

Concordia Lutheran Conference

Daily Devotions

By Carl M. Zorn

for the

Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Trinity

– Saturday –

Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed, lest he fall. — I Corinthians 10:12

Many who were once confirmed at the Lord's altar forsook Him and His Word and now worship the idols of this present world. The chief cause of this backsliding on the part of those who thus broke their confirmation vow is this: Self-confidence and spiritual complacency. They are not much concerned about their immortal soul or they would look to the only source of spiritual strength and grow in grace and spiritual knowledge (II Peter 3:18). They may have looked upon their confirmation as some kind of festivity, as a kind of "graduation day" from Christian education, their only concern at the time being their examination before the congregation. When that "ordeal" was over, they had no further cares; and they put their Catechism on the bookshelf as something to be henceforth ignored and disregarded. Others may have regarded the day of their confirmation with greater seriousness. Their hearts may indeed have burned with love for Christ Crucified and for the full truth of His Word, and for His sake they hated sin and worldliness. But they depreciated the thought, even the possibility, that they should ever "*fall from [their] own steadfastness*" (II Peter 3:17). They thought themselves equal to any temptation; and continued growth in grace and in the doctrines of God's Word did not strike them as a necessity. Why not? They thought that they were "standing" tall and steadfast on the spiritual battlefield, and they relied upon their own strength and reason. In short, they trusted in themselves (Psalm 118:8).

Beware of relying upon your own wisdom and power in a spirit of conceited self-confidence! (Proverbs 16:18). Whoever trusts in himself is half lost already. Powerful and treacherous temptations are round about you, and your sinful flesh is a tempter within you. The spirit of New Man, indeed, is willing; but the flesh is, oh, so weak (Matthew 26:41)! You are now believers by virtue of the Holy Spirit's work in you through the Gospel; but be not deceived! It is the same Gospel through which He strengthens and preserves in you faith unto salvation (I Peter 1:5; Romans 1:16). It is and ever will be "the One Thing needful." Where grace has exerted its power, the wickedness of the fleshly heart is sure to assert itself more powerfully than ever (Jeremiah 17:7-9; Romans 7:22-23). Where one devil has been driven out, seven will try to reenter and dwell there (Matthew 12:43-45). You will not live a minute in which Satan is not lying in wait for you (I Peter 5:8). He was able to persuade our first parents when they were still in the state of innocence to disobey God (Genesis 3:1-6), to turn King David into an adulterer and murderer (II Samuel 12:9) and King Solomon to follow after other gods (I Kings 11:1-13), one disciple of Christ into a traitor (Matthew 27:3), another to curse and to swear in denial of Him (Mark 14:71). Left to your own imagined strength, you will have lost the battle. Wield the Sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17b) which alone will enable you to "*resist [Satan] steadfast in the faith*" (I Peter 5:9a).

Prayer — Almighty God, merciful Father, Thou knowest that the devil, the world, and my sinful flesh have as their aim to deceive me and seduce me into disbelief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Enable me with the sword of Thy Spirit to put them to flight and by the strength that it affords to resist them steadfast in the faith, so that, though I be assailed by them, I may finally overcome them and obtain the victory for Jesus' my Savior's sake. Amen.

Rise! To arms! With prayer employ you, O Christians, lest the Foe destroy you; for Satan has designed your fall! Wield God's Word, a weapon glorious! Against each foe you'll be victorious; our God will set you o'er them all. Is Satan strong and fell? Here is Immanuel. Sing hosanna! The strong ones yield with Christ our Shield, and we as conquerors hold the field. Hymn 444, 1

Scripture Reading: 2 Peter 3:1-18