

The 23 Sunday after Pentecost
November 13, 2022

“That the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified”
(2 Thessalonians 3:1)
By Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 23 Sunday after Pentecost is
from our epistle reading, 2 Thessalonians 3:1-3.

**“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and
be glorified, just as it is with you, 2 and that we may be delivered from
unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.**

**3 But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil
one. 4 And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do
and will do the things we command you.**

**5 Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the
patience of Christ.**

Here ends our text.

I. First, our text tells us that God’s Word runs swiftly to you for your salvation

Back in my high school years when I was a bit more fleet-footed, I used to run
track. Maybe some of you also have some of you have such memories. I wasn’t
fast enough to be a sprinter, and I thought that running long distances was sort of
boring, so I settled on the 440 – once around the track – as fast as you could go.
And inevitably, when you round that final corner on empty, you just try to will
your legs reach the finish line.

Well, Paul speaks in our text of running swiftly, doesn’t he? He speaks of the
Word of the Lord running swiftly and being glorified. In a race, the first-place
finisher gets all the glory. God’s Word is personified in our text ...as if the Bible
grows legs and receives a medal of glory around its neck. Of course, the legs are
the apostles, ministers, missionaries, and all proclaimers including you, of God’s
marvelous things as we said in Psalm 98 earlier.

What things? The new song! The Good News! But before we describe the new
song, we have to take a moment to describe the old song. The old song is the harsh

reality of the law. “The wages of sin is death.” If you don’t finish first in a race...well, there’s always next time. In the spiritual race of life, there is no next time. You finish as a victor, or you are cast out as a loser. The old song of the law is the song of punishment for our sins. That’s the song of defeat, of booing. That’s a song of last place finishers, of eternal shame, of sadness.

In baseball, the losers slink away into the dugout and into the locker room. They’re forgotten. In our Old Testament reading from Malachi, the spiritual losers are not allowed to slink away - forgotten. They are held accountable for their spiritual wickedness. They are cast into the fiery oven of hell on the last day and are turned into stubble. And they are even trampled on as ashes under the soles of the feet of the redeemed. That is, the redeemed concur with God’s judgement of the wicked on the last day.

Oh how all sinful man, us included, needed a new song – a victor’s song! We could not achieve this, but God did! The new song is the song of salvation for the world in Jesus Christ. Listen to Psalm 98 describe what God has done!

**“His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.
2 The Lord has made known His salvation;
His righteousness He has revealed in the sight of the nations.
3 He has remembered His mercy and His faithfulness to the house of Israel;
All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.”**

As we heard in the 4th chapter of the book of Malachi, **“But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings;
And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves.”**

Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, offered His righteousness on the cross to pay for the world’s sin. This He has revealed to all the nations – to you and to me! So that all who fear and trust in Him receive healing, that is, His healing of our sins. We receive His righteousness through faith and are declared victors!!

Yes, the Word of the Lord has run swiftly to you and me, just as it had with the Thessalonians, and it is glorified in you and me! God receives all the glory for His Word that gives faith by the power of the Holy Spirit, forgives our sins, and gives us salvation! God has made known His salvation to you and me! What a new song this is! Sing it loudly!

Indeed, Jesus Word has come to us this day! His new song of salvation has come to you!

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” (Luke 21:33) So Jesus promises us in our Gospel reading.

II. And second, our text tells us that God’s Word runs swiftly to you to establish and guard you from the evil one

Yes, the Word of God ran swiftly to you as you were baptized in God’s Holy name. God began your race of faith, assuring you of your victory. And yet, that doesn’t mean that your race will be without obstacles.

I never ran the hurdles when I was in track. To me it seemed counter intuitive. I’m trying to run as fast as I can and then you’re going to make me run slower by going over hurdles? No, that wasn’t appealing to me.

But, that is the race of the Christian, isn’t it. Heaven and earth will pass away. And before it passes away a lot of bad stuff is going to happen in this world as we heard in our Gospel reading from Luke 21. Jesus says that there are going to be wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, pestilences, Covid, flu... **“but the end will not take place immediately”**.

In fact, Jesus prophecies of a very terrible time when Jerusalem and the temple are destroyed. This had to happen before the end of the world would come. It happened in 70 AD. The Romans laid siege to Jerusalem under emperor Titus for 5 months and according to Josephus 1 million people died.

“These days of vengeance” – God’s vengeance against the Jews who rejected His Son, had to be fulfilled. Many will fall by the edge of the sword, Jesus said and will be led away captive.

And now that this prophecy is fulfilled, we live in the last days where Jesus could come at any moment. There are many hurdles that we daily spiritually leap over by the power of God’s Word – sinful men of this world, the devil and our own sinful flesh.

“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, 2 and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.”

In Paul's day, there were brethren who believed that the last day was already upon them, so they decided not work anymore and just be busy bodies. Paul tells them that until the final day comes, **“we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.”**

Even as some of the brethren fell away and were disciplined, Paul reminds us that not everyone in this world is a believer in Christ. I know that's not a newsflash. There are unreasonable and wicked men and women who do not have faith. Yes, the economy and runaway inflation were the highest issues in this latest midterm election. But spiritual issues of abortion and by believers and unbelievers.

Not the first to do so, Michigan adopted a proposal which read thus:

“Proposal 22-3

A proposal to amend the state constitution to establish new individual right to reproductive freedom, including right to make all decisions about pregnancy and abortion;...”

Reproductive freedom to break the 5th commandment - granted. Again, not meaning to only pick on Michigan, but this came to my attention. The Attorney General Dana Nessel was up for reelection. She advocated on video, that every school should have a Drag Queen – a homosexual man dressed up as a woman – reading to stories to children. It's good she said. And she was reelected. I could go on and on about the spiritual hurdles that we face in this age by unreasonable and wicked men and women.

We pray that the Word of the Lord would run swiftly to teach people the truth about how we are fearfully and wonderfully made by our Creator, that we are made by our Creator as either a man or a woman and there is no third gender...that this gift of life is given by God and must be defended in the lives of the unborn and also the mother if her life is at stake.

The devil himself presents hurdles of unbelief to the world. He wants people to believe that there is no God. And in the church itself, he corrupts it so that the Antichrist takes power within as Paul said in the previous chapter 2 of 2 Thessalonians.

“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is

worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”

Yes, the Antichrist is human and sits in God’s house and declares himself to be God. His coming also, must occur before the end. And it has as the Lutheran Confession have declared that the office of the papacy is the Antichrist. As Dr. Kretzmann says in his popular commentary of the Bible:

“The insistence of the Roman See upon the tradition of the Church, its prohibition of Bible reading, its doctrines of the immaculate conception of Mary, of transubstantiation, of the sacrifice of the mass, of indulgences, of the veneration of saints, of purgatory, of the infallibility of the Pope, etc., the entire system of doctrine, in fact, with all its ramifications, mark the Pope of Rome as the Antichrist in the narrow or specific sense of the word.”

Yes, many hurdles of works righteousness and false doctrine continue to come from the Roman See.

And of course, Jesus tells each of us to be on guard against the hurdles that our sinful flesh daily brings us.

“But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. 35 For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

So we pray as Paul exhorts us to do, that the Word of God run swiftly to our hearts and the hearts of others to keep us strong in the faith. His Word endures! His victory endures! His right hand has given us the victory in Jesus Christ and we live with this confidence, without fear, until our Lord returns.

Oh, what a day that will be! Jesus in His glory comes to take us to eternal glory. **“Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”** And so the Word of God is glorified in you, believer in Jesus. Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)