

The Third Thesis: Faithfulness in the Predigtamt can only be proven for the sake of its seriousness through this, namely that the preacher is made proficient for it by God and is strengthened constantly through the comfort which God gives.

The preacher must be made proficient. The office is to be established seriously in a careful way which is demanded. We ask the question that Paul did in 2 Corinthians 2:16: “And who is proficient for this [task of the Predigtamt]?”

It is certainly not he who believes that he is able to be proficient on his own, or who thinks he can make himself proficient. It is chiefly not him for this very reason: because he who believes himself to be proficient or who thinks he can make himself proficient is full of vanity and pride. These are not the people with whom God wants to accomplish something. For he says in 2 Corinthians 12:59: “My power is made powerful in weakness.” In addition these people, who are full of conceit and self-assertion on their own and full of confidence in their own proficiency, are already for this very reason not proficient because they do not carry out the chief thing, they do not bear it, tolerate it, or allow themselves to be burdened by it. How quickly the patience is gone of he who thinks that he is proficient and that he must accomplish something. How little such a one understands for himself that which was in part begun with the practice of Paul and which Paul hinted at in Colossians 1:24: “Now I rejoice in my suffering that I suffered for you, and fill up in my flesh, what still lacks in regard to the affliction of Christ for his body, which is the church.” What I mean is this: in the care for souls, in the leading of the congregation to their ideal, a pastor must prove himself faithful, in order to achieve what God wants. That goal one ought never let fall from before his eyes. How a pastor must often be concerned with the smallest thing of all. What they often perceive lightly, he must take seriously. Where they apply themselves a little with spiritual care, he must apply with his whole heart. With many conscience pangs and notes one must often train the people, so that Christ

might take shape in them, so that the congregation might begin to be compared to a bride of Christ. How much more one must risk himself. How much one must carry, endure, and let himself really be pressed. That is such a small part from the quiet heroism of a pastor. But there is almost no recognition or admiration of it on the part of the people. – There are some people, who have one idea of what their pastor’s proficiency should be, and even if it is not entirely brought to fruition, this proficiency should be that of the special spiritual work and leading of the congregation. Either they consider the patient cross bearing of a preacher in the structure of the congregation chiefly as missing, as half-way, as undecided, as lacking in conscientiousness, or they think that their pastor is not at willing to do that. The pastors who are persuaded of their proficiency let themselves go, while they may forget about the welfare of their congregation.

However also on other grounds those are not proficient to carry out the office with faithfulness, who think that they are exactly what it needs, so that they are it. – The fact that they think they are proficient is not from the Spirit. That is flesh. That, whereby such a one now thinks himself to have accomplished something, is nothing spiritual, but only fleshly. In some way these are the natural talents: insight, cleverness, resourcefulness, discretion, ingeniousness, malleableness, personal effect, quick-wittedness, and fluency. In and of themselves these are gifts of God. They are fleshly, only when these are to the pastor that with which he wants to accomplish something with proficiency. Is such a one proficient to carry out the office faithfully as God wants it to be? With the question in 2 Corinthians 2:16: “And who is proficient for the task?” Paul referred to what he had said briefly just before, namely that he was to the one an odor of life for life, and to another an odor of death for death. People, who suppose with their own proficiency to lighten their duty, obtain the wanted people, but not in the way that Paul means: “the odor of life for life;” therefore it is does not fail to lose the odor of death for death. On the

contrary they only want to win, to make an impression, to push away no one, to lose for no one the favorable judgment, in order to be a successful, personable, and a popular pastor. It is totally out of the question for this to be the case, namely that such ones do not do the things to which they have been called by God, and as a result that they do not become the *Haushalter* which will be found faithful.

Thus, it is entirely the case with the idea of those who think that they can make themselves proficient.

If the pastors are neither proficient on their own, nor are they able to make themselves proficient, then it is necessary for them to know how God makes them proficient and how they must now consider themselves before God.

We hear first of all how God wants to do this.

When God gives faith through preaching, i.e. through the Word according to Romans 10:17 and likewise when the Holy Spirit gives it through the word of the gospel according to Galatians 3:2,5, then it is clear from the outset, that God also gives the proficiency to be a faithful pastor through the word of the gospel. For faith is the mother of all virtue and proficiency in the kingdom of God. They are of the same lineage; as the mother so the daughter. – And all God-pleasing proficiency must also be truly spiritual and thus can only be on hand through that through which the Spirit comes to us, that is, through the Word.

However, the Holy Scriptures also say it very clearly that God makes pastors proficient through the Word. For from many particular parts the Bible says of this proficiency that it is given through the Word of God.

One part is above all things, namely virtuous preaching, for it has hands and feet. Now, preaching comes out of the Word of God (Romans 10:17). One must not understand ‘preaching’

so narrowly and essentially, that only doctrine comes out of the Scripture. But, when Romans 10:15 says, “how beautiful are the feet of those who proclaim peace,” and places the entire preacher before our eyes, then one sees that the words, “the preaching comes from God’s Word,” also mean this: that a pastor in his preaching is a man according to the mind of God, a proficient preacher. That comes from the Word. That God creates through the Word.

To proficiency also certainly belongs a good portion of wisdom, yes, a powerful portion of true wisdom. For what use is all faithfulness, diligence, and all conscientiousness, when true wisdom is not there? “Ah,” you think, since Paul thinks otherwise. He still places in 1 Corinthian 4:2 the faithfulness of the *Haushalter* over everything. Yes, indeed! Then Paul goes on to say that the *Haushalter* should prove himself. But, before that there is the question about how he should be and how he should be equipped. Paul says even to Timothy (2 Timothy 2:2): you are a preacher – take care, that also hereafter there are preachers, and that they enter into that office, and thereby you have to see to it, whether faithfulness is to be expected from them. But he does not say that the only requirement is faithfulness, as if that alone would help, but also that they be proficient to teach others. Thus it does not stand, as if faithfulness, which God certainly stresses so highly and which we pastors ought never forget for our own salvation, were the one thing which compensates for everything else. Certainly not! Thus this ought never be said: “Preaching he certainly can not do, but he is faithful.” In the same way: “With wisdom and discernment he does not carry out his work, rather he often handles it as a right fool, who understand neither how to lead the people according to God’s council, nor knows and sees what in any one case the right, God-pleasing and useful goal for the Christian would be, nor in which God-blessed, wise manner one ought to attain it. However faithful he is, that is true.”

Now then – wisdom is a chief part of the proficiency of a pastor for preaching, for discipline, for care of souls etc. From where do these come? For in Christ are all treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossian 2:3). And how one is to take these treasures from him verse 2 says with the words, “to know the secrets of God,” i.e. the dear Gospel. Thus, wisdom comes through the Word. Even David, the man after the heart of God, says about it: “the testimony of the Lord makes the foolish wise” (Psalm 19:8; 119:4; 130)

A closely related part is this, that one is not embarrassed to receive objective and good advice. David speaks further in Psalm 119:24 about where one is to take it from, and how God gives it: “I have desire for your testimonies, which are my counselors.”

Still another piece of proficiency is right and proper boldness. A preacher must certainly be no man proceeding in blind boldness and proudly, but also must be no man who in thinking he is wise never boldly proceeds and never thoroughly puts his hand to it. True boldness is necessary. We pastors must be after the way of Paul, who said to Timothy: “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, of love and of self-discipline.” On that basis then Paul further admonishes Timothy: “So, suffer for the Gospel, as I am, by the power of God.” “As I,” says Paul and calls himself the bound up one, who carries his bands and fetters for the sake of his faithfulness in the office. Thus, he says to Timothy, “you must fear nothing, that is, you ought not carry out your office with a spirit of fear. – God must this give the spirit of fearlessness, of divine courage and godly power and strength. Yes, and we know this indeed, for God gives also this spirit through the gospel. Even Paul indicates that here: “suffer with the gospel.”

There is yet one more piece to be mentioned: conscientiousness. This God also gives. And through what? By what does he drive one to serious, sincere, and pious consideration, so that in any matter one goes with truthful, holy and pious thoughts, so that one places himself

before nothing, and lies about nothing? Through the Word alone, which is like a sword and penetrates through, until it separates soul and spirit, even bone and marrow, and is a judge of the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).

Yes, the Bible says very clearly by entirely focusing our attention on specific passages, and even by pointing to general passages, that proficiency for carrying out the office is given through the Word. Thus stands 1 Timothy 4:13-16 (namely, verse 15); but especially in the passage from 2 Timothy 2:15-17. Here the Apostle expresses himself thusly: You have known, dear Timothy, the Holy Scriptures from youth on. That is good. They can instruct you for salvation. – Yes, Scripture has all sorts of uses, so that it can make us miserable, inept, and blind men, who are useful for no work of God, into men of God, who are full of wonderful and admirable proficiency and characteristics, full of capability for every good work. Our old Lutheran interpreters say the most: “[Paul says] the man of God and means with that, the preacher.” If this is not the case, then this word says to us at least this much: as the beloved Bible chiefly makes proficient Christians, so also it makes proficient pastors. It creates the proficiency for the office.

But this too is a gift of God. Paul says: “that we are proficient is from God, who makes us proficient” (2 Corinthians 3:5). And in verse 3 he particularly ascribes it to the Holy Spirit, when a pastor accomplishes something or even proves himself as proficient. Thus God gives it, God himself. We know that Paul is no buzzing bee [*Schwarmgeist*], who directs us to expect divine gifts, heavenly treasures without means, i.e. without Word and Sacrament. So, we have certainly heard this previously, namely, that the Scripture makes us inept men proficient for the office of Christ, as he said to Timothy. And now he says it here in 2 Corinthians 3:5 again: “it is from God.”

Yet, we should learn to understand it correctly when it is said according to the Scriptures: God, and especially the Holy Spirit, does something spiritual in us through the Scriptures. We should learn that it does not happen as in temporal things. For then a man may set up a family head for the sake of his own goods, etc. He may set up a man, who has good abilities for it, whom God has equipped with full power, so that he knows it all, and in addition the man may also give to him in his hand a particular order of the house [*Hausordnung*] with a description of every right, duty, and specification for its administration, as well as a description of the losses to avoid and of the winnings to attain; he may also be a man whom God has likewise given a description of the type of attitude that the *Haushalter* should have toward him, the Lord, and a description of his behavior toward him, the Lord, toward all the staffers, to any other people all around, and toward whatever else may stand in such a particular *Hausordnung* for the *Haushalter*. If that has now happened, then the landlord can properly do nothing further. He must turn over everything to *Haushalter*, so that he might properly understand the *Hausordnung* so that he might correctly engrain it, stand by it etc. That must make him proficient [according to temporal things]. The landlord can well assist something, as much as it concerns him, with any possible admonishment, warnings, commendations, promises, and honoring before the people; however, he can not give to the *Haushalter*, his heart, mind, or will, the proficiency, which is well described in the *Hausordnung*. The *Haushalter* must acquire that through thorough and conscientious experience with the *Hausordnung*. If he has proficiency after that, he does not owe anything to the landlord. His gift [of the landlord] was certainly the description of proficiency in the *Hausordnung*, but not the existence of proficiency.

It is entirely otherwise with the heads of the household of the Lord of lords, with the servants of the great God. He has given to them the most majestic, the most exhaustive

Hausordnung for their office in the house of God, the church; they should be proficient according to it and they should study well the same [*Hausordnung*]. Yes, he wants to make them proficient through it alone, entirely, only not thus, so that that alone establishes the *Hausordnung* in the Scripture with them and God himself remains now out of the loop, but God himself effects them, not from afar, as a man works through a *Hausordnung* and can live far from the house, but God works as the nearest of all. The proficiency of a pastor is not the attainment of his earnest diligence and conscientious use of the Scripture, but a present, a gift of God. Thus, rightly and clearly teaches 1 Peter 4:11: “so that he may do it as out of the ability, which God administers.” Proficiency should remain also for us a gift of God alone. Always it should be said: What do you have, that you have not received? What should one boast about, if he had not studied it! So that proficiency, a present and gift of God, should never be forgotten by pastors, as perhaps happens more than one should think, we want to deal with and speak about this matter still further.

Now, it is an important question, how pastors must behave toward God, who wants to make them proficient in the previously described way, so that they might establish their office with faithfulness. The assumption is that we have to do this with believers – Here, one can easily go astray and leave behind one of both necessary parts, which we now want to take up. According to that, what was just said about proficiency as a gift of God, one could likewise allow to lack in the proper attitude. So that he takes it seriously with the first part, we want to discuss it. That part is: to work.

Pastors are often called workers in Scripture (Matthew 9:37,38; 2 Timothy 2:15). Where, on what, and how do they work? In the field of the Lord where seed is to be sown and crops are to be harvested (Matthew 9:37,38). In the house of God (Hebrews 3:5); among the peoples in

the world (1 Corinthians 5:10); in the church (Galatians 4:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:12); and in the Word and teaching (1 Timothy 5:17). With the latter we have properly the chief part of the work of a pastor: work in the Word. Naturally, this means teaching, especially preaching. That is indeed work among the people in and with the Word work. One should likewise bring to the man what alone makes one already proficient in Word and teaching. We are certainly not the enthusiasts according to the way of the Methodists and Baptists, who say, "the preaching must give the Spirit at that time;" who then at the very least assert that they regard the learned sermons not as the real sermon. The many sermon books which have come from them and the many testimonies from pastors could conclude yet another thing. Yet, we leave it.

It is certain, that he, who works at the time of his sermon in the Word and doctrines and with the Word and doctrines for the Christians, must have previously worked in the Word and doctrines earnestly and faithfully. He does this, chiefly so that he may have some virtuous thing to give to the Christians and might really prove himself in his sermon as proficient. But, the conscientious preparation of the sermon is not alone what we have here in mind as the work which should lead to the proficiency of a pastor. It is not work in the Word and doctrines on some Saturday or on any other day, in such and so many hours, as is perhaps customary for a pastor to keep up with his preparations for Sundays and festival days, but it is daily work in the Word and doctrines. It is also not work only with regard to the sermon and teaching with articulateness and forcefulness on someone else's sermon, but it is the work in the Word and doctrines with regard to his own sermon and teaching in order to become rich in knowledge and doctrine. It is not the work in the Word and doctrines to this goal alone so that others might live truly as Christians, but it is the work in the Word, with which one might carry out his own quiet, hidden Christian life in God and Christ. This work is the faithful, heartfelt, seeking with hunger

for bread and with thirst for water, being desirous of salvation to conduct one's life day after day with the beloved Word of God for one's own edification for the goal of eternal life – how good it is for those who go about with God's Word! Thus writes Wisdom 14:22. That is an apocryphal book, but the dictum is a truth of God. For the inspired Holy Scriptures say the same thing with other words. Thus, St. Paul says to Timothy (2 Timothy 1:13)¹: “Keep to the pattern of beneficial teaching.” The teaching certainly declares not only, “always speak as the words do,” but also, “hear constantly what they say to you.” Who then wants to have the former without the latter? But Paul says in other places directly to that point: “he should go about diligently with God's Word.” He says in 1 Timothy 4:13: “Keep to reading, to admonishment, etc,” and then in verse 15: “hold to such things, so that you go about [in them].” – That is certainly also the manner of the pious according to the description of Scripture. According to Psalm 1 they speak about the law of God both day and night, that is, they go about constantly with the Scriptures. One certainly notices this among the pious. Take Paul. What intimacy with the Scripture of the Old Testament! And whenever one who was inspired says, he speaks out of inspiration, then whatever he should say, the Holy Spirit gave to him – indeed, so Paul boasted to Timothy, who knew from childhood the Holy Scripture, and that with believing knowledge. That was the fruit of his going about with the Scripture. And then – then one hears Maria, the mother of the Lord in her short song of praise (Luke 1:46-44). How familiar she was with God's Word! She must have been diligent in going about with the Word, as much as it was possible for her. And – the going about with the Word was not made as easy for them as it is for us. But, wherever the words of Scripture flow today to a Christian, it happens as it did to Mary. But with the words which she had, she went about, and thus she was a proficient prayer, as we have her before our eyes. However, I want to leave these ladies, who the Scripture exhibits. There are even those at

¹ Text: zu *Timotheus 1, 1,13*.

Berea. I call a certain man a Lutheran with pride, in whose writings we have in the most marvelous way before our eyes proof of that which we know about him, namely that he went about most faithfully and in a most heartfelt way with the Scripture. What a life and a thorough incorporation of Scripture there is with Luther! There he is, as far as I can determine, singular in his manner. One may compare the man, who stands next to Luther in history and who is exalted by many wherever possible, (I mean Calvin), who one calls the reformer of the reformation church. He speculated and philosophized theologically, but he is through and through not a man like Luther, from whose love flowed streams of living water from the continually opened source of Scriptural. That was the fruit of his faithful and devoted going about with Holy Scriptures. If we, pastors, want to become proficient, then we must likewise go about in this manner with the Scriptures.

Those who think that they can do without it and yet be proficient, will be unproficient. There are certainly such pastors who do not consider necessary an intimate going about with Scripture and a settling oneself into the Scripture. They know the doctrine, have its aptness, are not poor in inventiveness, have their measure of expertness, they even know their people, they know how they must take hold of them, what appeals to them, etc. On that they rely. When the opportunity presents itself, they take from the text the things which are already evident. Yes, their sermons are certainly still considered as quite presentable. In principle they are professional preachers. If one has a few of those tools, then it is not so very difficult to bring the sermon to somebody. The recipe is simple. Make the sermon thus, so that it sets forth what is reasonable, but doesn't go so deeply, so that the people have trouble with the thoughts; make the sermon thus, so that the hearers can remain in the right mind in order that they may be properly lead to piety, but make it not so spiritual, so that the sermon is disconcerting and disturbing.

Give the sermon the tone of spirited earnestness, so that the hearers could boast that they belong to a right, Christian, authoritative congregation, but administer the sharp edge of the Word intelligently, so that no hearer must do himself harm at it. To that yet add small ingredients of things which interest, allure, and so on – and everything else connected with aptitude and executed in worthiness, so that the judgment of many will record: Here we have a right, acceptable sermon.

I repeat: such professional preachers are not the people proficient before God. And as they are not proficient who think that they already have proficiency, just so little are those proficient who think that at least they had those things to make themselves into proficient people; people who think that they need only add their gifts in order to instruct themselves further; people who think they need to learn for instance out of this praised sermon book, the art of division, out of a second, the pleasing execution of it, out of a third, clever embellishment with parables, pictures, histories, etc. Thus one can see that sermon books are of use, and ought in no way be tossed aside. Especially one ought make use of our father Luther with rich studies. For many of the above mentioned people, Luther may not exactly be the master teacher. But one thing he has above all, and plainly above all: the deep spiritual sight, the wonderful penetration into the beloved Word of God. But when one puts it to use properly, above all things for awakening zeal, so that namely one may apply these things, about which his sermon gives testimony. It gives testimony of devotedly going about with Holy Scriptures. That can not even be replaced through other things.

Incidentally, it is astonishing that a preacher, who chiefly wants to preach on the basis of Scripture, and yet has to do with Scripture not that which is within, namely that in spite of everything it would still be necessary for him to go about with Scripture in a true, devoted

manner. He encounters always, and yet not often enough such encouragement and praise of God, thankful doxologies and remembrances of the believers, who all imply, that Scripture is something exceedingly exquisite, that the going about with it is something very refreshing, and that it is certainly not to be declared, what all a man has in the Scripture, and what rich winnings he may pull from it, which will never be able to acquire it anywhere through anything else, except through Scripture alone. We only need to read Psalm 119, where it says: “refresh me according to your Word,” v. 25; “your word is sweeter to my mouth than honey,” v. 103; “if your Law had not been my comfort, then I would have decayed in my misery,” v. 92; “O, how I love your law; daily I speak about it,” v. 97. “with your commands you make me wiser than my enemies; for it is eternally my treasure,” v. 98; “sustain me through your Word so that I may live,” v. 116; “salvation is far from the godless, for they do not esteem your righteousness,” v. 155. – Opposite to such expressions it is in fact highly astonishing, that a preacher, who actually has to do with the Scripture up to a certain point, yet not within, so that he must as a result cultivate an inner sincere going about with Scripture, if he really wants to be something in God.

Thus far about the going about with Holy Scripture, which is so properly the core of the first part, which belongs to the proper attitude of a preacher toward God, who should make him proficient to faithfully carry out his office, namely to work. We have already indicated that a Christian ought not think that there is nothing further except diligent work on his part, if he wants to acquire all proficiency. Certainly not! This is and remains a gift. For this reason to the first part of a proper attitude toward God, namely work, it must come subservient, to that which in the known saying stands as first, namely prayer.

It says: “Pray and work.” Pray first. One must indeed pray before work, so that one does it correctly. And certainly pray afterwards, that it might be blessed. Praying begin, praying

conclude, pray before the work, pray after the work, and pray also during the work – pray and work. Everything, which we have, is a gift of God, and God certainly does not let his gifts be taken. They must be requested. Thus, it is for us pastors with the gift of proficiency. Wisdom is a generous portion of the same; and it is so much lacking to us. Now: “If anyone among you lack wisdom, he should ask God, who gives everyone without judging” (James 1:5). Even Paul knows well, how he can turn his dear Christians to such gift as knowledge and experience from God; “I pray,” he says to the Philippians (1:9) and to the Colossians (1:5), “that your love may become more and more rich in all kinds of knowledge and experience.” – Thus he will also have done it for himself. He also wants the Christians to repay him the same kinds of prayers. When in his letter to the Romans he reminds them of his work, that he wants to carry out still further; and when he also reminds them of the obstacles and how much courage and joy in battle belong to it, he speaks to them (Romans 15:30): “I admonish you, dear brothers, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you might help me struggling with prayers for me to God.” Yes, how shameful it is, that such a high apostle even had to admonish the Christians to pray for him, so that he might carry out his work of preaching. For in Colossians 4:2ff he says, “Continue in prayer and be watchful in the same with thanksgiving; and pray at the same time also for us, so that God may open up for us the door for his word to speak the mysteries of Christ, for which reason I am also bound up; so that I might reveal the same, and how I should speak.” In a very similar way he, who knows well, what belongs to that for courage and spiritedness the whole time, exhorts the Ephesians to preach clearly that which is foolishness to the world and a stumbling to the Jews, and also to the brothers of the world and of the Pharisees in the congregation: “Pray for me, so that the Word which is given by me with a joyful opening of my mouth, so that I might make known the mystery of the gospel” (Ephesians 6:19). Now, it

is known to each one, how much Paul and all the apostles call all Christendom, teachers and hearers, shepherds and sheep, to pray for every good, and particularly for spiritual gifts. And God even commands it, and gives for that reason promises that are heard and kept.

Now, one may hear much to lament, as if Christendom had no excess. Indeed, there is often much lacking in spiritual gifts. Then, the declaration of James (4:2) is still true yet today: “You have not, because you ask not.” – Who from us teachers of the Word will not have to admit: I am in my prayer life. I do not mean, that we do not have such a sign for prayer in our way of praying, as the Israelites did on our clothing and doors. We hold morning prayer, and evening prayer among ourselves. However, whether or not the rich going about with prayer to God is present, or if it is something according to what one hears from Paul, how he prayed constantly, or from the prayer life of our father Luther – that is still the question. I think that we should humble ourselves then as lazy servants. And I think, dear Christian brothers from the congregations, that you do it and say about it at home so that they do it also. Then it will also be true, that you all forget all too often the admonishment of Paul that you should pray for your pastors. Oh, if only that would happen! I mean this, the dear hearers resent the preacher for the infrequent soft-spoken word, when they themselves prayed for him for this very reason. O how they can often set themselves so heartlessly, so callously, in such an unfriendly way, and bitterly against a faithful pastor, when they in a heart-felt way pray for him to the Father in heaven! Could not both praises and curses certainly come from the same mouth; could they not pray to God for the pastor, and also berate and dispute with the pastor? Let it become better. Diligently let us pray, so that the spiritual gifts may overflow richly according to the saying: “As you pray, so will it be given to you.” Above all things we pastors want to pray diligently for all proficiency for the faithful fulfillment of the office, certainly keeping in mind that we cannot

give ourselves proficiency, nor can we take it from the treasures of God. God allows nothing at all take it, for he wants it to be requested. –

If preachers have proficiency through God's grace for the carrying out of their serious office, then they would certainly and yet scarcely at all be in a position to work and persist in that office with all faithfulness from the bottom of their heart. This is true for there are many sorts of things which can make even the proficient servant of God tired, droopy and despondent. There are things, which do not result from a lack in proficiency, whose power to make a preacher weak can not be overcome by bare proficiency. However, here God has a means to guard his faithful servants from despondency, so that they do not lose, for example, the hand from the plough, a means to strengthen again the lame feet, and the tired hands. That is the comfort of God. That is the threefold comfort, which he gives to the preachers as his servants called by him and in fact it comes straight out of their God-pleasing call.

That is chiefly the comfort in all tribulation, trial [*Anfechtung*], and unpleasantness.

This is, as noted a comfort not only for the proficient pastor, but also for the properly called pastor. The comfort comes from the call. If his call came in a way which is proper, God-pleasing, and desired by God, then this call gives him a rich comfort in all tribulation, unpleasantness, and *Anfechtung* in his office; it is self-evident that this comfort must be lacking for those, who have not come into their office in the way commanded by God.

A pastor, whose call has gone out properly according to God's Word and will, can say for this reason with full right: Here God himself has called and placed you. For this reason he can also rightly say: What you now take up, that God places upon you. It is for you, as preacher, a divine cross of the preacher. For that is indeed the way, which leads one as a Christian and thus also as a preacher to believing and childlike obedience toward God. Those are the ways, on

which God himself leads as Father, for he leads through the Spirit and the Spirit through the Word. As long as one truly remains on such ways, then the leadership of God is also in pure, fatherly grace. If one has tribulation, then it is not something unsalutary, which one has invited on himself. If one has *Anfechtung*, then those are not the hardships, into which one has plunged himself curiously. Rather, one ought to look at everything as a cross from the Father, imposed out of love (Hebrews 12:6). – With that the preacher also receives this rich comfort to enjoy, which all Christians enjoy; therefore they look at, on the certain basis of the divine word, tribulation, unpleasantness, and *Anfechtung* believingly as a cross laid on them out of love from the heavenly Father. Above all things they themselves ought say: “Here the Father in heaven does not want to force evil and rebuke for past guilt, but he wants accomplish much good, peace, and joy for the future for you yourself and then also for others (Hebrews 12:11; Psalm 116:13); the heavenly Father does not want to do you harm, but he wants to bless you (Psalm 116:7).

Let us hear once more the voice of father Luther. He says, “Not only does he seek his honor but he also seeks mine, because I seek his honor, as he says in 1 Samuel 2:30: “‘whoever honors me, should also become honored.’ That is our comfort, so that we can be joyful, even if all the world defiles and dishonors us; thus we are certain that God demands our honor and therefore will avenge, judge and rebuke whoever can believe it and can expect that he certainly will come” (XIV 437. Evang. S. Judica).

Further he says, “Thirdly, thus Matthew has these words: ‘I preserve him;’ or: ‘if I want to hold him, he is outwardly calm.’ That is a comfort to the minister or to the servant, so that he might know that he has God for a protector in his office or mission.... Whatever is in the world that plagues the ministers of God. On account of this he makes the promises that he himself wants to be their defender against all of this. Both where he does not do this and where we do

not know that he wanted to do it, who wants to undergo the trouble and the great danger, which one must bear in the teaching office [*Lehramt*]?" (IX., 80. Matth.12,18).

Finally he speaks to Galatians 1:1: "For this reason this is our great comfort, we who are now at this time in the *Predigtamt*, namely that we always have a holy and a heavenly office, to which we were properly and in an orderly way called, which we might well boast about against the gates of hell." – (there you now see, how noteworthy this boast of our office, namely the call is. After that Luther says that he understands now, what he earlier did not understand, namely why Paul made so many boasts about his call.)

The cross makes proficient, firm, and good Christians (by training) (Hebrews 12:11). – trial teaches to keep the focus on the Word (Isaiah 28:19); it drives one properly into God's Word – the cross helps especially to properly understand, relish, and to savor the word of grace. Psalm 119:71: "It was good for me, that you humbled me, so that I might learn your right decrees." – Isaiah 26:16: "When tribulation is present, then one seeks you." – The cross moves to urgent prayer. Need teaches to pray. "When I am distressed, then I call to the Lord, and cry out to my God," says David (Psalm 18:6). And Asaph says, "when I am troubled, then I consider God; when my heart is full of angst, then I speak" (Psalm 77:3). – The cross is the divine school to properly teach one to find nothing in himself and to find everything in grace. Paul, when he speaks about his severe cross, the thorn in the flesh, says that he wanted keep himself entirely in line with the word of the Lord: "let my grace suffice for you." For this reason, he wanted to boast about the weakness, namely, so that grace might be made powerful in him (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). – And closely connected with it, namely that the cross is an excellent school, is always simple, reliable, to be seen without seeing the grace of the Father everywhere, and yet to be believed, as the apostle Peter says to us (1 Peter 1:5,6): "you may now be for a short time,

wherever it may happen, sad in all kinds of *Anfechtung*, so that your faith might be found rightly created and more costly than perishing gold.

Thus, the cross makes proficient Christians. Thus it also makes proficient, solid pastors. And that it should reach the goal to serve according to the fatherly will of God for the best of the pastor, that, even the pastor knows and ought to be comforted because of it. Indeed, for he himself can say: ‘you stand here in your office according to the will of God.’ That gives him great comfort in his tribulation, *Anfechtung*, and unpleasantness of any kind, which serve as a salutary cross. With that are received suffering, tribulation, and also grievousness, which are always there at the outset for us (they seem not to be joy for us, but suffering). Then they certainly do not at all embitter the poor, plagued, servant of God, or make him grieve, so that he almost wants to decay and so that all power and vivacity for the work disappear for him. – Then it goes according to Isaiah 40:27ff, where the oppressed Israel says: “My way is hidden before the Lord.” It is that way with Jeremiah. Zion speaks out in tribulation: “The Lord has forgotten me.” – But, it says to Israel, do you not know? The Lord, the eternal God, will not grow tired or languid. He gives the tired power. For this reason if the servant of the Lord, his servant, just like the slave becomes tired and languid, and brings with that trouble his own weaknesses - and it is certainly that way with all preachers in tribulation and adversity - then there is only one thing necessary. They need to grasp the comfort of the Lord. Those who wait on the Lord grab new strength, so that they ascend with wings, as the eagle, so that they run and do not grow tired, so that they walk about and do not grow faint. Yes, without being strengthened through such comfort, it would not be possible to properly set up his office as a faithful pastor. It would be entirely impossible for a right, true shepherd to keep showing the shepherd’s love, while forgetting himself, under all personal suffering as a Christian and particularly as a pastor. The

bitterness would drive away that which must give power and vivacity to the work as pastor, namely love for the sheep.

Thus, it stands with the preacher, who stands by virtue of a right, God-pleasing call in a congregation. Thus he can pull rich comfort from this pleasing calling. However, that must exclude him who comes into his office through an evil, stained call.

Such a one can certainly not say: "God has called you here." He must say: "You have brought yourself here." Than it will doubtless be for him, wherever suffering, tribulation, *Anfechtung*, and adversity arise, as if a clear voice called to him in his heart: "you have taken that upon yourself." He will never know to look at it otherwise, than that it is bitter for him. Yes, it is so. Certainly it will not be for him in his heart, so that he can say with confident in simple truth, as before God: "That is a fatherly cross." And when it does not take a particular twist, namely through rightly created penance, then it will not go with him according to this divine order for cross bearing [*Kreuzesordnung*]: first, it does not seem to be joy for us, but vain suffering, but after that out of it there are peaceful fruits, that is, peace and joy in spirit and faith as a justified child of God. On the contrary the order is this, that it remains with the first. It seems to us to be only suffering. Now the feeling, which made such an assumption, becomes ever more bitter. And so that such a one is sunk in such bitterness, which is ever more horrible, the conscience is stirred all the more. Luther writes to Galatians 1:1: "In contrast it is certainly a horrid and appalling thing when the conscience says: 'O Lord God! What have you [conscience] made, that you have done such and such without call or command.' Then such terror and heartbreak hoist themselves on the conscience, so that such an uncalled preacher might very well desire, that he had never at all read or heard his whole life that, which he taught. For the disobedient makes all works evil, even if they want them on their own to be so good, in such a

way so that the greatest of all and best works might become the greatest and the worst of all sins.” Such a preacher is lost to comfort in tribulation. In his position he is also not the man to carry out God’s work. He has not the comfort to think that he might want to twist and wrestle down his misery, for as long as he preaches, he always still accomplishes something good before God. Luther says about Galatians 1:1: “It is not enough if one has something alike to the pure, loud Word of God and pure doctrine, but one must also be certain of the call so that he might be in the right.”

The properly called pastor also has from his call, which is so pleasing to God and according to the Word of God a second comfort in all difficulty and toil, which confront him in his office. These are great. With the *Predigtamt* it does not stand thus, as many entirely dear Christian think. They think that it is an easy and cushy office. The Scripture teaches otherwise. If we look at it only in consideration of its chief parts without consideration of particular circumstances, various arrangements and duties bound up together with it, which are outside of the chief part. The chief part for a preacher is the people to whom he is called to bring under the obedience of faith according to the gospel and under the obedience to love according to the law. That he should accomplish through preaching and teaching. Is that easy? The apostle James says (3:1,2): “Dear brothers, not everyone should undertake for himself to be a teacher; and know that we will receive all the more judgment. For we all are lacking in manifold ways. However, whoever lacks in no word, he is a perfect man and can curb the entire body.” After that the apostle begins to address what a judgment the tongue can wreak with evil words, and can kindle a dangerous fire. How finely James here paints the call of a preacher as serious and exceedingly accountable through his comparison with the common call of the Christian. In that, he says, we load through the errors with the tongue and unrighteous words so much liability and

judgment on ourselves because it wreaks so much evil. However, that now applies firstly in the *Predigtamt*, since a single evil and perverted word wreaks much harm in doctrine, and since it can easily kindle the most evil fire. Yes, it can bring a soul into the danger of eternal fire. And for that God makes a preacher accountable. What a serious judgment he can lift upon himself! For this reason James advises and admonishes with reference to the judgment of God: “Not everyone should undertake for himself to become a teacher.” Thus, James truly says to all dear brothers in the congregations: Dear brothers, do not hold the office of your preacher for something so easy; it is rather something entirely serious and highly accountable, alone for the sake of the chief part, teaching. Then it is the goal that no one be lacking in his words, so that the preaching might not be a detriment.

If the office of preacher is serious, bound up with trouble and toil for the sake of the one part, preaching, then it is for the sake of the people, to whom the preacher is to preach. We have already said what we should accomplish with preaching. Is that something easy? Does the preacher have anything to do with the problem, which makes little trouble or toil, or does he keep himself on the other side of it? Yes indeed! Even when we look at only the entire circumstance, or only take into consideration the state of the thing, so that I may thus say, how he is right in line with the guide, namely the rule, that we all are sinners and are all unproficient, that we do nothing good and are fleshly from birth on, full of enmity from nature against all obedience to God, be it according to the gospel or be it according to the law. How things do stand here and always will stand, and what they have entirely in common, that we need not first determine approximately through all kinds of statistics, which can on top of everything be lacking and could be objected to by angered Christian people. Here one who is unaccounting has placed before our eyes the account, which each one will certainly accept, namely our dear Savior

in the parable about the four kinds of fields. Thus, that is the state of things: There is a quarter who are callous, who receive the sermon for themselves as nothing; there is a quarter who are shallow, who are on the surface of their heart a little Christian-like, but underneath are a hard rock of impenitence, and self-righteousness, in such a way so that they do not hook on to the Word very well; there a quarter are mammon seekers, so that they do not allow the Word to flourish; and there is only a quarter with whom the Word finds good absorption. Perhaps one thinks that the accounting may be arbitrary for a quarter. It is possible! If I take another Word of the Lord, then the accounting sets itself as more sorrowful, for example: “many are called, but few are chosen – do you think that he [Son of Man] will find faith on earth – the gate is tight, and the way is narrow, which leads to life, and there are few who will find it.” So what now, when the state of things is thus so regulated? But are there not often enough entirely other circumstances? There are congregations, whose picture is entirely after that manner: They will buy, sell, build and also woo, eat, and drink. In short, they are congregation, thoroughly sunk in what drives the world and in the business of the world, without any visible sense for the kingdom of heaven. They are congregation according to the picture of the guards, who banish Christ from the boundaries for the sake of the cattle population; they are congregations, entirely sunk in pure drive for mammon and seeking after mammon, in stinginess and winnings, a true field of thorns which chokes all seeds. They are congregation according to the picture of the Israelites: That people sat down to eat and drink and stood up to play. They are congregations entirely sunk in amusement, and in every kind of association for every possible entertainment, in constant going about from picnics, and the leading of songs, and everything else, and yet so far from the earnestness of Christendom.

That is hard ground for the sower of God. What toil and difficulty mount up there! There he should now accomplish something; there he should obtain something for God. And there he stands alone. Moses has lamented in Numbers 11:14: "it is too difficult for me; I can not carry the people alone." Now if a preacher stands facing the toil and difficulty, which come out of his task in a congregation, then he often needs to call out in a not halfhearted way: "It is too difficult. What will I accomplish! I stand alone!" Then a glorious comfort comes to him, a comfort, namely out of his calling; a comfort, which takes away the despondency in any kind of success for the sake of the difficulty of the work, and strengthens him in a most majestic way, as often as he might become tired. For from his call the comfort comes: You stand here as a servant of your great Lord as a tool only of the almighty master builder of the church, namely God. It is in truth the great God himself, who here carries out his work through his Word, which is powerful and full of grace, and needs you only as his tool. This is the same thing the apostle says (1 Corinthians 3:5); "Who is Paul? Who is Apollos? Servants are they, through whom you have been saved; and that happens, as the Lord has given to each one. I have planted. Apollos has watered. But God has given the result. Thus neither he who plants, nor he who waters, is anything, but God, who gives the result."

So also it does nothing, if a servant, who should carry out the fieldwork of God on the hard ground, says to himself: "what should I then accomplish? Am I then anything all to do this difficult thing? Only say to yourself: "Yes, I am only a called servant, the tool; the result God gives; in truth God also drives the work. In a comforting way Luther speaks about it. He speaks about Exodus 4:13 (III., 506): "For if one were skilled as Gabriel and all angels, and God did not call him, then he would certainly accomplish nothing. Again, if one is ineloquent and God has

called him, then he carries it out. He is as God wants, so that the world might see, that we are not it, who drives it, but God does it.”

He says further (XII., 582): “Now two things belong to a bishop and preacher. The first: that he is ordained by God. On that much is laid. Then, when God is alongside, so it is God’s power, which today calls one, tomorrow adds two more, and which never ends up empty. For this reason the preacher is so humbled, so that when they know and see their own weakness, and that they are earthen vessels, they commend it all to God and let him do as he wants because they are certain that God does it all.”

Likewise VI., 120 b. in relation to Psalm 55:5: “For this reason I often become discouraged about it, when I see such; it often hits me directly at the heart so that I sometimes consider: If this teaching was not to be spread out into the world, then I would rather do anything else than this carrying out and revealing this teaching to the unthankful world. These are however evil, fleshly thoughts. Let the world be as unthankful as they want; let them misuse the Word as greatly as they can. Either way one should not cease to teach and to preach, but remain steadfast and proceed on with the doctrine, commending to God the result, happiness and increase. For he is such a king, for whom it should and must succeed, who must and wants to have victory over his enemies. If it neither happens in this place, nor at this time, then it will happen in another place and at another time.”

Finally, XIII., 24, Evang. 1. Advent: “This is said as comfort for preachers, lest they should worry about who believes them and absorbs it. For it will certainly happen according to Isaiah 55:11: ‘My word which goes out of my mouth (they are God’s mouth as his messengers) should not come back to me again alone.’ And Paul says in Colossians 1:6: ‘The gospel is

bearing fruit in the world.’ For this reason it is possible in no other way, that wherever the gospel is preached, there are some, who grasp it and believe.”

Whoever thus looks at himself as a worker and thus at his work, he has a comfort, which truly erects him, lets him go about his work with joy, and buckles down to the work with hope. He, who stands through a God-pleasing call in a congregation, has such comfort, so that he can look at himself as the worker ordered by God and his work as commended to him by God.

Yet, what if the hope, which a preacher grasps, nevertheless comes true as good as if it did not come true? Well, then the proper call contains a great comfort with small successes.

What is a small success? Where can it be said, that a servant of God has no success? Here, the judgments of the undiscerning are very diverse, that is, the judgments of those lacking spiritual insight and of those who are full of insight, gifted with spiritual sense and discernment. The first ones see only the success, when outwardly the congregation makes forward progress. The others see the results above all things when the people make progress in knowledge of the faith and in the life of sanctification. That latter judgment is also God’s judgment. His goal is chiefly with his preachers: Make yourself blessed and those who hear you. That Luther accents, when he says against the antinomians (XXI., 347, writing against the antinomians): “...But for the sake of the pious, since they want to be saved, we must live, preach, write, suffer, and do everything.”

Now, it may very well happen, that even in the latter way a preacher may be able to see nothing or as good as nothing from the results. He preaches the law for the knowledge of sins, and behold, after a considerable time he must become inward with respect to many kinds of opportunities, discussions and other things so that the people have just about nothing of true knowledge of the depths of their damnable sinfulness. In addition the sermon or the

admonishment, which apply that sinfulness to them, still stand with the quite astonished and suggestive shaking of the head quite opposite; they just put up with it, so that it is said by them but just in the sense as one so often hears it: the priests must preach that way, that is they way they learned it; that is just doctrine. In short, preachers find only too often those who remain so opposed to the intrusive preaching of the law for the knowledge of sins, since that does not concern them at all. O yes, how much remains after all that in the serious preaching of the law, when one thinks that one must now have convinced, remitted and smashed the people, that they must come to recognize themselves in the offered mirror, so that the people say to themselves: “Yes, you are the man. You! You are the deeply corrupted sinner in your heart, and that is the very root of the evil, of the senses of the flesh, and of disobedience.” And how the divine sorrow remains first from the feeling grieved about it! Yes, yes, sighs many a pastor: What hard ground here! It moves and stirs nothing. – Naturally, where he is the right man, as we always presume, then this state of things is not the result of that, namely that he preached always only law. Indeed he perhaps did not do that at all in the above described spiritual way, but what one calls the preaching of the law in the disapproved sense, namely that one constantly demands all possible piety and sanctification with “should” and “must” and suspicion of them as nominal Christians and then after that rebukes, cuts down and shames, so that it becomes nothing.

We set out now that he does his work properly, that he preaches richly and in a comforting way when he preaches the real sermon of grace, the gospel. Then it also happens that after a long time, after real patient waiting, no fruit shows itself. There is nothing to be noticed, at least scarcely anything continuous, showing that the people have genuinely understood the sermon about faith, that they understand the word of grace, that they tasted the gracious word about Christ as the kind Word of God and that they really were comforted, comforted in Christ

on account of their sins. When a preacher looks at this or that penitent child still as most hopeful among many others, and listens at the opportunity to the confession, even if he understands what true, salutary penance is, and he does not lack the chief part, namely faith, which grasps Christ, so that he heals the broken and lays on the wounded conscience for the sake of the sins the balm of forgiveness, and yet beats them with questions such as: “Is it not true that you praise God so that he may bestow such salutary penance for life?” Then he hears the disheartened response: “Well yes, dear pastor! Not to do it again is the best penance.” – How unhappy it will be for that one! Or in the case of sickness, where one, as much as he is able, privately yet specially holds out the gospel in its sweetness, which is so very heartwarming; he holds out the free grace, the comfort of the righteousness for life, given without any of our works, and so one hopes to hear something from the form like a happy echo: “The Lord is my righteousness.” Then it sounds out the old afflicting song of self-righteousness contrary to the one: “Yes! Yes! If one only does everything, which Christ has commended, then one can surely be comforted. I have always held thus in life, and I can surely say, that I have not let it lack, etc.” With that a complacent description of his righteous Christian life follows. One does hear in that, so that such a one recognizes Christ not as a giver of righteousness, but as a giver of law.

And if it now goes on – “I leave that part of sanctification, education and true, God-pleasing living undiscussed, when from the fruit of the preaching, from salutary penance, from true repentance, from divine sorrow, and heavenly joy there is truly just about nothing to be noticed, when there are thus almost no true results.” O, that can make a preacher deeply dispirited.

With what will he comfort himself? One could certainly say to himself: “You do not even see where real fruit has occurred.” Had not Elijah desponded, because he saw no result

from all his preaching, but only saw the opposite? But what did God say to him in 1 Kings 19:18? “I want to leave reserved 7000 in Israel.” Compare that to Romans 11:3-4. – Now, it can be exactly the same in our day. Where he sees no fruit, there can very well be fruit. The comfort for Elijah is also our comfort. Luther says about Psalm 45:5 (VI., 120): “For this reason he wants to comfort us through faith, so that we should hope, even if we see no fruit of the Word. In addition we should not doubt, because it stands recorded: ‘it should and must succeed for him, so that it can not go away without value and fruit, but the same must certainly follow after it [the Word]....So that the caretaker of souls, who thus stands before the congregation of Christ, should not desist, but should teach and instruct the people with the highest diligence and faithfulness.”

Furthermore, if despondency comes to a preacher with a glance at the great things, then encouragement can come to him with a glance at the smaller things and the smallest things of all. Then we will view it as Luther does, who says about Isaiah 62:1 (VII., 451):

“The Word is held by the world in great hate as a contempt for the Adversary persecutes it with power and guile. The remainder, when they do not persecute it, either despises it or esteems it little, but rather they follow after their own activities and winnings. This dishonor pains and irritates the servants of the Word very much, so that they are sometimes tempted with impatience and would rather remain entirely silent than look at so great a despising of the Word. (Jeremiah 20:8-9; 1 Kings 19:4) It seemed just that way here for Isaiah. However, he strengthened himself against temptation, so that he would not sin by abandoning his call. Even though, he said, the Word is mocked by all, and still suffers persecution by most, yet I will not on that account abandon the preaching. For just as I did not begin preaching because of the godless, so I do not want to cease preaching because of the godless.”

Above all things it is true for a preacher, that he may take this comfort for himself from his God-pleasing calling: God, who has called you here; he is the Lord, and rules everything according to his will. You however, who are called, you are a servant and slave, and not he who rules things and sets out how they should be. Yes, you are not only one time a servant, who was dedicated into every undertaking of his Lord. Indeed, John 15:15 states: “For a servant does not know what his master does. You however I have told that you are my friends because everything which I have heard from my Father, I have revealed to you.” Even so, it does not mean as Acts 1:7 says: “It is not important for you to know the time or the hour, which the Father has set beforehand by his power.” By the form there are many times and hours, which God has reserved for himself, where we are opposed to all kinds of riddles and secrets. Thus, a humble preacher also tells himself:

Since you are not a regent
Who should do everything:
God sits in authority
And does everything well.

Certainly he carries out everything gloriously. But the way is often quite wonderful (Isaiah 28:29). It is a way through the dark. Psalm 97:2 says: “Clouds and darkness are around him.” Isaiah accordingly calls out: “Indeed, you are a hidden God, you God of Israel, the Savior” (Isaiah 45:15). And Paul says in Romans 11:33-34: “O what depth of riches, both the wisdom and knowledge of God! How entirely incomprehensible are his judgments and unsearchable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?”

“A distinction must be kept with special diligence between what is and what is not revealed expressly in God’s Word. For beyond that, about which was said so far, as was revealed in Christ, God has kept secret and has hidden still much of this secret, and has reserved his wisdom and knowledge alone, which we should not probe, nor follow our own thought into it, nor draw conclusions or speculate, but hold ourselves to the revealed Word” (M. 715, 52).

Now the cases are cited.

Again to his point: “Likewise, when we see that God gives his Word in one place, while he does not give it not to a second, when he takes it away from one place and lets it remain in another. In the same way one is concealed, blinded, given in a perverted sense, while another, in just the same guilt, is converted again, and others as well. . . . Because we neither can nor should investigate and find out the basis for everything in this article, the high apostle Paul, who, when he disputed much concerning this article from the revealed Word of God, as soon as he came to it, in order to display what God had planned beforehand from the secret of his hidden wisdom, he quelled and chopped off the discussion with the following words: ‘O what depths of wisdom. . . who can know?’ and testified, ‘who can know outside of and above that which he has revealed to us in his Word’” (M. 716, 57. 717, 64).

One may think only on our dear Savior himself. How wonderful is the way of God the Father with his Son as preacher, so that the visible fruit and accomplishments of believers are so small, so that the Savior himself, the Lord, to whom everything has gone from the Father, must say to his disciples: “You will do greater works than I” (John 14:12). From that Luther derives comfort for himself and preachers:

“One would almost like to say with Job and Jeremiah: “I wish that I had never been born.” So I would almost like to say: “I wish, that I would never come with my books. . . . again I

must never consider myself better than our dear landlord Jesus Christ, who lamented again and again: without success I have worked and my labor is lost” (XXI. 347, writing against the antinomians).

One can be opposed to the comparison of a preacher, who is a sinful man, with Christ, the perfect Son of God, who can surely pull no one into sin in the direct administration of his *Predigtamt* on earth. For this reason he can be opposed to this comparison, because what can not take place with Christ, can take place with the most faithful preacher, namely, that he through mistakes causes many failures in the office and is guilty in many cases, so that it results in so few fruits with him. Indeed, each preacher must acknowledge that. Yet when hardly any fruit are shown after sincere faithfulness, honest diligence, and wise work, he ought to always make for himself comfort from his call: ‘You are here only the servant and slave; God is the Lord. He has appointed you to preach; he himself gives the Spirit through that, who works faith, wherever and whenever he wants. He is the Lord and his courts are unfathomable and his ways unsearchable. He has his times and hours. I want to be still to what he does, whenever he may say to me: What I now do, that you do not know that I may faithfully work under his gracious help is my concern. What the work should accomplish, I must leave for God as his concern.’”

In this way Luther speaks the following comforting words: “This comfort belongs especially to the bishops and shepherds of souls; these should set themselves up in this way, so that they believe that their office is powerful, whether that is clearly seen according to all outward appearances, or if no fruit resulted. For if anyone wants to be satisfied with his office but not before he converts everyone and has made them into Christians, then he will never have any peace. Just as Abraham found everywhere the despising of God, and yet was not half-hearted, nor did he cease to continue constantly in the true religion with his person, with his

family and to instruct others in it, so also you will not be half-hearted, but will proceed comforted into your office commended to you by God and let God worry about the progress of his Word” (VII, 341. Isaiah 50:1).

On that comfort everything depends for the preacher who can truly say of the power of the divine call: ‘Here I stand for God and as his tool. My mouth is his mouth. I must not complain about a little fruit, nor for many a further comfort. God has his times and at that he lets me aim. Then it is not in vain.

Meanwhile when much misjudgment hits a faithful preacher, when it vilifies his honorable, sincere, righteous work as the case, so that no results are according to their meaning, when these thoughts master his sermon, etc, then he can comfort himself: “O that strikes me not to my dishonor, but to my honor through God’s grace. Here what falls on me, properly falls on my Lord.” Luther says: “Thus it is again before us, who preach the Word, an honor and a comfort, so that we are certainly assured that we are God’s tool; our tongue is God’s tongue and our voice is God’s voice. Then after that we can scorn with great confidence the Despiser of the Word, and say to those mockers: “You do not deride me, I who am a teacher, but you mock yourself; you do it not to me, I who am a man, but you do it to the Holy Ghost; you do not despise my words, but God’s Word. What concerns me, you will see” (XI, 58. Evang. Matth. 10).

Translated by Nathanael Bourman