

“HARD TIMES.”

Hard times! This is a term with which we are all acquainted; a term which, in late years, has been in the mouths of people throughout the world. Hard times! This is a topic which during the last few years has been discussed, perhaps, more than any other, in private conversation, in meetings public and private, in the daily press, in magazines and church papers; a topic which has claimed the attention of men in every station of life, employers and employees, producers and consumers, politicians, statesmen, whole Governments; yea, even representatives from all nations have met in conference for the purpose of escaping from the distress of hard times and, or overcoming it.

But are the times in which we are living really so hard? It is true, agriculture, business, industry, and commerce are, in many cases, in a bad way, in some cases even at a standstill. Because of overproduction and underconsumption factories are idle, thousands of able-bodied men are unemployed, prices of primary products have sharply declined, taxation has increased, so that also in our own land there is poverty, and even starvation among many people. Indeed, the times are hard.

On the other hand, it is true that only a small percentage of our Australian people appear to be experiencing really hard times. There still seems to be plenty of money about somewhere. When we consider that £100,000 can be subscribed to the Golden Casket every few weeks; that only some nine months ago £4000 was paid in one day to witness part of one of the cricket matches between England and Australia; that the attendances at other sporting fixtures and picture shows do not show a great, if any, decrease; that even in some small towns three, four, or more hotels are flourishing; that some of our own people can still spend pounds and pounds on unnecessary pleasure-trips: when we consider these facts, we begin to wonder how it is that people can talk of hard times. Yes, it is to be feared that many complain of hard times simply because they have experienced a slight drop in their income, or because they have heard others speaking of them, or because they have read about it in the papers, while they, at the same time, have all they need and more. The fact that a person does not enjoy the prosperous conditions he used to, is as yet no proof for the contention that the times are hard.

And yet it cannot be gainsaid that in spite of the fact that many still have plenty of money to spend, there are also, even among the members of our Church, such as are really suffering poverty and want; such as, because of adverse conditions in the world, stagnation in industry, unemployment, decline of prices of primary products, are in sore need of the necessities of life, and are in reality experiencing very hard times.

And since as yet no human being can see how or when conditions are going to improve; since, on the other hand, a number of factors seems to indicate that the present hard times are going to become very much harder, it is no wonder that the hearts also of our people are uneasy, worried, alarmed, depressed, perplexed.

But what are we going to do about it? Shall we continually complain, utter expressions of uneasiness, grief, and resentment? Shall we murmur and grumble? No; for all this would not improve conditions in the least. Shall we take up a stoical attitude, with calmness and indifference submit to the inevitable, simply make the best of it and say: Hard times come and hard times go; others have survived them, and we shall, too? No; there is no sense nor wisdom in that.

But we are to learn from these hard times, we are to profit by them, we are to discern the times (Luke 12, 56), we are to inquire for the why and the wherefore of hard times, and not forget that even in the hardest times we need not despair, but find unfailing comfort in the promises of our Heavenly Father. For our instruction, warning, admonition, and consolation, let us therefore learn what God reveals to us in His Word concerning

HARD TIMES.

We shall consider this topic under four headings: (1) **their cause**; (2) **their purpose**; (3) **our duty**; (4) **our comfort**.
Their Cause.

In trying to ascertain the cause of the present hard times, men have suggested a number of things. Some have blamed the World War, because of which the nations are forced to repay huge sums of money they borrowed in prosecuting that horrible carnage. Others have blamed the reckless borrowing and spending of money during the years of super-prosperity following the war. Others, again, have laid the blame upon the wholesale introduction of machinery for the production of food, clothing, and other goods, resulting in overproduction or underconsumption, or both.

Now, each of these contentions has something in its favour, for present-day conditions in the world can indeed be traced back to all of them. We know that there are

natural, visible, immediate causes for prosperity and for poverty, for good times and for times that we call bad. And so we can say that the war and the introduction of machinery are the visible, natural, or immediate causes of the present hard times.

But as Christians we look deeper; as Christians, for whom the Bible, the true and infallible Word of God, is the only fountain of all wisdom and knowledge in spiritual matters we know that there are also supernatural causes for everything that happens in this world, also in temporal matters. As Christians we know that the present hard times were brought upon us by the dispensation of God.

But, someone may say: Do you mean that? Do you mean that God, the good and loving Heavenly Father would send us times like these? Let us see.

We all know that the heavens and the earth, all visible and invisible creatures, were created by the almighty power of God. (Gen. 1). Concerning that we have not the slightest doubt, in spite of all the theories of unbelievers to the contrary. We also know that God by that same almighty power preserves all things in the heavens and on earth. "He upholds all things by the word of His power." (Heb, 1, 3). And one essential part of God's preservation of the world is His government, His administration, His management of the same. God, the Creator, is also the one and only Superintendent of the universe. This world is not a dead mechanism, not like a clock which God wound up when He created it and then allowed to work by its own power till run down. Neither are the things in this world controlled only and altogether by the laws of nature, as is evident from the fact that these laws are so often overruled. No! sound, common sense already tells us that behind it all there is a mighty power at work. And Scripture tells us that this power is none other than the Lord and Creator, God Himself. For thus it is written, Ps. 33, 13-15: "The Lord looketh from heaven; He beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of His habitation He looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashioneth their hearts alike; He considereth all their works." And read Psalm 104, in which God's providence is described in detail.

However, God exercises not only general supervision and control over the whole world, but He supervises and controls also each individual creature, each individual part of the world. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." (Mat. 10, 29-30). That is the declaration of God's own Son, and He ought to know.

The Bible goes even further than that. The Bible reveals to us that it is God Himself Who sends also troublesome times, misfortunes, calamities, and the like, upon the earth. Under His almighty, all-wise, just, and righteous government of the world He dispenses not only that which is good in our eyes, but also that which to us does not seem good. Amos 3, 6, we read: "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" And Isaiah 45, 7: God says: "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." And Is. 28, 29, that prophet asserts concerning trouble, distress, misfortune: "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts."

What about the contention that times of hardship and distress, famine and depression, come about simply according to dead mechanical laws of nature, that we therefore should be quite at ease and say: Hard times come and go; all these things run in cycles, and will therefore continue to come at intervals. The answer thereto is: If hard times were governed merely by dead mechanical laws of nature, then at no time could anything happen against these laws of nature. But because such things do happen, for instance, the darkness on the day of Christ's death, therefore, it is evident that the laws of nature are governed and controlled by some unseen power. And because we Christians have the information of Scripture, we know that again it is the Lord God Who has not only made these laws of nature, but Who also can, and does, suspend them at any time to suit His purposes. Think of the time when Joseph was in Egypt. He told King Pharaoh regarding the seven years of famine which were to come: "The thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass." (Gen. 41, 32). Think of the time of Elijah. This prophet said to Ahab, the King of Israel: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before Whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." (1 Kings 17, 1).

Yes, Scripture teaches quite clearly that all things are controlled and governed by the almighty hand of God; that consequently also hard times could not come upon us without the will or permission of God and that, even if we can point to visible, natural causes of the present hard times, also these causes are governed and directed by Him, and that therefore hard times indeed do come from God.

But why does God send these hard times? Concerning that, Scripture asserts most definitely that God causes hard times to come upon men because of their sins.

In Paradise, when our first parents were living in perfect righteousness and holiness, there were no hard times. Then they performed their duties of dressing and keeping the garden of Eden in perfect satisfaction and happiness. But when they had sinned by eating of the forbidden fruit, then hard times began. For God said unto Eve: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee"; and unto Adam; "Cursed be the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." And why did God speak thus? "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, 'Thou shalt not eat of it.'" (Gen. 3, 16-19). That was the reason; that was the cause of the hard times which God brought upon Adam, his disobedience, his sin.

Think of the great Flood. Why did God bring that great catastrophe upon the children of men? Because "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Gen. 6, 5). The general disregard of God's warning words and solemn commands, the people's continued impenitence, their sin, that was the cause of God's sending the devastating and annihilating Flood.

What was the cause of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah? The crying sins of unspeakable immorality and the base refusal to accept divine admonition, that was the cause of God's raining fire and brimstone upon the notoriously wicked inhabitants of those two cities.

Why did God send the plagues upon Egypt? Because "the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go; as the Lord had spoken by Moses." (Exod. 9, 35).

What caused God to send hard times upon the children of Israel when, in the time of Ahab, He withheld rain and dew from their land for three years and six months? The fact that they were halting between two opinions, yea, serving the idol Baal; their idolatry, their sin, that was the cause of their hard times.

Why did God bring destruction upon Jerusalem forty years after Christ's death? Because its inhabitants not only had killed the prophets and stoned them which had been sent unto them, but especially because they would not be gathered unto their Shepherd, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, their Saviour. (Mat. 23, 37).

We could continue giving concrete examples from Holy Writ, showing that the one and only reason why God sends hard times upon the children of men is their sin and iniquity, their transgression of the commandments of their God and Creator. But we shall merely look at a few texts which state that truth in general. In Ezekiel 14, 13, God says by the mouth of that prophet: "Son of man, when the land sinneth against Me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out Mine Hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it." St. Paul writes, Rom. 1, 18: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." And Eph. 5, 6: "Because of these things (namely, fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talking, jesting, etc., v. 2-3) cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

From these and many other texts of Scripture it is quite clear that God sends hard times upon the children of men because of their sins. If man had not fallen away from God and transgressed His commandments; if there were no sin, there would be no hard times either. Then man would still be enjoying perfect satisfaction and contentment and unalloyed happiness, experiencing nothing but the good, perfect, and bountiful blessings of God in the same manner as Adam and Eve experienced the blessings so lavishly bestowed upon them by God in Paradise before the Fall. But because of men's sins, because of their transgressions of God's commandments, God has, in His righteous wrath, been compelled repeatedly to send hard times upon them, times in which the Lord withdrew His blessings from them to a greater or lesser extent, times in which their hearts were not overflowing with joy and gladness, but rather bitterness and sadness. Also the hard times which the world is experiencing at present are caused by nothing else than men's sins.

But is the world so full of wickedness and sin that God should bring such hard times upon it? Are we not a Christian nation?

Indeed, our nation, and others, are called Christian nations, but are they being ruled by the spirit of Christ? There are, it is true, in every nation such as fear God, and,

like the seven thousand in Elijah's time, have not bowed unto Baal (1 Kings 19, 18), but endeavour in word and deed with God's help to live according to the commandments of the Lord. Nevertheless, it is a sad but solid fact that the vast majority of people of the so-called Christian nations are "lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." (2 Tim. 3, 2-5). Are not these words, written by the inspired Apostle Paul nearly 2000 years ago, a remarkably true picture of conditions in the world at the present time? What is the evidence of the records of the law courts? Do they not prove that vice and crime are extremely prevalent also in our so-called Christian country? Callous disregard for the property and life of the neighbour, thieving, defrauding, robbing, acts of violence; murders are reported in the newspapers every day. Offences against the estate of matrimony, fornication and adultery, occur with nauseous frequency. Disloyalty, rebellion against the powers that be, the Governments, is becoming more evident day by day, so that even respectable unbelievers look upon the future with apprehension and terror. Indeed, the world is evil.

However, crimes that are condemned and punished by the temporal powers are not the only sins that are committed. Many things that are a gross violation of God's Law are ignored, tolerated, yea, even approved and encouraged by the Governments, yea, even by sections of the visible Church. We are reminded at once of the vice of gambling. Even though the Government declares certain kinds of gambling legal, even though it fosters the spirit of gambling by conducting a State lottery, as the Golden Casket, gambling is, nevertheless, not only an evil that tends toward the ruination of the people, but it is, above all, a grievous transgression of God's order concerning the lawful acquisition, transfer, and disposal of property.

Dancing and drunkenness are two evils which are not only harmful to the people's physical strength, but also abominations in the sight of God.

But the greatest sin of the people at the present time is that they so universally despise the Word of God, that they are "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." To hear and read God's Word, that is something which the present generation considers as being absolutely unnecessary. They will spend their time, their energy, their money, yea,

their very lives, in the service of self, in seeking after money and goods, in vain, frivolous, soul-destroying pleasures and amusements, but utterly neglect to make provision for their soul's salvation; they utterly neglect to seek the Kingdom of God, forget their Maker and their duties toward Him, but despise Him and His Word, and, at best, give Him a thought or two when they feel life's little day approaching its close.

Friends, in view of the godless conditions in our country and the world at large, is it any wonder that God's wrath is provoked to the uttermost? Must we not say that the world is full of wickedness, and admit that because of such sin and wickedness God had, and still has, abundant reason for sending down hard times upon it? And that is the real cause of the present hard times: the sin and wickedness of mankind.

What about the **Church**? Did God send hard times also because of existing conditions in the Church? Let us see.

Looking upon the Christian Church as a whole, what do we find? It is a well-known fact that the greater part of the clergy has departed from the precepts of its Founder, Christ. It is not continuing in His Word. God's Word, the everlasting truth of the Scriptures, has been set aside, is no longer being preached in its truth and purity, but gross, blasphemous, soul-destroying errors are being proclaimed from many pulpits; horrible, atrocious heresies are being upheld and promulgated with impunity. In many cases the pulpits are being used merely for the purpose of proclaiming the Social Gospel, delivering discourses on current topics, politics, unemployment, prohibition, war, disarmament, and the like. In short, the Church, to a great extent, no longer is true to the words of Christ, "Preach the Gospel" (Mark 16, 15), and, "If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed" (John 8, 31), but it is bent upon proclaiming unto men only the things for which their ears are itching. Christendom has fallen, and, in many cases, become a disgrace to Him whose name it bears.

The same thing is true in general of those that claim **membership** in the Christian Church. They, indeed, wish to be called and looked upon as Christians; they wish to be members of the Church; they also go to church, partake of the Sacraments, but they do not truly believe from their hearts, neither do they confirm the profession of their mouths in their daily lives. According to their profession they belong to the Lord, but according to their life they belong to Satan and the world. Their life is governed not by the spirit of

Christ, but by the spirit of the evil one. That sharp distinction which God demands between Christians and unbelievers (e.g., John 15, 19: If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you; Rom. 12, 2: Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind; 1 John 2, 15: Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world); that sharp distinction disappeared, and people that call themselves Christians are mingling with unbelievers in their godless practices, yea, at times even taking the lead in vice and wickedness. Who, then, seeing that things are thus in Christendom, would say that God is unjust in sending hard times upon the earth!

To come nearer home: how are conditions in **our own Lutheran Church**? With heartfelt thanks to God we can say that by His unmerited grace His Word is still being preached among us in its truth and purity. Our **Pastors** preach and proclaim the Word of God according to the analogy of faith. But can we Pastors say that we have at all times been as diligent and faithful in our ministry as we should have been? Did we at all times preach the Law in all its severity, without fear or favour, before friend and foe, as Christ expects it of us? Did we at all times proclaim the saving Gospel in all its sweetness to contrite sinners as our Saviour would have us do it? Were we as diligent and faithful as we should have been in warning our people against the snares of Satan and in exhorting them to strive after holiness and righteousness?

And what has been the attitude of our **members** towards the preaching of the pure Word of God? Must we not admit, acknowledge, and confess that we, the members of our Lutheran Church, have not always appreciated this great blessing, the pure preaching of the Word of God, and the correct administration of the Sacraments? We did not realize how richly we were blessed by God in preserving unto us this heritage, and in continuing to point out to us the way to salvation correctly. That is evident from the careless and negligent attendance at divine services and Holy Communion of many, and from the fact that the family altar has been discarded more and more. How many fathers and mothers are there amongst us who make no effort whatsoever to teach the truths of God's Word to their children in the home, but leave that entirely to the Church and Sunday School! Are there not also such amongst us as indeed call themselves Christians, but at the same time do not zealously endeavour to live according to the profession of their

mouth? Disobedience to parents, hatred and enmity, uncleanness and unchastity, coveting and defrauding, gossiping, slandering, back-biting, are not these and many other sins prevalent among us? Is there a sharp distinction between the conduct of all our members and that of the godless worldlings? Is our life a definite proof that we belong to Christ, our Redeemer? Is not worldliness getting a hold of many?

And what about our attitude toward the command of Christ: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature?" Have we all been as zealous, faithful, and untiring in doing mission-work as we should have been? Did we conscientiously give of our money toward the extension of God's Kingdom as God had prospered us? (1 Cor. 16.2). Did we give as cheerfully as the widow who gave all she had, even all her living (Mark 12, 44), or as the Macedonians, who gave of their deep poverty and beyond their power? (2 Cor. 8, 2). Can we deny that in the years of plenty, when our income was very much greater than was necessary for the maintenance of our bodily life, many were inclined to spend large amounts for personal comforts, luxuries, pleasures, and then gave to the Lord only a small portion of the remainder? By doing that, they have withheld from God what they owed Him, and that is called in Malachi 3 robbing God. They were thieves and robbers in God's sight, because they did not place their gifts into the service of His Kingdom as they should and quite easily could have done.

Friends, we could continue, but this will suffice to convince us of the fact that we have most grievously sinned against God and transgressed His commandments, that we have often thoughtlessly, some, perhaps, even obstinately and shamefully neglected to do our Christian duty towards God and our fellowmen. Let no one try to excuse himself and say, 'The innocent must suffer with the guilty. For who of us is so ignorant or blind spiritually, so self-righteous as to say he has not sinned at all, and not at all rendered himself subject to the wrath of God! Besides, the very fact that some do try to plead innocence, that is a further proof that there was abundant reason for God to send hard times. We all have to admit that we have a thousand times become guilty of sins against God and our fellowmen, sins of commission and sins of omission; we have to confess and say: "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of faces." (Dan. 9, 7). With humble and contrite hearts we therefore accept the truth of Scripture that hard

times are sent by God upon us, upon our Church, upon our nation, upon the whole world, because of the sins and iniquities of men.

Having thus seen that the cause also of the present hard times is nothing else than the sin and wickedness of mankind, on account of which the almighty, all-wise, and just Ruler of heaven and earth has brought them upon us, let us proceed to the second part of our paper, which treats of their purpose.

Their Purpose.

God never does anything in a haphazard manner, but in all His dealings with the children of men He acts according to His infinite wisdom. Even as He never does anything without a reason, so He also never does anything without a definite purpose. That is true also with regard to the hard times He has sent upon men. What, then, is their purpose?

Concerning the purpose of hard times, and other afflictions, the Bible makes a distinction between the purpose God has in view with regard to unbelievers and His purpose with regard to believers.

Of the purpose God has in view with regard to the **unbelievers** Scripture teaches us that God by means of hard times lets them feel His wrath and punishes them for their sins and iniquities. And unbelievers are not only the outspoken infidels and atheists, not only those that openly reject the Christian religion, and frankly acknowledge that they do not believe in the Triune God; but unbelievers are also all those who, even though they claim to be Christians, do not believe from their heart; who, even though they claim to be followers of Christ, have, nevertheless, given their heart to the world; who, even though they have the form of godliness, yet deny the power thereof. Also all such, in spite of the fact that they consider themselves believing Christians, are in reality nothing else than unbelievers. And upon all such God sends hard times as a punishment for their sins and iniquities. For these are the words of God, Exod. 20, 5: "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me." And Lev. 26, 14-16, 18-21: "But if ye will not hearken unto Me, and will not do all these commandments; and if ye shall despise My statutes, or if your soul abhor My judgments, so that ye will not do all My commandments, but that ye break My covenant: I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart; and

ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass: and your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits. And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto Me: I will bring seven times more plagues upon you, according to your sins."

And read also Deut. 28, 15-45.

These texts of Scripture proclaim the solemn truth that any misfortune, calamity, distress, or disaster that strikes the unbelievers is for them a punishment from God because of their sin and unbelief. By means of hard times God speaks to them in His wrath and vexes them in His sore displeasure. (Ps. 2, 5). He shows them that they cannot continue indefinitely and with impunity to give themselves up to the service of sin and vice; He makes them face the day of reckoning and shows them that His threats are not empty words, but that He sooner or later certainly executes them upon him that persists in impenitence and unbelief. He frequently already in this world changes the lewdness of the sensualist into grief; He causes the pomp and the splendour of the proud to vanish, and the treasures of the rich to disappear; and the boasting of the arrogant and haughty to be turned to hopelessness and despair. That is one of the purposes of hard times with regard to the godless unbelievers, they are a punishment for them, a lesson to teach them that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Heb. 10, 31).

God has a further purpose with regard to unbelievers when sending hard times upon them. Even though He punishes them and brings bodily hardship and suffering upon them, He is at the same time endeavouring to bring salvation to their soul. For "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Pet. 3, 9). Yea, the Lord has sworn by Himself (Ezek. 33, 11): "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." When God punishes unbelievers with hard times, as they are heading for their eternal destruction, He thereby does not wish to hasten their destruction, but to check them in their disastrous course, to pave the way for the heeding of His Word, that they might turn from their evil ways, and to become partakers of His grace and Christ's redemption, to rescue them from the power of Satan, and to make them His children and heirs.

That this is God's sincere will, yea, His sworn purpose, is clearly proved also in those texts of Scripture in which God laments the fact that His visitations upon men are so often in vain. For instance, in Jer. 5, 3, that prophet says by inspiration of the Holy Ghost: "O Lord . . . Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; Thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return." God laments the fact that they refused to be corrected by His visitations, but that they rather hardened their hearts and continued in wickedness. That is a powerful proof for the fact that even though God sends punishments upon the unbelievers, He, nevertheless, is thereby seeking their welfare, their eternal salvation; yea, even though He deliver them unto Satan for the destruction of their flesh, His purpose is that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (1 Cor. 5, 5). Even though He makes them feel very severe punishments, He does not yet pass final judgment upon them, He does not yet deliver them to eternal punishment. God's final purpose is to rescue them from everlasting damnation, and to make them partakers of everlasting salvation. If man, however, continually and obstinately hardens his heart, like Pharaoh did, then hard times are sent upon him only for his punishment and destruction.

The purpose of hard times with regard to **believers** is different. It is true, when God because of their old Adam sends hard times upon them and reveals unto them His wrath over sin, His final purpose is also to seek their eternal salvation. But never is it His purpose to punish them, for by faith in the Saviour, believing Christians have received forgiveness of their sins. (Acts 10, 34: Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins; Rom. 5, 1: Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ); and where sin has been forgiven, blotted out, removed, there can no longer be any necessity for the punishment of sin. Christ, by His death, has not only atoned for sins, but also suffered the punishment for them. Whoever, therefore, believes in Him, has received redemption not only from the guilt, but also from the punishment of sin.

Hard times are sent upon Christians not as a punishment, not as though God were their enemy, but only because He is seeking their welfare. That is the definite assertion of St. Paul in Rom. 8, 28, where he confidently states: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose."

And could it be otherwise? Is not the Lord God, the Almighty Ruler of the universe, Who sends hard times, is He not the kind and loving Heavenly Father of His children? Could this, their Heavenly Father, Who has given His only-begotten Son into death for them, bring anything upon them, His children, that did not have as its purpose their benefit? Does He not say, Jer. 29, 11: "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end"? Yes, all things, also the present hard times that are sent upon believing Christians by God, have no other purpose than to work for their benefit.

In what way? we ask.

Hard times are to be for them a solemn admonition and a wholesome chastisement. By means of hard times God wishes to draw their attention to the fact that sin is still present with them, and to preserve them from falling away from Him, and to induce them to seek their soul's salvation all the more diligently.

Christians are to remember that hard times are a consequence of their sins, even though not a punishment, as this word is commonly understood. Hard times are, therefore, to remind them of their sins and imperfections, of the defects in their Christianity, of the negligent fulfilment of their duties toward God and their fellowmen. Hard times are to preserve them from falling into selfrighteousness, to prevent them from saying: We have no sin, as may so easily happen when they experience only prosperous times. Hard times are to induce them to confess sincerely with Luther, that they daily sin much, and, indeed, deserve nothing but punishment. That is the effect hard times had upon King David. When he saw the angel smiting his people, he said: "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly." (2 Sam. 24, 17). St. Paul was tempted to exalt himself because of the wonderful revelations he had received from God. But to prevent him from such sinful boasting, there was given him a thorn in the flesh. God wanted St. Paul to remain humble, to be preserved from selfrighteousness and pride, to continue to glory in God's grace alone.

Hard times are to be a chastisement for Christians. God lets His children see His wrath over sin in order to urge them to forsake sin more and more, to fight against every temptation with ever greater efforts, and to become ever more zealous in following righteousness. Christians, indeed, are determined out of love to their God and Saviour to lead a God-pleasing life, to avoid everything that is offensive to God, to keep their hearts temples of God, to serve Him in

holiness and righteousness all the days of their life. But they are continually in danger of drifting away from their God; their old Adam tries to make them unwilling and sluggish in performing their Christian duties; unbelieving acquaintances join with their flesh to tempt them to worldliness; the devil is continually about them with his deceit and trickery, giving them no peace within or without. Great is, therefore, the danger for them of becoming lukewarm, of getting entangled in the things that tend to destroy their faith and to deprive them of their eternal salvation. Great is this danger, especially in good and prosperous times, when they enjoy more than they need for this life.

For instance, when they receive bountiful harvests, or high wages, they are tempted to rely on these earthly goods, to ascribe their success in life to their own efforts, to their own wisdom and strength; they are in danger of neglecting prayer, yes, in danger of forgetting God altogether. And it is to preserve them therefrom that God sends hard times upon them. He wants them to realize again that without their Heavenly Father they are helpless, all their work and efforts are in vain, that everything, also their very life, depends altogether on the undeserved blessing of God.

Again, when everything is well, and they have all they desire, Christians are in danger of spending a large portion of their money to acquire and enjoy luxuries, "to fare sumptuously every day"; yes, even in danger of spending it on such pleasures as are harmful for their soul's salvation. That danger is there. They see unbelievers doing it, and are so easily inclined to follow them, for their old Adam delights therein. Now, God knows and sees this danger, and in His fervent love for His children He wishes to protect them from becoming worldly-minded. He brings hard times upon them, He reduces their income so that they may not any longer seek the things of this world. He takes their comforts, their luxuries from them. Thereby He wants them to realize that such things are vain, have no abiding value, that they are here to-day and gone to-morrow, that it is consequently gross foolishness to set their hearts upon them. He wants them to remember that Christ says, Mat. 6, 19-20: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." God calls unto them: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world . . . the world passeth away, and the lust, thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John

2, 15-17). By means of hard times God calls upon them not to trust in uncertain riches, but to seek those things which are above their eternal salvation, and to say: What is the world to me!

The world is like a smoke, a fleeting exhalation,
A shadow faint and dim of very short duration;
My Jesus doth abide, though all things fade and flee;
My everlasting Rock—What is the world to me!

Furthermore, by means of hard times, which Christians know are sent by God because of the sins of men, God wishes to remind them of the fact that His final Judgment upon sin is coming, that the day is fast approaching when He, in His righteous wrath over the sins of men, will destroy this world. And in view of that, God wants them to remember that it is their solemn duty to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2, 12), to become ever more zealous in seeking their soul's salvation and the salvation of their fellowmen, to put forth ever greater efforts in performing their Christian duty of preaching the Gospel to every creature, so that on Judgment Day the Lord need not cast them away into everlasting fire, but, by His grace, receive them into everlasting life.

That is the purpose God has in view when sending hard times upon His Christians, to draw their attention to the fact that sin is still present with them, to preserve them from falling away from Him, and to induce them to seek their soul's salvation all the more diligently. And the more we realize from Scripture that this is God's earnest purpose, to keep us from setting our hearts upon the vain and perishable things of this world, to have our conversation in heaven (Phil. 3, 20), to draw us closer to Himself.—The more we ponder the fact that God in His infinite love for us fervently desires these hard times to work for our spiritual and eternal good, the less are we inclined to harbour thoughts of dissatisfaction and murmuring because of them. Yea, instead of complaining that the times are hard, even though we feel the effects sorely, we should utter thanks and praise to God for His loving care on our behalf, thank Him on bended knees that He did not permit us to drift away from Him, into eternal destruction, as we had very well deserved, but that He chastens us for the purpose of drawing us closer to Himself and heaven.

Realizing that also of the present hard times it is true what the Apostle writes in Heb. 12, 11: "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby," our hearts

should be filled with sincere and heart-felt gratitude to God for this salutary chastisement which He has brought upon us, and earnestly should we beseech Him to grant us His Holy Spirit's guidance that we may, in a rich measure, receive and partake of its intended benefits.

As to how we may receive and partake of them, we shall learn in the third part under the heading, Our Duty.

Our Duty.

The hard times weighing down the people of the world at present have produced various effects on them. Some have cursed and blasphemed, accused God of hardheartedness, injustice, and cruelty. Others have despaired, laid hands upon themselves, committed suicide. Others have remained seemingly indifferent. Others have sunk deeper into covetousness, greed, and usury, and have tried to improve their position at the expense of their less fortunate fellowmen. Others have become callous and tried to overcome their depressed feelings by giving themselves up more than ever to the sinful pleasures of this world.

To all such the words of Jer. 5, 3-4 apply: "O Lord . . . Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; Thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return. Therefore, I said, Surely, these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God." All those to whom these words apply, have received no benefit from the hard times. God's dealings with them have been unprofitable for them; His purpose has not been achieved in them; they have frustrated His intentions; they have endured the hard times in vain.

What, then, shall we do to obtain the benefits God wants us to derive from hard times? What shall we do that God's salutary purpose may be fulfilled in us? What is our duty with regard to hard times?

Let us consider first the duty of such as have forsaken their God, such as indeed claim to be Christians, but are Christians in nothing more than in name. Concerning these we have already seen that hard times are sent upon them by God because of their sins for the purpose of checking them in their ungodliness and leading them to righteousness. Their duty, selfevidently, is to return to their God. That is the admonition of God in Jer. 3, 12-13: "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy

God." Return! that is the call the Lord addresses to them in these hard times. Return! that is the invitation, the earnest and pleading request the Lord extends to them in these hard times. Return from your wicked ways, return from the paths of unrighteousness, indifference, worldliness, ungodliness; return from those paths, for they lead but to your eternal destruction and damnation! Return to Him Whom you have forsaken, from Whom you have been estranged, return to Him, your Lord and God!

How may they return to Him? God says, Jer. 3, 13: "Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God." God does not merely ask them to check themselves slightly in their life of sin; He expects not only a little outward reformation, a little patchwork in their life here and there; no. He demands of them that their hearts be changed. And for that purpose He says: "Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God." The thought of improving their life somewhat in the future for the sake of again receiving God's temporal blessings should not be in their hearts. First of all God wants them to look back upon their past life with its corruption and wickedness. Let them hear His voice again: "Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God." Their iniquity, their sins and transgressions of the past should demand their attention first of all. They are to acknowledge them, not only because on their account hard times have been brought upon them, but chiefly because by them they have transgressed the commandments of their God. O hear it once more: "**Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God!**" That is the real horribleness, hideousness, heinousness, damnableness of their sins, not that they have brought hard times upon them, but that thereby they have transgressed the commandments of their God, sinned against their Heavenly Father, disgraced and dishonoured His holy name, and deeply grieved Him Who has never bestowed anything upon them but love and kindness. They are to acknowledge, admit, and confess that by their worldliness, by their participation in the sinful, lustful pleasures of the world, they have not only played into the hands of sin and Satan, but also caused the name of God to be blasphemed among the Gentiles. (Rom. 2, 24). They are to acknowledge, admit, and confess that by their negligent and careless use of God's Word, by neglecting to hear and read it diligently and with devotion, by their despising of the means of grace, they have not only hindered the working of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, but they have caused their

Saviour to weep bitter tears over them, even as He wept over Jerusalem because of that same sin. (Luke 19, 41-44). They are to acknowledge, admit, and confess that with their hypocrisy, waywardness, and back-sliding, yea, with all their sins they have grievously offended Him Who gave His only-begotten Son into death for them, Him Who out of pure love and thirsting for the redemption of their souls shed His precious blood on Calvary's cross; Him, their Saviour and their God, they have offended and grieved. That is what they are to acknowledge, according to the text quoted above: "Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God." That is their duty with regard to hard times.

And, having realized that their sins have so offended their God, let them ask Him for forgiveness and pardon. True, they do not deserve to be forgiven, but they may trust in the atonement of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, and seek forgiveness in His name. He is the Mediator between God and men. He has taken the sins of the whole world upon Himself, endured the punishment for them, completely atoned for them when He as their substitute died on the accursed tree of the cross. There He bore their griefs and carried their sorrows; there He was wounded for their transgressions and bruised for their iniquities. (Is. 53, 4-5). There He Who knew no sin was made sin for them, that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. 5, 21). There He shed His holy, precious blood which cleanses them from all sin. (1 John, 1, 7).

By means of this work of atonement Christ has effected a reconciliation between God and men, and because of this God can forgive them their sins and pardon their iniquities. Therefore, let them heed the voice of God, in sincere sorrow over their sins, return to Him and hear His assuring words: "Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee" (Mat. 9, 2); "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Is. 1, 18); "I will forgive your iniquity, and I will remember your sins no more" (Jer. 31, 34); "I will cast all your sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7, 19). Verily, the Lord is merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. (Exod. 34, 6-7). Let men therefore heed the voice of God speaking to them in these hard times, and, having heard His voice, let them answer in the words of Hosea 6, 1: "Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up." Let them return to

Him in genuine repentance and faith, in sincere acknowledgment of their sins, seek refuge in the infinite grace of God revealed in Christ Jesus their Saviour, with crushed and broken hearts accept the forgiveness He offers them by the merits of their Redeemer, in faith accept the pardon and righteousness proclaimed to them in His Word. That is what the Lord wishes them to do in these hard times; let them do it, so that they may obtain the benefits God wants them to derive from them.

And then let them bear in mind that Christ says when proclaiming unto them the forgiveness of their sins: "Go, and sin no more!" (John 8, 11). Let them, in view of the fact that God has graciously forgiven them their sins, be on their guard against falling into the same evil ways, lest a worse thing come unto them. (John 5, 14). Let them out of thankfulness to their Heavenly Father for His grace and everlasting kindness, strive to remain faithful unto Him, diligent in performing the works of faith, zealous and untiring in seeking the eternal welfare of their souls and those of their fellowmen.

What is the duty of **true Christians** with regard to these hard times? The duty of such as sincerely believe in the Saviour, accept Him as their Redeemer, and trust in His work of atonement? God's Word teaches that hard times are to induce them to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, to seek refuge in the free grace of God in Christ Jesus, and endeavour to walk more and more in holiness of life.

We sincere Christians are to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. King David became proud when he saw the greatness of his kingdom. But he humbled himself when he saw the angel smiting the people, and said: "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly." (2 Sam. 24, 17). St. Paul was in danger of exalting himself and becoming proud because of the abundance of revelations he had received from God. But he remained humble by the "thorn in the flesh" with which God permitted Satan to buffet him. (2 Cor. 12, 7). Were not we also inclined to become proud because of the blessings God had bestowed upon us? We have His Word in its truth and purity; we are richly blessed with spiritual blessings. And when God granted us bountiful temporal blessings in the years of plenty, did not permit conceit and pride enter and try to take possession of our hearts? But, in order to preserve us therefrom, God sent us hard times. Let us, therefore, humble ourselves under His mighty hand, and acknowledge that we are but dust and ashes before Him, the great and almighty Lord and God.

We are to humble ourselves also in this way that we acknowledge also our guilt in connection with these hard times. Also our sins and imperfections are the reason why God has visited us with hard times. Be it far from us to think that only the godless deserved them. No, we all have to smite upon our breast and say: "God be merciful to me a sinner!" (Luke 18, 13), especially in view of our greater responsibility. For Christ says: "That servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes." (Luke 12, 47). As Christians we indeed are resolved to do the will of our God, to forsake wickedness and pursue righteousness; but even though we think we have done all we could, can we claim to have reached perfection? Must we not say with St. Paul: "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." (Rom. 7, 18). And even if we had completely done our duty toward our God and our fellowmen, does not Christ say: "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do"? (Luke 17, 10). Yea, have we not at times even become guilty of deliberately transgressing God's commandments, deliberately neglecting to perform our Christian duty toward Him and our neighbour? Let us acknowledge also our transgressions, and humbly pray: "Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." (Ps. 143, 2).

That is our duty with regard to hard times, to humble ourselves before God, and then to seek refuge in the free grace of God in Christ Jesus. God's grace has been our place of refuge ever since we became Christians. It shall be our place of refuge also now. For even though we have erred and gone astray, His grace has not ceased, His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, He will not deal with us after our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities (Ps. 103, 10-17); the covenant He has made with us in Baptism still stands, and whosoever cometh to Him, He will in no wise cast out. (John 6, 37). The blood of the Saviour still cleanses us from all sins, and by faith in Him we are accepted again as God's children and heirs.

A further duty with regard to hard times is that we Christians strive to walk more and more in holiness and newness of life. We have seen the sins that caused God to send hard times upon the earth. We have seen that also we were by no means innocent. But God has forgiven our sins and pardoned our iniquities. Should not this unmerited

grace of God urge us to fight all the more against everything that is displeasing to our gracious God, urge us to become ever more zealous in living up to our profession, and in following Him? It is true, the devil will not spare us, the world will continue to entice us, our own old Adam will continue to try to lead us astray. The flesh will continue to lust against the spirit. But we must crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, by daily contrition and repentance drown the old Adam, withstand the evil desires and suppress them, daily put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and we are to put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4, 22-24); daily we should bury our sins and shun them, from day to day walk and grow before God in true faith and good works, daily renew our baptismal vow, renounce the devil and all his work and all his pomp, and promise to serve the Triune God and Him only.

But let us remember that in our own strength we shall never be able to walk in holiness of life. Left to ourselves we can do nothing. The only way we can hope to live righteously and be kept unto salvation is by the power of God Who works through His Word. Let us therefore hold His Word sacred, and gladly hear and learn it. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Col. 3, 16). And by means of the Word of God, the Holy Ghost will sanctify and keep us in true faith unto salvation.

Let us also do everything we possibly can to bring the Word of God to those that are still without it, so that they, too, may learn of God's purpose in these hard times and receive their intended benefits, that they may cease cursing and blaspheming, and by the Spirit of God be led to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, to acknowledge also their transgressions, and to seek and find forgiveness in the precious blood of Christ. Experience shows that many a one has, just during these hard times, already been turned to God and His Church; let us therefore expedite the work of saving souls, gladly, zealously, and untiringly fill our hands unto the Lord for the pursuance of mission work, exert every effort for the maintenance and extension of God's Kingdom; yes, let us work, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. (John 9, 4).

That is our duty of which the Lord is reminding us in these hard times; let us do it, so that they may not have been sent in vain to us.

And then, if God's purpose has been achieved in us, if He by means of hard times has driven us to His Word, so that

we have been humbled under His mighty hand, repented of our sins, received forgiveness for them, so that by His Word He has wrought in us the firm intention to amend our lives and to be more faithful in our Christianity; then we may also have the assurance that His blessing will rest on us again, that even in the hardest times He will not fail to provide for us. The fourth, and last, part of this paper therefore treats of our comfort.

Our Comfort.

In these hard times people have tried to find comfort and relief in the legislation of Governments, in the deliberations of economic conferences, and the like, but their every hope has been shattered. We have been told again and again that we have "turned the corner," but the hard times continue. We must admit, and many, even renowned men who have closely studied conditions in the world, have admitted that it is beyond the wisdom and power of men to find a way out of the situation. Therefore "put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help." (Ps. 146, 3). Who knows, the hardest times may only be coming.

But we Christians know that there is One whose wisdom and power is unlimited, Who can, if it is His will, change the days of adversity into days of prosperity just as easily as He calmed the storm on the Sea of Gallilee (Mat. 8, 26), and that is the Lord our God. In Him do we place our hope and our confidence, and in His promises do we trust. "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." (Ps. 146, 5). The Lord our God Who has brought the hard times upon us, He is "our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea" (Ps. 46, 1-2), for He has given us the most wonderful promises, promises that are as unchangeable and unfailing as He is Himself. Listen to a few. Heb. 13, 5: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Is. 49, 15-16: "Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands." Is. 54, 10: "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

Yea, the whole Bible abounds in such glorious promises, promises on which we can absolutely rely; for is it not the almighty God of heaven and earth that makes them? God

Who has already fulfilled them in our past life, always given us all that we needed? God Who above all has given us His Son to be our Saviour? "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8, 32). The Lord our God is He with Whom we seek help; He is our Protector, our Rock, our Fortress; He cares for us, for every single one of us; He watches even the smallest things in our life. Christ says, Mat. 10, 29-31: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." Where is the child of God that will not trust in the Lord after hearing all the aforementioned promises of God from His own infallible Word!

All these promises apply also to the maintenance of our bodily life. But God has also given promises which refer to that in particular. After the Flood God spoke to Noah (Gen. 8, 22): "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." The Lord spoke those words; the almighty Ruler of the universe gave that promise. And what He has promised, He can and does certainly keep. Seedtime and harvest shall follow each other in their regular order until the end of the world.

At times He indeed will not give us all we think we need, at times He will let us feel the pinch of poverty, but if we remain steadfast in serving Him, He will bless us all the more after the hard times have passed. He says, Malachi 3, 10: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

It is true, God has not promised to give us temporal blessings in overflowing abundance all our lives, but He has promised to give us everything we need, food and clothing, and if we have food and raiment, let us be therewith content, says St. Paul 1, Tim. 6, 8. And food and clothing He will provide for us at all times. O listen with believing hearts to that most wonderful promise the Saviour has given to His Christians, recorded Mat. 6, 25-34: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap,

nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek); for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Dear friends, can we permit doubt, anxiety, fear, despair, to exist in our hearts after hearing these words of our Saviour? O let us cast all care upon Him, He will care for us! Let us learn the solemn lessons God wishes to teach us in these hard times; let us increase in faithfully serving Him, in spite of all hardships and difficulties, and never waver in our trust in Him and His promises, but say with the Psalmist: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him, Who is the health of my countenance, and my God." (Ps. 42, 11). And with the poet:

Soul, with all thine anguish, Wait on the Lord:
 Nor in sorrow languish, He will help afford.
 When all things fail, God will still prevail;
 He can safely lead thee Through the strongest gale.
 When storms distress thee, In every ill,
 God will surely bless thee; My soul, be still!
 Therefore, dear fellow-Christian,
 Sing, pray, and keep God's ways unswerving;
 So do thine own part faithfully.
 And trust His word, though undeserving,
 Thou yet shalt find it true for thee;
 God never will forsake in need
 The soul that trusts in Him indeed.