

Watchwords for the Warfare of Life, Part Second. Words For The Day's March. I. The Leader



Continued from [Part 1 Words for the Battle-Field, V. The Enemy](#)

I. The Leader

FOR the rest, I am expecting daily the maledictions of Rome. I am disposing and arranging all things, so that when these arrive I may go forth prepared and girded; like Abraham not knowing whither, or rather knowing most certainly whither, since God is everywhere.—1518.

WHAT a beautiful, comforting Gospel that is in which the Lord Christ depicts Himself as the Good Shepherd; showing what a heart He has toward us poor sinners, and how we can do nothing to save ourselves,

The sheep cannot defend nor provide for itself, nor keep itself from going astray if the shepherd did not continually guide it; and when it has gone astray and is lost, it cannot find its way back again nor come to its shepherd; but the shepherd himself must go after it, and seek it until he find it; otherwise it would wander and be lost forever. And when he has found it he must lay it on his shoulder and carry it, lest it should again be frightened away from himself, and stray, or be devoured by the wolf.

So also is it with us. We can neither help nor counsel ourselves, nor come to rest and peace of conscience, nor escape the devil, death, and hell, if Christ Himself, by His word, did not fetch us, and call us to Himself. And even when we have come to Him, and are in the faith, we cannot keep ourselves in it, unless He lifts and carries us by His Word and power, since the devil is everywhere and at all times on the watch to do us harm. But Christ is a thousand times more willing and earnest to do all for His sheep than the best shepherd.

Not at our own Will.

I CANNOT guide myself, and yet would fain guide the world! Many a time I have made fine articles and rules, and brought them to our Lord God to guide Him. But the good God has let me see in the end how all my mastering has come to nothing.

Not at our own Pace.

THIS temptation oftentimes excuseth the godly, that their life seemeth unto them to be rather a certain slow creeping than a running. But if they abide in sound doctrine and walk in the spirit, let this nothing trouble them. God judgeth far otherwise.

For that which seemeth unto us to be very slow, and scarcely to be creeping, is running swiftly in God's sight. Again, that which is to us nothing else but sorrow, mourning, and death, is before God joy, goodness, and true felicity.

The Word of God as Daily Bread.

ALTHOUGH the works of God are not dumb, but picture Him to our eyes that we may see Him, yet He comforts us far more powerfully when He adds to His works a living Word, which the eyes do not see, but the ears hear, and the heart, through the in working of the Holy Spirit, understands.

"The Divine Art of Learning."

I ALTHOUGH I am an old Doctor of the Holy Scriptures, have not yet come out of the children's lessons; and do not yet rightly understand the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. I cannot study or learn them through and through, but I am learning daily therein; and I pray the Catechism with my son Hans, and with my little daughter Magdalene.

When, indeed, do we understand in its breadth and depth the first words of the Lord's Prayer, "*Who art in heaven*"? For if I understood and believed these few words, that God, who has created heaven and earth, and all creatures, and has them in His hand and power, is my Father, then would follow this sure conclusion, that I should also be a lord of heaven and earth; that Christ should be my brother, and all things be mine. Gabriel must be my servant, and Raphael my guide, and all angels must minister to me in my needs.

But now, that my faith may be exercised and preserved, my Father in heaven lets me be thrown into a dungeon, or fall into the water. In such trials we see and experience how far we understand these words, how our faith totters, and how great our weakness is.

Therefore, the one little word, "Thine" or "Our," is the hardest word in the Holy Scriptures, as is to be seen in the first Commandment, "*I am the Lord thy God.*"

TO fathom and truly to exhaust one single word in the Holy Scriptures is impossible. I defy all learned men and theologians to do it.

For they are the words of the Holy Spirit; therefore they are too high for all men; and we new-born Christians have only the first-fruits, not the tithe.

I have many times thought of commenting on the Ten Commandments, but when I

have only begun with the first word, which sounds thus, "*I am the Lord thy God,*" I have stopped short at the little word "*I.*" And not yet can I understand that "*I.*"

OH, my Lord God, the Holy Scriptures are not so easily understood, even when one reads them diligently. Let us learn well these three words, and ever remain learners before them: to love, fear, and trust God.

BEFORE a man can truly understand the first word in Genesis, "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,*" he dies. If he lived a thousand years he would not learn those words through and through.

MY best and Christian counsel is, that all should draw from this spring or wellhead; that is, should read the Bible diligently. For he who is well grounded and exercised in the text will be a good and perfect theologian; since one saying or text from the Bible is better than many glosses and commentaries, which are not strong and sound, and do not stand the enemy's thrust.

THE Bible is a very large, wide forest, wherein stand many trees, of all kinds, from which we can gather many kinds of fruits. For in the Bible we have rich consolation, doctrine, instruction, exhortation, warning, promises, and threatenings. But in all this forest there is not a tree which I have not shaken, and broken off at least a pair of apples or pears from it.

CABALA was good until Christ; but now that Christ has come, and His grave stands open, all that is over. Our fanatics say that much is still dark in the Holy Scriptures, and not yet manifest. That is false, and not true; for the sepulcher is open, and Christ has come forth into the light. Therefore, whosoever knows Christ, truly is a master in the Holy Scriptures, and remains a master.

IN this Book thou findest the swaddling-clothes, and the manger wherein Christ is laid. Thither the angels directed the shepherds. These swaddling-clothes may indeed be poor and little; but precious is Christ, the treasure laid therein.

ONCE when Jeit Dietrich said to the Doctor, in reference to heresies, "It would be better to pray not to be learned in the Holy Scriptures than to be learned in them," Doctor Luther answered, "No, no! we might as well pray that there should be no gold in the world, or no sun in the world; because without the sun many crimes could not be committed.

It is an abominable slander against the Holy Scriptures, and against all Christendom, to say that the Holy Scriptures are obscure. There never was written on earth a clearer book than the Holy Scriptures; compared with all other books, it is as the sun to all other light.

Let none tempt you away from the Scriptures. For if you step out of these you are lost; your enemies lead you whither they will. But if you keep to them you have overcome, and will heed their raging no more than the rock heeds the waves and billows of the sea.

Only be certain and doubt not that nothing is clearer than the sun, that is, the Scriptures. If a cloud glides before them, behind them is nothing but the same clear sun. So, if there is a dark saying in the Scriptures, doubt not; behind it, most surely, is shining the same truth which in other places is clear; and let him who cannot pierce the dark, keep to what is clear.

THE Word of God is a light which shines in darkness, brighter than the sun at mid-day. For in death not only is the light of this material sun extinguished, but even of reason with all her wisdom. But there, with all faithfulness, the Word of God still shines, an eternal sun, which faith only sees, and follows on into the clear Eternal Life.

I HAVE often said that from the beginning I have prayed the Lord that He would send me neither dream, nor vision, nor angel. But I have entreated also, with earnest prayer, that He would give me the true and sure understanding of the Holy Scriptures.

"AH, if I were only a good poet," he sighed, "I would fain write a costly Carmen (Latin for "poem" or "song," symbolizing beauty, creativity, and expression.), Song, or Poem, concerning the use, power, and fruitfulness of the Divine Word."

HE said, "You have now the Bible in German. Now I will cease from my labors. You have what you want. Only see to it, and use it after my death. It has cost me labor enough. What an unspeakable gift it is that God speaks to us."

IN the evening, bear something of sacred words with thee in thy heart to bed; chewing the cud of which, like a clean ruminant animal, thou mayst sweetly fall asleep.

But let it not be much in quantity; rather little, well pondered and understood; so that rising in the morning thou mayst find ready for thee the relics of last night's feast.

For in all study of the Sacred Scriptures we should despair of our own wit and labor, and seek understanding with fear and humility from God. At the close, and often during the reading, lift up the eyes of thy heart, and of thy body, to Christ, with a brief sigh imploring His grace, saying and thinking, "Grant, Lord, that I may rightly understand these things; yet more, that I may do them. Behold, Lord Jesus, if this study be not to Thy glory, let me not understand a syllable. But give to me whatever shall seem to Thee for Thy glory in me a sinner."

SAINT JOHN the Evangelist speaks majestically, with very simple words; as when he says, "*In the beginning was the Word.*"

See with what simple words he describes God the Creator, and all the creatures; as with a flash of lightning.

If a philosopher and man of learning had undertaken to write of such things, how would he have gone round about with wondrous, swelling, high-sounding words, magnificent but obscure, *de ente et essentia* (Latin meaning of being and essence), of self-existence, and divine and heavenly powers, so that one

could have understood nothing. Never were simpler words; yet under such simplicity he says all.

Every word in him is worth an hundredweight; as when he writes, "He came into a city of Samaria called Sychar, and spoke with a woman;" and, "the Father honoreth the Son."

They are indeed, in appearance, slumbering words; but when one wakes them up, and unveils them, and earnestly meditates on them, they are found indeed worthy.

UNDER the papacy they were constantly making pilgrimages to the shrines of the Saints; to Rome, Jerusalem, St. Iago de Compostella, in order to make satisfaction for sins; but now we may make true Christian pilgrimages, in faith, which will please God; that is, if we diligently read the Prophets, Psalms, Evangelists. Thus shall we make journeys, not through the earthly cities of the saints, but in our thoughts and hearts to God Himself; thus shall we make pilgrimages to the true Promised Land, and Paradise of Eternal Life.



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