co 3:5). “A god,” says Luther, “means that from which we are to expect all good and to which we are to take refuge in all distress” (LC 2). Who, what, is our refuge, our source of contentment, things or God? Especially in our materialistic American society, where television shows called “Greed” attract a huge following, we have

to keep asking ourselves that question; for you cannot serve the true God and the god called “Mammon” at the same time (Mt 6:24).

Verses 4-5: τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου καλῶς προϊστάμενον, τέκνα ἔχοντα ἐν ὑποταγῇ, μετὰ πάσης σεμνότητος. εἰ δέ τις τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου προστῆναι οὐκ οἶδεν, πῶς ἐκκλησίας θεοῦ ἐπιμελήσεται, “*He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?)*”

Qualification #11: τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου καλῶς προϊστάμενος, “*one who manages [literally, ‘stands in front of, leads’] his own family well*”

Paul argues here from the lesser to the greater. It’s not that the family is somehow a less important entity than the congregation, but that it is the smaller grouping of the two. If one is unable to lead his family well so that both his wife (Eph 5:22) and children display a godly submission (ὑποταγήν) to his loving leadership, then how can he be expected to lead a whole congregation?

If the pastor is to manage his family well, he cannot be an absentee father and husband. He cannot abandon the responsibility of raising his children and put it into the hands of his wife. We all know that the mandate of Ephesians 6:4 not to “exasperate” our children but to bring them up in the “discipline and instruction of the Lord” is addressed, not to mothers, but to fathers—and that includes fathers who also happen to be pastors. The pastor who does not spend time on a regular basis with wife and family because he is so busy at church needs to rethink his priorities, remembering that God has made him a husband and father as well as a pastor. He needs to be faithful, therefore, to all three of these God-given roles. (By the way, few are the fathers who, after their children are grown and gone from home, will say, “I wish I would have spent *less* time with my kids”!)

Verse 6: μὴ νεόφυτον, ἵνα μὴ τυφωθείς εἰς κρίμα ἐμπέσῃ τοῦ διαβόλου, “*He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil*”

Qualification #12: μὴ νεόφυτος, “*not a recent convert*”

We don’t have to spend much time on this qualification since none of us are new converts (νεόφυτοι, “newly planted”). In these words, however, there is a warning against conceit (τύφος is smoke; τύφω has the picture in it of being puffed up with pride), which can trip up any pastor. Later in his letter to Timothy, Paul uses this same word as a description of those who think that *their* word is superior to *God’s* Word: “If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited [τετύφωται] and understands nothing” (1 Tm 6:3-4). To think that anything *I* have to say is better than what *God* says is, of course, the height of arrogance. The conceited person, whose trust tends to be more in self than in God, puts himself at risk of falling “under the same judgment as the devil.” “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall” (Pr 16:18).

Verse 7: δεῖ δὲ καὶ μαρτυρίαν καλὴν ἔχειν ἀπὸ τῶν ἕξωθεν, ἵνα μὴ εἰς ὀνειδισμόν ἐμπέσῃ καὶ παγίδα τοῦ διαβόλου, “*He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap*”

Qualification #13: μαρτυρία καλή ἀπὸ τῶν ἑξωθεν, “[one who has] *a good reputation with outsiders*”

The need for a good reputation with “outsiders” is a reoccurring theme in the Pastoral Epistles. In the second chapter of his letter to Titus, for example, Paul urges that the younger women be taught “to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands *so that no one will malign the word of God*” (vv. 4-5). He counsels Titus, “In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, *so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us*” (verse 7). Slaves should be taught “to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, *so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive*” (verses 9-10).

How will a pastor attain a “good reputation” with “outsiders” and make the teaching about God our Savior “attractive”? For one thing, he can’t remain hidden behind locked church doors. If he does, at best the result will be *no* reputation, for he will be invisible to the community. He will have a good (καλός, “noble,” “excellent,” “splendid”) reputation if, when he is out and among people, he demonstrates that he is

- a man of integrity and conviction
- a man whose speech and actions are above reproach
- a man whose simple “yes” and “no” are as good as an oath
- a man who always speaks the truth, even if he knows it will be met with criticism, but who does so in a gentle, loving manner (Eph 4:15, “Speak the truth *in love*”)
- a man who, though he may not be able to pray and worship and work with the heterodox, does not look upon them as the “enemy,” but rejoices over whatever of the truth of God they are proclaiming.

I’m sure we’re all painfully aware that Satan tries to produce in us precisely the opposite of the qualities at which we have just taken this brief look. At times he succeeds in that attempt. For the Christian pastor there is warfare, and it’s not a rare experience to find ourselves on the losing end in our daily skirmishes with the old evil foe.

Yet, brothers, we do not despair, because

II. For the Christian Pastor There Is Victory

In Christ Jesus we are, in fact, “more than conquerors” (Ro 8:37).

I walk with Jesus all the way;
His guidance never fails me.
Within his wounds I find a stay
When Satan’s power assails me.
And, by his footsteps led,
My path I safely tread.
In spite of ills that threaten may,
I walk with Jesus all the way.

In the time that remains I want to talk about how we as Christians can be tapping regularly into Christ’s victory. Two things in particular I want to emphasize: Daily *remember* Christ’s victory and daily *claim* Christ’s victory.

Daily Remember Christ’s Victory

We will want to remember, we won't want to forget, that in Jesus Christ there is victory. The Apostle John has made that very clear, hasn't he? "The reason the Son of God appeared," he writes, "was to destroy the devil's works" (1 Jn 3:8). What are the devil's "works"? They are his unceasing efforts to enslave and destroy us. The Son of God appeared to destroy this destroyer.

Three times the writer of the letter to the Hebrews uses the word ἐφάπαξ ("once for all," "never to be repeated," "unique") to emphasize the completeness of the victory Christ won for us. Recall the expression *hapax legomenon*, used for a word that is found only one time in the Scriptures. The prefix ἐφ' (ἐπί) intensifies the word to emphasize its absolute uniqueness. Listen!

Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins *once for all* when he offered himself (He 7:27).

He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place *once for all* by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption (He 9:12)

We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all* (He 10:10).

The Apostle Paul uses the same word in his letter to the church at Rome: "The death he died, he died to sin *once for all*; but the life he lives, he lives to God" (Ro 6:10). When Jesus said, "It is finished!" (Jn 19:30), he really meant it, even though it may have appeared for a time that he had lost the battle. C. F. W. Walther reminds us of this in his majestic Easter hymn:

The foe was triumphant when on Calvary
The Lord of creation was nailed to the tree.
In Satan's domain did the hosts shout and jeer,
For Jesus was slain, whom the evil ones fear.

That dark and woeful Friday on which our Savior hung on the tree, seemingly defeated by Satan, was not the end, however. The evil ones may have jeered,

But short was their triumph; *the Savior arose*,
And death, hell, and Satan he vanquished, his foes.
The conquering Lord lifts his banner on high;
He lives, yes, he lives, and will nevermore die (CW 143, st. 2-3)

Yes,

The strife is o'er, the battle done;
Now is the victor's triumph won.
Death's mightiest powers have done their worst,
But Jesus has his foes dispersed.
Let shouts of praise and joy outburst! (CW 148, portions of st. 1 and 2)

"Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead" (2 Tm 2:8), Paul counsels Timothy. Don't forget the resurrection. Remember. Remember on those days and at those times you are keenly aware of how far short you have fallen of what God wants you to be and to do, remember the God who did not fail to remember his covenant (Ps 106:45), the God who "remembered his love" (Ps 98:3), the God who "will remember [our] sins no more" (He 8:12)—because Jesus died and rose.

Don't forget. Remember. Remember that God has graciously given you a full share of the benefits of the death/resurrection victory of Jesus. This he has done for you already in your baptism:

Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death.... If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection (Ro 6:3-5).

You don't have to feel the lashings of the scourge, the nails pounding through your flesh, the crown of thorns pressing down into your scalp, the agony of total separation from God (which is the "wages" of sin). For in baptism everything Jesus did was personally credited to your account. His suffering is your suffering. His death is your death. His resurrection is your resurrection—today to new life, tomorrow to life that never ends. His victory is your victory. The victory is complete. You have nothing to add to it. St. Paul writes, "You have been given fullness in Christ,... having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead" (Co 2:10,12). "You have been given fullness," all you need. Your fullness is to be found "in Christ," in your baptism. In Christ there *is* victory. Remember.

If it is true, as has been said, that "most Christians have enough religion to feel guilty about their sin, but not enough to enjoy life in the Spirit," could not at least a part of the problem be that we don't return often enough to our baptism and *remember* with gratitude and joy that in it God has given us Christ's victory in its entirety? Daily *remember* Christ's victory, the victory that is your victory.

Daily Claim Christ's Victory

By Daily Contrition and Repentance

We claim Christ's victory, first, by a life of daily contrition and repentance. "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made" (Ge 3:1). Even though "he's judged, the deed is done," Satan is no less crafty today. This is one of his favorite tactics: He will try to get the pastor to violate the various qualifications for the ministry listed by Paul in 1 Timothy 3. "Go ahead," he will whisper. "It really isn't all that big a thing if you flirt a little with some woman in the congregation or let down your guard in a counseling session. The world isn't going to come to an end if you lose your temper once in a while, or show partiality, or drink a few too many drinks, or bully your people around, or neglect your wife and family, or get caught up in the greedy pursuit of material gain, or acquire a few dollars by dishonest means, or behave in an obnoxious way in the community. Go ahead. You're only human. It's no big deal. It's just a *little* thing."

But that's only part one of Satan's sly strategy. Once he gets you to take the bait (which is the imagery of James 1:14), he sets the hook hard, and then he changes his tune: "You know that supposedly *little* thing you just did? Actually, it's such a *big* thing that God will never forgive you. You might as well give up." That's the path on which he likes to lead us—from thinking that the sin we are tempted to commit is so *little* that it really doesn't make any difference if we give in to it, to thinking that the sin we have just committed is so *big* that we have put ourselves beyond the reach of God's forgiveness.

The truth, of course, is that Satan is lying on both counts. There is no such thing as a little sin, and likewise there is no such thing as a sin so big that God cannot and will not forgive it. He "forgives *all* your iniquities" (Ps 103:3).

Our baptism, where God personally applied Christ's victory to us, is the place to which to return daily to claim anew that victory when by sin we have pushed it away from us. "The Christian's baptism," Richard Jungkuntz reminds us in his book, *The Gospel of Baptism*, "is both point of departure for Christian existence and point of constant return. There is no further, additional grace or gift that can enhance its power or take its place" (Concordia, 1968, p. 86).

Luther puts it this way in his *Large Catechism*:

The ship [i.e., baptism] does not founder since...it is God's ordinance and not a work of ours. But it does happen that we slip and fall out of the ship. If anybody does fall out, he should immediately head for the ship and cling to it until he can climb aboard again and sail on it as he had done before ("Of Baptism," 83, Tappert's translation).

The need to do this is ongoing, as Luther also brings out in the *Large Catechism*:

The slaying of the old Adam and the resurrection of the new man...must continue in us our whole life long. Thus a Christian life is nothing else than a daily baptism, once begun and ever continued. We must keep at it incessantly, always purging out whatever pertains to the old Adam,... so that the longer we live the more gentle, patient, and meek we become, and the more free from greed, hatred, envy, and pride...This is what it means to plunge into baptism and daily come forth again ("Of Baptism," 65-67,72).

"If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness!" (Ps 130:3-4). Through daily contrition (sorrow over sin) and repentance (trust in the forgiveness won by Christ) we daily return to our baptism and reclaim for ourselves all the blessings of the victory Jesus won for us.

By Cultivating a Daily Devotional Life

Secondly, we claim Christ's victory by cultivating a daily devotional life. In preparation for this essay I re-read a powerful essay, "The True Reconstruction of the Church," presented by Prof. August Pieper in 1919 to the 15th biennial convention of the Wisconsin Synod. The convention was held not too many miles from here, in New Ulm. The essay appears in translation by Prof. Heinrich Vogel in volume 62 of the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Nos. 2 and 3.

Although delivered 90 years ago, the essay has a contemporary ring to it. Two of the points Pieper makes have a direct bearing on the subject at hand and bear repeating:

- *The Church Draws Its Life and Power from the Word*

The Church ...flourishes to the degree that ...faith, knowledge, fear of God, piety, blessedness, holiness, love toward God and our Lord Jesus Christ, the very image of Christ itself dwells in it (p 85).

The Church ...draws its spiritual life, its spiritual character, entirely and only from the revealed Word of God,... from the Gospel (pp 86-87).

Every individual part of the spiritual life of the Church must derive from the Word (p 87).

- *The Church's Teachers, Therefore, Need To Be Men of the Word.*

They must be concerned first about their own souls:

All reconstruction must begin at home (p 89).

The most important part of true faithfulness in the ministry is ...that one cares even more for his own soul than for souls of others! ...Can a teacher teach his pupil more than he knows himself? ...It should be the foremost concern of every pastor and public teacher in

his ministry, to save himself first, and then those who hear him (1 Tim. 4:16)...The highest office is to care for my own soul (pp 98-99).

Let each one ask himself. Is my Christianity, my faith still power and life, or merely an outward form and habit?Am I still one who prays? Is God's Word still being used in my home, or have the Bible, the hymnal, and the catechism become silent and dead books to me? (p 94).

Pieper deplors the lack of spiritual fervor, of ardent desire to be immersed in the Word, that he sees on the part of the church's pastors and teachers. "Pietism and Rationalism," he writes, "could have done no harm to the Church, if the pastors, professors, and teachers had not first forsaken the pure doctrine by degenerating into dead orthodoxy and into spiritless mechanical operation with the traditional body of doctrine." He warns that "what happened in Germany must also happen elsewhere, also among us, if we do not get out of the dead and deadening mechanical operation with 'pure doctrine' and 'correct practice'" (p 105).

Mechanically you extract a piece of information from the Bible, mechanically you write it down in your sermon or lecture, and mechanically you reproduce it. Therefore do not be surprised, if it also has only a mechanical effect, and not only leaves your own heart cold, but makes it ever more indifferent and hard...Yes, that is our defect, that we use the Bible only officially altogether too much (p 111).

This, the dead mechanical workmanlike activity in the ministerial office in the church, school, and classroom, this spells certain death for the Gospel and the Church. The forms remain, but the spirit, the spiritual life, perishes (pp 103-104).

Yet Pieper still holds out hope:

We do not lack the Holy Spirit entirely as yet, we have at least a spark of knowledge, of faith, of love, and of the fear of God. And with this spark we can again ignite a blazing fire within ourselves that will fill every fiber of our heart with burning zeal for God's kingdom. To use an illustration: you still have one or two matches in your pocket, which a patient and faithful God has preserved intact for you (pp 108-109).

"One of these matches," Pieper writes, "is *prayer*." "Prayer is the vital breath of faith, the pulse beat of the believing, godly, and God-fearing heart....A Christian who does not pray is a lung that does not breathe, a heart that does not beat, a body that does not live, a spiritual corpse" (pp 91, 92). He asks, "Is not the promise specifically recorded for us that God will give us his Holy Spirit in answer to our prayers?" (pp 108-109). He therefore urges us to plead, "Dear Father, for my Savior's sake, give me thy Holy Spirit, whom thou hast promised to give me." He adds,

We should not, neither do we want to ask for a specific measure of the Spirit, but for as much as is necessary to rescue our soul like a firebrand out of the fire, as much as is necessary so that we do not diminish in spiritual power, but daily become stronger, as much as is necessary to discharge our duty faithfully and to edify the souls entrusted to us sufficiently and to make them abound in good works, as much as is necessary to carry his Gospel into all the world and to gather the elect of God (pp 109-110).

The other “match” is *devotional study of the Word*. Pieper exhorts: “We must study the Scripture in such a manner as though we could never exhaust it; we must daily learn something new, daily understand more exactly, more deeply, more fully” (p 116). Why be in the Word? Because, as Pieper assures us,

no one can live in the Word, in the Gospel, without being illuminated by its light, being warmed by its glow, being set on fire by its fire, being strengthened by its power, and being spiritualized by its spiritOh, if once again we professors, pastors, and teachers would live and walk and search in the Word, how bright, how light, how clear, how warm, how hot, how glowing, how powerful, how strong, how mighty our hearts would become in spirit, how our preaching and teaching would grip the hearts of our hearers, persuade them, overcome them, so that the Church would become a veritable plain of Sharon, an Eden, a garden of God! (p 110).

Claim Christ’s victory daily by taking the time daily for *prayer* and *devotional study of the Word*. Can we afford the time? Pieper’s response is, “If we personally have our life and thought in the Scripture as our foremost concern, then we shall also find the necessary time for other Scripture study. The wretched filth which the daily newspapers daily squirt into our hearts from the street, we can dispense with entirely” (p 120). In other words, as Mary did 2000 years ago, let something else go so the “one thing needful” doesn’t get neglected. You and your congregation will be blessed for it. Paul tells Timothy that a “good minister of Christ Jesus” is one who is “constantly being nourished” in the Word (literal translation of the participle *ἐντρεφόμενος* in 1 Timothy 4:6).

If we fail along the way? If the press of *busyness* overwhelms us and we neglect our real *business*? Go back to your baptism, drown anew the old Adam and let the new man arise, and start again. Your gracious God will never give up on you! Christ has won the victory for you. No power on earth is able to take it away from you. Remember his victory. Claim it daily.