

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Jeremiah 23:16-29

¹⁶ This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. ¹⁷ They keep saying to those who despise me, ‘The LORD says: You will have peace.’ And to all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts they say, ‘No harm will come to you.’ ¹⁸ But which of them has stood in the council of the LORD to see or to hear his word? Who has listened and heard his word? ¹⁹ See, the storm of the LORD will burst out in wrath, a whirlwind swirling down on the heads of the wicked. ²⁰ The anger of the LORD will not turn back until he fully accomplishes the purposes of his heart. In days to come you will understand it clearly. ²¹ I did not send these prophets, yet they have run with their message; I did not speak to them, yet they have prophesied. ²² But if they had stood in my council, they would have proclaimed my words to my people and would have turned them from their evil ways and from their evil deeds. ²³ “Am I only a God nearby,” declares the LORD, “and not a God far away? ²⁴ Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?” declares the LORD. “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” declares the LORD. ²⁵ “I have heard what the prophets say who prophesy lies in my name. They say, ‘I had a dream! I had a dream!’ ²⁶ How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds? ²⁷ They think the dreams they tell one another will make my people forget my name, just as their fathers forgot my name through Baal worship. ²⁸ Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream, but let the one who has my word speak it faithfully. For what has straw to do with grain?” declares the LORD. ²⁹ “Is not my word like fire,” declares the LORD, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?”

23:16 DO NOT LISTEN – Cf 5:13. (TLSB)

visions. “Revelations” or “prophecies” (see 1Sa 3:1; Pr 29:18; Isa 1:1; Ob 1). (CSB)

Revelations of their own imagination. (Kretzmann)

from their own minds. See v. 26; 14:14. False prophets are like preachers of a “different gospel” (Gal 1:6–9). (CSB)

Their so-called messages to the people being made without authorization of Jehovah. (Kretzmann)

23:17 *You will have peace.* The essential message of the false prophets (see 6:14 and note; 8:11; 14:13 and note; cf. 28:8–9). (CSB)

Irresponsible coddling of evildoers. (TLSB)

stubbornness of their hearts. See note on 3:17. (CSB)

A willful disobedience to the Lord's will. (Kretzmann)

NO HARM WILL COME TO YOU – Proclaiming a security which the Lord had expressly denied them. (Kretzmann)

23:18 *council of the LORD.* God's heavenly confidants (see v. 22; Job 15:7–10 and note; see also 1Ki 22:19–22; Job 1:6; 2:1; 29:4 and note; Ps 89:7). In Am 3:7 the Hebrew for "council" is translated "plan," the purposes that God has promised to reveal to his chosen servants (see v. 20). (CSB)

They did not associate with the Lord like the prophets to whom He entrusted the task of "revealing His secret" (Am 3:7). (TLSB)

LISTENED AND HEARD HIS WORD – The prophet again denies that any of these false, self-appointed prophets can be mouthpieces of Jehovah. Jeremiah, on the contrary, now proclaims a word of the Lord which is entirely different in content from the inventions of the false prophets. (Kretzmann)

23:19–20 Repeated almost verbatim in 30:23–24. (CSB)

23:19 *storm ... whirlwind.* A vivid image of God's wrath. (CSB)

Same threat is found in 30:23–24. (TLSB)

23:20 ANGER OF THE LORD WILL NOT TURN BACK – not cease from carrying out His judgment. (Kretzmann)

UNTIL HE FULLY ACCOMPALISHES – everything that He had planned with regard to the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. (Kretzmann)

DAYS TO COME – At the time when His judgment would strike the people. (Kretzmann)

you will understand it clearly. Unlike the false prophets, who continued to mislead their hearers even in Babylonia after the exile of 597 B.C. (see 29:20–23). (CSB)

They will be fully aware of the truth of His threats. At the same time the Lord denies that He has in any way authorized the deceivers of His people. (Kretzmann)

23:21 *I did not send.* See v. 32; 29:9; contrast 1:7; Isa 6:8; Eze 3:5. (CSB)

They had not been commissioned as His messengers. (Kretzmann)

HAVE RUN – As messengers. (TLSB)

did not speak to them. See 29:23. (CSB)

Insisting that they possessed the prophetic spirit of the true God. (Kretzmann)

23:22 *my council.* See note on v. 18. (CSB)

In other words, they would preach repentance from idolatry instead of confirming the people in their false security, which has ever been a trick of such as falsely proclaimed themselves messengers of the Lord. To give weight to these reproofs, the Lord now shows why it is that He is familiar with the hypocritical conduct of the false prophets. (Kretzmann)

23:23 *God nearby ... God far away.* God is both transcendent and immanent; he lives “in a high and holy place, but also with him who is ... lowly in spirit” (Isa 57:15). (CSB)

23:24 *hide ... so that I cannot see him.* See Job 26:6; Ps 139:7–12; Am 9:2–4. (CSB)

I fill heaven and earth. See Isa 66:1. (CSB)

Luther: “Now, if someone has Him who fills all things, he has more than the whole world. He has the real Fountain, not merely a spoonful, which is what the world would be in comparison with this Fountain. Even if God gives much—a kingdom, Persia, the papacy, an empire—it is still only a small leftover, a bit of bread, a spoonful, a mouthful. It is not the real Fountain but only a piece that He gives everyone and tosses up for scrambles. But when a man has Him who has more than He can give away, as the saying goes, then his heart knows that he has a gracious God and all things in Him. What could such a heart ever lack?” (AE 13:405–6). (TLSB)

Nothing being hidden from His omniscient gaze, from His omnipresence. With these attributes at His disposal, the Lord is naturally familiar with the acts and thoughts of all men everywhere. (Kretzmann)

23:25 *lies.* See 5:12. (CSB)

They offered the dross of their own imagination instead of the gold of God's Word. (Kretzmann)

in my name. See Dt 18:20, 22. (CSB)

dream.† God used dreams to reveal himself and to communicate with people (Ge 28:12–13; Nu 12:6; Mt 1:20; 2:12, 19), but the false prophets promulgate “false dreams” (v. 32), fabricated in “the delusions of their own minds” (v. 26). (CSB)

23:26 *hearts ... minds.* The Hebrew is the same for both words. (CSB)

their own minds. See note on v. 16. (CSB)

23:27 *my name*. To forget the Lord's name is tantamount to forgetting him. (CSB)

forgot ... through Baal worship. When Judah's ancestors forgot God, they began to serve Baal (see Jdg 3:7; 1Sa 12:9–10). (CSB)

Prophets who taught contrary to the doctrines revealed by God were to be branded impostors. (TLSB)

The Lord now sets forth the principle which is to guide those who claim for themselves the authority of His messengers. (Kretzmann)

23:28–29 The true word of God is symbolized in three figures of speech (grain, fire, hammer). (CSB)

23:28 **SPEAK IT FAITHFULLY** – God works through His powerful Word. Corruption of His Word leads to confused teaching, hence the responsibility of godly teachers is great. (TLSBB)

straw ... grain. Of the two, only grain can feed and nourish (see note on 15:16). (CSB)

Contrast between the less useful straw and the precious, life-giving Word of God that nourishes faith. (TLSB)

The dreams of the false prophets are chaff, empty straw; God's Word alone is the grain, the real substance. And still more the Lord asserts in characterizing His Word, the only message that has the right to be proclaimed as the eternal truth. (Kretzmann)

23:29 *like fire*. See note on 20:9. The fire of the divine word ultimately tests “the quality of each man's work” (1Co 3:13). (CSB)

Devouring and destroying all the philosophy of men which will not stand the test of His eternal truth. (Kretzmann)

This is God's thunderbolt. By the Law He strikes down both obvious sinners and false saints. He declares no one to be in the right, but drives them all together to terror and despair. This is the hammer.... This is not active contrition or manufactured repentance. It is passive contrition, true sorrow of heart, suffering, and the sensation of death” (SA III III 2). (TLSB)

like a hammer. Similarly, the divine word works relentlessly, like a sword or hammer, to judge “the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Heb 4:12). (CSB)

Its power overcoming even the hardest and the strongest fabric of men's imagination. (Kretzmann)

EPISTLE – Hebrews 11:17-31, 12:1-3

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, ¹⁸ even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” ¹⁹ Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death. ²⁰ By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future. ²¹ By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph’s sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. ²² By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones. ²³ By faith Moses’ parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king’s edict. ²⁴ By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. ²⁵ He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. ²⁶ He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. ²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel. ²⁹ By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. ³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days. ³¹ By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

11:11 BY FAITH – Faith enabled Abraham to become a father even though he was old and Sarah had never been able to have children. Abraham trusted that God would keep his promise. (Concordia Journal – July 2001)

Sarah ... was barren. Probably referring to the fact that she was far past childbearing (Ge 18:11–12; see note on Ge 11:30). (CSB)

Guthrie says: “It is perhaps surprising to find Sarah spoken of as an example of faith, for according to Genesis she was more conspicuous as an example of doubt... Her mockery must have turned to faith long before Isaac was born.” Westcott: “Sarah, who was at first unbelieving, was at last inspired with her husband’s faith by his example and influence. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

11:12 *as good as dead.* Because he was 100 years old (see Ge 21:5; Ro 4:19). (CSB)

nenekromenou – having died. Here is impossibility compounded. (Concordia Journal – July 2001)

Guthrie: “Teeming life was to come from apparent death, a superb example of God’s ways differing from men’s estimate of what is possible.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

stars in the sky ... sand on the seashore. See Ge 13:16 and note; 15:5; 22:17; 26:4; 1Ki 4:20. (CSB)

11:13-16 These verses might be considered a sort of parenthesis because verses 17-19 return to the theme of Abraham. These verses might be used as a text on the occasion of the death of a Christian. OT saints looked forward to the fulfillment of promises in time and therefore looked forward to everlasting life. NT Christians look forward to the fulfillment of promises after death and therefore look forward to everlasting life. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

11:13 ALL THESE – Refers to the people mentioned in verse 4. They did not see the fulfillment of heaven in their lifetime but in faith were assured of the promise. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

The word “all” means all OT believers. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

The sacred writer here shows that his definition of faith applies well in the case of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob: These all died in keeping with their faith, although they had not become partakers of the promises, but had seen them from afar and hailed them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. As the patriarchs had believed during their lives, so they died in their faith, as it behooved men that had seen the day of the Lord, the coming salvation, from afar, through the promises of the Lord, John 8, 56. They were so firmly persuaded that God would fulfill His word in every particular that they actually saw the fulfillment. They hailed the promises from afar, as people on board of a ship may wave recognition to a group of friends on shore. The fact that the Gospel-promises were not fulfilled while they lived, and that they did not see the Messiah in person, did not influence their faith. They cheerfully confessed and called themselves strangers and pilgrims here on earth, a fact for which their being sojourners in the Land of Promise was a type. Cp. Gen. 23, 4; 47, 9; Ps. 39, 12; 1 Pet. 1, 1; 2, 11. (Kretzmann)

THINGS PROMISED – *Tas epaggelias* – This takes into account not just the promises, but also the very content, the substance, of the those promises. (Concordia Journal – July 2001)

saw them and welcomed them from a distance. By faith they saw—dimly—these heavenly realities and were sure that what they hoped for would ultimately be theirs (see v. 1). (CSB)

aliens and strangers on earth. Their true home was in heaven. (CSB)

Bengel remarks: “The worldly cleave to the world; believers scarcely cling to it in any part.” He observes that this verse plainly refers to John 8:56. Guthrie says: “It is all of a piece with the underlying principle of the epistle that it is the heavenly and not the earthly things which are of most importance.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

11:14-16 This open confession of the patriarchs, as evidenced in their lives, is further discussed: For they that say such things plainly show that they are in search of a fatherland. The acknowledgment and confession of the patriarchs that they were strangers and sojourners here on earth, that this world was not their home country, made it very evident that the true homeland must be elsewhere, that they are eagerly awaiting their entrance into that promised place. They think of, have in view, and are making for, a land which they can call their own, which is their own by the gift of God. Their entire attitude agreed with this state of mind: And if, indeed, they

had cherished memories of that land which they had left, they would have had opportunity to return; but now they aspire after a better one, which is the heavenly one. If at any time during their sojourn in Canaan and also in Egypt the patriarchs had had regrets on account of their having left Mesopotamia, if they had cherished fond memories of that earthly country from which Abraham had gone forth, if their sighing had concerned itself with a mere earthly paradise, then it would have been an easy matter for them to return to their former homeland. But it was not an earthly country that their faith was aspiring after with such eager sighing, but the promised heavenly land, the city whose possession was assured by virtue of the Messiah's merits. Thus the cordial relationship between God and them is brought out: Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them. Because the faith of the patriarchs in the promises of God was so implicit, because they credited His promises even though they themselves did not actually become partakers of them while living here on earth, therefore God was not ashamed of them, did not hesitate to confess them, was willing to be called their God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Ex. 3, 15. For this reason, also, He was preparing for them a city, the heavenly Jerusalem, the mansions above, which would in every way satisfy the hopes and expectations they had held all their lives, John 14, 1-3. This is also the goal of the hopes, the expectation of the faith, of all believers to this day - Jerusalem, the city fair and high. (Kretzmann)

11:14 ARE LOOKING FOR - This remains the confession of God's people while on earth. They are never completely at home in the surroundings of this present world. (Concordia Journal – July 2001)

country of their own. That better, heavenly country (v. 16). (CSB)

patris – It is the fatherland or one's native county to which one belongs. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

Patris, which occurs only here in the epistles, means “fatherland.” Under ordinary circumstances people speak of a fatherland as a country from which they have come. These people set their hearts on (that's the meaning of *epizateo*) a fatherland to which they were going. RSV and NKJV translate “a homeland.” Bengel says: “Citizens of the world do not call themselves strangers in the world.” Guthrie says of *patris*: “It means a fatherland where the nation can find its roots.” Westcott observes: “As strangers' they acknowledge that they were in a foreign lands; as sojourners' that they had no permanent possession, no rights of citizenship. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

11:15 TO RETURN – Bruce aptly points out: “When Abraham's servant suggested to his master that Isaac might go to Mesopotamia in person to persuade his bride to come to Canaan, Abraham said: ‘Beware that thou bring not my son thither again’ (Gen 24:6).” Bengel reminds us that the patriarchs had this opportunity for many years. Guthrie observes: “This is all the more remarkable when it is recognized that the land they left behind had reached a more advanced stage of civilization than the land of Canaan to which they went. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

11:16 WERE LONGING - *oregontai* – continual, ongoing striving or desire. It was a vision of something better than where they were. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

GOD IS NOT ASHAMED TO BE CALLED THEIR GOD – Dio ouk epaischunetai autos o Theos – God is not ashamed of them. In grace, God gives his name to us, putting it on in Baptism, bringing us to faith in Christ and making us members of Christ and of his family. (Concordia Journal – July 2001)

Bengel observes: “Not only is he not ashamed, but glories in it.” We agree with those who consider epikaleisthai epexegetical: “God is not ashamed of them, namely, to be called their God.” How often did not God identify Himself as “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” The person who trusts God’s promises can put his own name there. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

prepared a city for them. City (v. 10) and country are interchangeable in the concluding chapters of this letter (vv. 9–10, 14–16; 13:14). The ultimate reality is represented by the new Jerusalem in John’s vision of the believer’s eternal state (see Rev 21:2). (CSB)

A tent is living place but only temporary. A city is a dwelling place, but permanent, in comparison. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

11:17 See Ge 22. (CSB)

his one and only son. See Ge 22:2, 12, 16; Jn 3:16; Ro 8:32. (CSB)

What God asked him must have seemed not only incredible, but completely contrary to all that God had promised. (PBC)

11:18 YOUR OFFSPRING – From Isaac would come not only physical Israel, but spiritual Israel, composed of all true believers in Christ, Abraham’s greatest seed. To sacrifice Isaac seemed to mean canceling the fulfillment of that glorious promise. (PBC)

11:19 *God could raise the dead.* So strong was Abraham’s faith that he actually believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead if necessary, an event that did occur figuratively when the substitute ram was provided (Ge 22:13). (CSB)

11:20 See Ge 27:27–40. (CSB)

Isaac, blind and aged, could not see which son was kneeling before him, but with the eyes of faith he could see what the future held for each of them. (PBC)

11:21 See Ge 47:29–31; 48:8–20. (CSB)

Jacob in his early days had leaned too heavily on his own resources and skill, but on his deathbed he leaned on his staff in worshipful trust in God’s faithfulness. (PBC)

11:22 See Ge 50:24–25. Jacob (v. 21) and Joseph are additional examples of those whose faith is no less strong at death than in life (v. 13). (CSB)

Joseph, though he could have had his body impressively preserved in some Egyptian pyramid, looked ahead with eyes of faith through the mist of 400 years to Canaan. (PBC)

11:23–29 See Ac 7:20–44. (CSB)

11:23 *Moses' parents.* See Ex 6:20; Nu 26:58–59. (CSB)

Joy at their baby's birth must have been dampened by concern when they saw it was a boy. Anxiety must have shadowed everyday of those three months as they struggled to keep quiet and secret a growing baby boy. But they did it – “by faith.” (PBC)

no ordinary child. See note on Ex 2:2. (CSB)

Exodus says, “he was a fine child.” (PBC)

ESV has “fine.” Hebrew tob is used for in Genesis 1 to describe God's “good” creation. (TLSB)

the king's edict. To kill all Israelite males at birth (Ex 1:16, 22). (CSB)

11:24 MOSES...REFUSED – It says, he said no to the elite position and exalted privileges he had as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. By faith he did this, knowing what his decision would cost him. Deliberately he shook off the position of royal blood and chose identification with the [people of God. (PBC)

11:25 *pleasures of sin.* The luxury and prestige in Egypt's royal palace. (CSB)

From his decision came mistreatment; what the people of God were going through fell on him. For Moses to remain in Pharaoh's court even after knowing that God had called him to rescue Israel would have been sin. Sin's pleasures are only for a short time when compared to what God has in store for his people. (PBC)

11:26 *for the sake of Christ.* Although Moses' understanding of the details of the Messianic hope was extremely limited, he chose to be associated with the people through whom that hope was to be realized. (CSB)

treasures of Egypt. The priceless treasures of King Tutankhamun's tomb alone included several thousand pounds of pure gold. (CSB)

11:27 *By faith he left Egypt.* Probably referring to his flight to Midian in the Sinai peninsula when he was 40 years old (Ex 2:11–15; Ac 7:23–29). (CSB)

not fearing the king's anger. Exodus indicates that Moses was afraid (Ex 2:14) but does not expressly say of whom. And it tells us that he fled from Pharaoh when Pharaoh tried to kill him (Ex 2:15) but does not expressly say that he fled out of fear. The author of Hebrews capitalizes on these features of the account to highlight the fact that, in his fleeing from Pharaoh,

Moses was sustained by his trust in God that the liberation of Israel would come and that he would have some part in it. (CSB)

he persevered. For 40 years in Midian (Ac 7:30). (CSB)

saw him who is invisible. See vv. 1, 6. (CSB)

11:28 See Ex 12. (CSB)

11:29 See Ex 14–15. The third and final 40-year period of Moses’ life was spent leading the Israelites through the desert. At the age of 120 years he died in Moab (Dt 34:1–7). (CSB)

11:30 Moses’ place as leader was taken by Joshua, who brought the people of Israel into the land of promise. (CSB)

Jericho. The first great obstacle to their conquest of the land was captured by faith without a battle (Jos 6). (CSB)

11:31 *the prostitute Rahab.* A designation describing her way of life prior to her newly found faith (Jos 2:8–11; 6:22–25); also a testimony to God’s boundless grace that can reach down and redeem and raise any sinner to eternal dignity. (CSB)

welcomed the spies. See Jas 2:25. (CSB)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. ² Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

12:1 *surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses.* The imagery suggests an athletic contest in a great amphitheater. The witnesses are the heroes of the past who have just been mentioned (ch. 11). They are not spectators but inspiring examples. The Greek word translated “witnesses” is the origin of the English word “martyr” and means “testifiers, witnesses.” They bear testimony to the power of faith and to God’s faithfulness. (CSB)

Like a massive cloud those OT heroes of faith surround the readers, giving vivid example of the endurance and eventual triumph of faith. “Don’t give up!” those heroes would shout from the pages of Holy Scripture, “Keep on running? You’re on the right track!” (PBC)

The phrase *kai hēmei* is emphatic: “We, too, on our part.” It places us beside all the glorious believers mentioned in chapter 11. Our faith, our strength, our conflict, and our crown is the same as theirs. Their past life still speaks to us about what faith really is. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

The verbal adjective *heuperistato* does not occur elsewhere in Greek literature, and the exact meaning is uncertain. The most likely meaning is “easily ensnaring,” but “dangerous” is also possible. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

The “great cloud of witnesses” refers to the many great persons of faith enumerated in chapter eleven: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. You may wish to cite a Biblical story illustrating how one or more of these persons fixed their eyes on the Lord. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

The first three words of this verse range us along side of the OT believers mentioned in chapter 11. Even the believers in the OT are a countless host. They are witnesses in the sense that they are examples to us of faith and endurance. They surround us. God has placed them all about us in our thinking to encourage us. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

THROW OFF...HINDERS – Paul is using the metaphor of a runner. Runners must put off every encumbrance. *kai* is plainly exegetical. Illustration becomes application. *euperistaton* occurs only here in NT. It is variously rendered “which so easily besets us, which clings so closely, which holds on to us so tightly, which we easily fall into, that so readily entangles our feet.” Don’t limit this to besetting sin. It denotes the flesh, the old Adam. Read Romans 7. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

A runner in a race naturally wants to carry no excess weight and tries hard to avoid obstacles that would trip him. Sin will hamper us in the race of life unless we confess it and resist it. Giving in to sin will make us stumble. The present subjunctive of *treveu* implies that the readers have been running and still are now. It may be translated “let us keep on running.” Perseverance (*hupomonē*) connotes holding out under a severe strain. The runners are not to let down under the strain, to slow up, or even to stop for any reason. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

run with perseverance. See Ac 20:24; 1Co 9:24–26; Gal 2:2; 5:7; Php 2:16; 2Ti 4:7. The Christian life is pictured as a long-distance race rather than a short sprint. Some Hebrew Christians were tempted to drop out of the contest because of persecution. (CSB)

Running a race is strenuous work. The writer calls it *agona* which denotes strenuous conflict. We are told that it is laid before us. God has placed a mighty host around us and has laid the strenuous race before us. God encourages Christians through their mutual and reciprocal encouragement. On this verse Guthrie says: “These witness bear witness to the faithfulness of God in sustaining the.” Bengel identifies sin here with unbelief. Lenski: “their past life and their death still speak to us about what faith really is.” Bruce: “it is not so much they who look at us as we look to them – for encouragement.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

“Don’t give up!” those heroes would shout from the pages of Holy Scriptures, “Keep on running! You’re on the right track!” (PBC)

12:2 *fix our eyes on Jesus.* Just as a runner concentrates on the finish line, we should concentrate on Jesus, the goal and objective of our faith (Php 3:13–14). (CSB)

We do this by looking exclusively to Jesus. The word means to rivet one's attention on one person or thing. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

The participle *aforōnte* introduces the motive for running with unfaltering perseverance. It may be translated “ever looking away (durative present) to the author and perfecter of our faith.” Along the way, we may see many things that could dishearten us or even bring us to a halt. But by always fixing our eyes on Jesus, our speed will increase and our stamina will grow. Christ is the source of our faith, and he sustains it through the Word and Sacraments, and leads us to the heavenly goal of our faith. All along the way he is the object of our faith. Rom 1:17 says, “In the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last” (NIV; NIV note: “from faith to faith”; RSV: “through faith for faith”). The faith was defined in 11:1, so it is specific: “being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

The competition in the race is not between believers. Rather, each believer struggles against his or her sinful nature and against the snares of sin met along the course. In addition, the believer struggles to pursue by faith the things hoped for, which are not seen. There is a competition between the allure of the visible things of this world, and the blessings of Christ and riches of heaven which are perceived only by faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

The author uses the present tense in the Greek to remind us to keep fixing our eyes on Jesus. (PBC)

author. See note on 2:10. (CSB)

Westcott notes that Chrysostom said of the word *archagon*: “He Himself placed faith in us. He Himself gave the power.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

He's the one who authors, continues and brings our faith to perfection in heaven. From A to Z He is both the object and the cause of our faith, giving us something to believe and the faith to do so. (PBC)

perfecter of our faith. Our faith, which has its beginning in him, is also completed in him; he is both the start and the end of the race. He is also the supreme witness who has already run the race and overcome. (CSB)

Beck renders it: “who gives us our faith from start to finish.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

joy set before him. His accomplishing our eternal redemption and his glorification at the Father's “right hand” (see note on 1:3; cf. Isa 53:10–12). (CSB)

endured the cross. See Php 2:5–8. (CSB)

scorning its shame. As with Christ, the humiliation of our present suffering for the gospel's sake is far outweighed by the prospect of future glory (see 11:26; Mt 5:10–12; Ro 8:18; 2Co 4:17; 1Pe 4:13; 5:1, 10). (CSB)

Guthrie remarks: “An attitude which does not ignore the shame, but holds it to be of no consequence in view of the joy.” Bruce: “This disgrace Jesus disregarded, as something not worthy to be taken into account when it was a question of His obedience to the will of God.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

SAT DOWN...RIGHT HAND...THRONE OF GOD – The point here is that His suffering came to an end, He was victorious and now reigns forever. That should hearten us in our daily battles with sin as we run the race. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

Christ, the object of our faith, is our role model since he has already finished the race. He is the one “who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” The “joy set before him” is the glorification that followed his sufferings, his kingship over all believers, and the joy of redeeming fallen humanity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

12:3 *Consider him.* He suffered infinitely more than any of his disciples is asked to suffer—a great encouragement for us when we are weary and tempted to become discouraged. (CSB)

We are to look Him over well and check Him from all sides. When feet fell like lead and we think we can't run another step, when hearts are as heavy as our legs and souls are ready to give up, then it's time to consider Jesus. (PBC)

not grow weary. See Isa 40:28–31. (CSB)

From Him comes not only an example of how to run, but power for faith to pick up the pace and lengthen the stride on the track to heaven. (PBC)

It is a picture of an athlete relaxing before his goal is reached. That is a pitiful sight. We dare not give up. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

GOSPEL –Luke 12: 49-53

⁴⁹ “I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! ⁵⁰ But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed! ⁵¹ Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. ⁵² From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. ⁵³ They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

12:49 *fire*. Applied figuratively in different ways in the NT (see note on 3:16). Here it is associated with judgment (v. 49) and division (v. 51). Judgment falls on the wicked, who are separated from the righteous. (CSB)

Proclamation of the judgment (cf 3:9; 9:5; 10:13–15). (TLSB)

Jesus longs to reveal the Kingdom, not only through judgment, but also and especially through the revelation of His grace and the deliverance it brings about. (TLSB)

εἰ ... ἀνήφθη—εἰ with an augmented indicative poses a contrary-to-fact condition. Not yet is it the hour for the fire to be kindled. (CC p. 520)

Jesus continues to explain to his disciples-apostles the foundation for their leadership as stewards of the mysteries and why hypocrisy and the love of possessions are dangerous distractions from waiting for the coming of the Son of Man. Their watchful service will be during a time of division. But the patient perseverance required of them and the anguish they may endure are put in proper perspective by the immeasurably greater anguish and perseverance of their Lord himself (12:49–50). Those who have been baptized into Christ undergo death and resurrection with him (Rom 6:1–4; Col 2:11–13). Thus the hostility they may suffer is a consequence of their baptismal incorporation into Christ (cf. Jn 15:18–25). (CC p. 521)

“Fire” recalls John’s preaching and baptism, where fire refers to God’s wrath and eschatological judgment (3:9, 17; cf. 9:54; 17:29; 22:55). John’s baptism is preparation for the coming of God’s kingdom in Jesus, which entails the pouring forth of God’s eschatological wrath on the earth. Already with John’s baptism, the world is asking, “When and on whom will this eschatological wrath be poured?” Jesus, in his baptism (3:21), in his Nazareth sermon (4:16–21), and in his response to John’s disciples about his Messiahship (7:18–23), shows that he comes in solidarity with fallen humankind, bearing in himself the wrath of God against sin. The fire of God’s eschatological wrath, then, is to be poured out first and foremost on Jesus, the one who comes in solidarity with sinful humanity and in substitution for it (22:37). (CC p. 522)

Fire can either *destroy* or it can *purify*. The fire of God’s wrath laid on Jesus will lead to his death and will destroy the power of sin and hell. This fire is first laid on Jesus when he enters the waters of his baptism by John. From his baptism, Jesus stands under the Father’s wrath and continues to stand under the Father’s wrath until that wrath is satiated in his crucifixion. With every sickness Jesus heals, every sin he forgives, every dead person he raises, Jesus is both releasing creation from its bondage and absorbing into his body all sickness, sin, and death. This is how he puts himself in the position to receive God’s wrath against sin. From the moment he steps forward publicly in his baptism as the world’s Messiah, this process begins. For this he came. Jesus knows that he is to bear this fiery wrath and eschatological judgment, and his passionate plea (12:50b) expresses his wish that it were already accomplished. Jesus knows that the fullness of God’s wrath is yet to fall on him, and he yearns that his substitutionary atonement on the cross would come soon (12:49). (CC p. 522)

The lake of fire in Rev 20:10, 14–15 suggests a connection between the eschatological wrath of God, which Jesus suffered on the cross, and a kind of “baptism by immersion.” On the cross, Jesus is thrown into that lake of fire on our behalf; thus he underwent a “baptism by fire” on our behalf. When we are baptized into him, we are baptized into his death and resurrection (Rom 6:1–4; Col 2:11–13), so we too experience this fire. We endure the fire of God’s eschatological wrath as destructive in our death to sin, and we are purified by the holy fire of rebirth through the Spirit. See further the excursus “Baptism in Luke-Acts.” (CC p. 522)

12:50 *baptism*. The suffering that Jesus was to endure on the cross (see note on Mk 10:38). (CSB)

Figurative way of referring to the cross. (TLSB)

For the early catechumenate, Jesus’ baptism in water and his “baptism” in the shedding of his blood show how Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are related.

God’s wrath poured upon Jesus resulted in his bleeding and so caused his blood to wash down his body. A similar bloody washing occurred when “the blood of the covenant” was sprinkled on the people by Moses (Ex 24:8). Isaiah describes the Messiah as one who “will sprinkle many nations” (Is 52:15). In the OT there is a connection between the blood shed in sacrifice and the application of this blood by sprinkling as a kind of washing of the people. After sprinkling the people with “the blood of the covenant,” Moses and the elders miraculously eat and drink in God’s presence on the mountain (Ex 24:9–11). The very blood that cleanses in baptism—the blood applied through water and the Word by the Spirit—is also the cup of the new covenant in Jesus’ blood “which is being poured out on behalf of you” (Lk 22:20; cf. Eph 5:26; Titus 3:5–6; and Rev 7:14; 22:14 in light of Gal 3:27).

There are other OT themes that point toward a fiery “baptism” in Jesus’ blood. The red heifer combines the motifs of sacrifice by fire and washing (Numbers 19). This is a unique sacrifice different from the regular sacrifices prescribed in Leviticus. The red heifer is slaughtered outside the camp, just as Jesus is crucified outside Jerusalem. The blood of the heifer is sprinkled in the tabernacle, just as Jesus’ blood sprinkles many nations (Is 52:15). The red heifer, together with cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet wool, is burned as a holocaust. The ashes from this burnt offering are mixed with water to make the water mixture used for cleansing various kinds of uncleanness caused by death. The cleansing waters allow unclean people to be reincorporated and regathered into the people of God.

Circumcision, a bloody ritual that incorporated one into the covenant people, rendered one clean (cf. Ex 4:24–26—“bridegroom of blood”). Baptism, the NT

counterpart of circumcision, is a washing that incorporates into the new covenant (Col 2:11–13). Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is the atonement that makes the cleansing waters of Baptism efficacious, and the benefits of his sacrifice are offered the communicant in the Supper (1 Cor 10:16–17). (CC p. 523)

Both are rooted in Christ's ministry as humanity's substitute. Jesus "came by water and blood" (1 Jn 5:6) as he identified with sinful humanity both in his baptism in the Jordan and in his table fellowship, especially at the Last Supper. Christian Baptism and the Lord's Supper both flow from Christ's atonement. Jesus appeased the Father's fiery wrath both by his perfect life of obedience, attested by the Father's approval voiced at his baptism (Lk 3:22), and by his suffering on the cross. The public messianic ministry into which Jesus was baptized and his passion are both completed at his death, when both water and blood flowed from his side—a fact of great significance for John the evangelist (Jn 19:34–37).

Augustine, for example, interprets the water and blood as representing the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, by which the church is created and sustained. Augustine even compares the formation of the church through the water and the blood from Christ's side to the formation of Eve out of the rib from Adam's side, since Jesus is the second Adam. See Augustine, "Homilies on the Gospel of John," IX, 10, and XV, 8, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 7, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956) 67, 101. (CC p. 524)

DISTRESSED I AM – Verb implies being torn between two emotions. On the one hand, Jesus cannot but dread His impending death on the cross. On the other, there is glory for Him and all humankind beyond the grave, thus His eager expectation. (TLSB)

συνέχομαι—Luke uses this word more often than other NT authors. (Lk 4:38; 8:37, 45; 12:50; 19:43; 22:63; Acts 7:57; 18:5; 28:8; the other NT occurrences: Mt 4:24; 2 Cor 5:14; Phil 1:23) H. Köster translates: "How I am totally governed by this" to reflect Jesus' sense of inexorable movement toward the cross. (CC p. 520)

Thus, in speaking of both the fire Jesus came to cast and the baptism with which he must be baptized, Jesus speaks of his destiny in Jerusalem: "And how I am in distress until it is accomplished" (12:50). Here are echoes of his first two passion predictions (9:22, 44) and the programmatic sayings in 9:51 and 13:22–23. But there is also a hint of Jesus' prayer to the Father on the Mount of Olives, where he shows his distress over his imminent suffering: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but may yours happen" (22:42). Already in Gethsemane, Jesus' shedding of blood begins when "in agony, he prayed very fervently; and his sweat became as drops of blood falling down on the earth" (22:44). Jesus knows the outcome of his journey's end and the horror that awaits him in Jerusalem. Like the whole burnt offering or holocaust (עֹלָה) so frequent in the OT, Jesus is to be offered up for the sin of world as the fire of the Father's wrath is laid on him. (CC p. 524)

until it is completed. The words from the cross would pronounce the completion (Jn 19:28, 30). Jesus wished that the hour of suffering were already past. (CSB)

τελεσθῆ—This is another theological passive; God is the agent who will cause Jesus' baptism to be "accomplished." See comments at 13:32. (CC p. 520)

12:51 DO NOT THINK – Although the disciples probably expected opposition—even violent opposition—they anticipated a military victory and subsequent political peace during the Messiah's reign. Jesus would indeed bring about a kingdom of peace, but not the earthly kind His followers envisioned. (TLSB)

PEACE – εἰρήνην—This is emphatic by position as the first word in the indirect discourse. (CC p. 520)

The presence of the Father's wrath upon Jesus brings a result that the disciples would not have anticipated. This fire and baptism do not lead to peace in worldly life but to division. For fire cast *on the earth* (ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν; 12:49) parallels peace (not) given *on the earth* (ἐν τῇ γῆ; 12:51) because the baptism Jesus must be baptized with brings division. For the hearer, this seems ironic because peace is what Jesus was supposed to bring, as Zechariah (1:79), the angels (2:14; ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη), and Simeon announced in the infancy narrative (2:29). Jesus brings peace to sinners and the sick throughout his ministry (7:50; 8:48), and the seventy (-two) disciples continue to herald his peace when they announce it from house to house as they heal and proclaim the kingdom of God (10:5–6). As Jesus enters Jerusalem, the crowds sing, "Blessed the Coming One, the King, in the name of the Lord! In heaven peace, and glory in the highest!" (19:38). But Jesus weeps over the city of Jerusalem because her people did not know "the things that have to do with peace" (19:42). After the resurrection, Jesus' first words to the Eleven gathered in the upper room are "Peace to you" (24:36). (CC p. 524)

division. See note on Mt 10:34. (CSB)

There is no middle ground with respect to Jesus and His rule. A person stands either with Him or against Him. (TLSB)

How does one reconcile Jesus the peace-bearer with Jesus the divider? Jesus does bring peace on earth for those who are members of his kingdom and who receive his heralds of peace in faith. This peace between God and humanity is made possible because God's wrath against humanity has been placed on Jesus. But the means for administering this peace—a watery baptism, a baptism into death—will cause division and conflict among people. The theology of the cross brings peace with God and absolves those who are marked with the cross in Baptism (1 Pet 3:21–22), but the cross also brings enmity from the world. (CC p. 525)

The hearer knows that Luke's gospel contains other references to Jesus as one who brings division. Jesus will cause the downfall of some, the resurrection of others, and the thoughts of many hearts among the families of Israel will be revealed when God's

eschatological wrath is laid on him (2:29–35). Jesus’ entire ministry has been one in which division has occurred, particularly between those in the Jewish religious establishment which rejects his teaching and the sinners and tax collectors who receive him in faith (7:29–30). The parable of the vineyard (20:9–19) highlights that rejection. Those who would follow him may have to forsake their family ties (9:59–62). Jesus reiterates that forcefully in 12:51–53. (CC p. 525)

12:52 FROM NOW – ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν—“From now on” includes Jesus’ ministry. (CC p. 520)

Families would be deeply divided over what to make of Jesus. (TLSB)

FAMILY DIVIDED – ἔσονται ... διαμεμερισμένοι—The periphrastic future perfect suggests a state or condition that is in the future. *From now on* people who are confronted with Jesus in the Gospel message will be in a state of division (emphasized by the word order with διαμεμερισμένοι in last place). The idea is similar to 2:34–35. In 11:17–18 Jesus spoke of a kingdom or house being divided, but here it is the people in the house who are divided. (CC p. 520)

Opposition to Jesus may split families, pitting father against son, mother against daughter, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and vice versa, as prophesied in Micah 7:6. This division within families will be reiterated by Jesus after the banquet parable: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters and even his own life also, he is not able to be my disciple” (14:26). Familial division reappears in the context of Jesus’ final apocalyptic discourse: “And you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put to death some of you, and you will be hated by all because of my name” (21:16–17). These further references show how division between the disciples and the world will increase as Jesus nears Jerusalem. And it will be no different during the time of the church, as the consummation of eschatological judgment draws near. Yet the disciples will not stand alone. Even if forsaken and persecuted by their biological families, they are part of the family of God through the new kinship of all who hear the Word of Jesus and do it (see comments on 8:19–21). (CC p. 525)

THREE AGAINST TWO...TWO AGAINST THREE – πέντε ἐν ἐνὶ ... τρεῖς ἐπὶ δύο καὶ δύο ἐπὶ τρισίν—This may be an attempt to capture the sense of the parallel in Micah 7:6, where the older generation is pitted against the younger one: parents (two) against their children (three). The unequal numbers suggest continuing conflict with disciples sometimes prevailing and at other times on the defensive, but the battle is not an even standoff or stalemate. (CC p. 521)

Families would be deeply divided over what to make of Jesus. (TLSB)

12:49–53 Jesus expresses a deep desire to fulfill God’s plan of salvation once for all, even though it means going to the cross. The depth of His commitment naturally forces His followers to decide what is most important for them, as well. As you wrestle with so great a challenge, take

comfort in the One who calls you. He is faithful. • Lord Jesus, when earthly relations cause me to make You and Your kingdom anything less than my first priority, strengthen me and lead me back into the way of life everlasting. Amen. (TLSB)