

# St. Crispin's Day Epistle to the Brethren with Whom I Stand

## 25 October Anno Domini 2006

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Beloved Brethren in the Ministry of the Word,

Assuming the posture of a brother and approaching as a faithful friend, Judas sought out Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and drew near to kiss him. *But Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48).* Nothing new. We read from of old: *One brother said to another, "Let us go out to the field." And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him (Genesis 4:8).*

Words are difficult to find when attempting to describe those who deceitfully betray us, or betray a nation, or the brotherhood. How would you describe such a traitor? Despicable is far too clean. Cowardly does not reach the depth of our reaction. Loathsome approaches. Perhaps gutless. Too inflammatory? Too bad! It's true. To demonstrate, ponder your reaction and try to put it into words as you read the following:

April 22, 2005 - Associated Press – Fox News Website

FORT BRAGG, N.C. — An Army sergeant was convicted Thursday by a military jury of premeditated murder and attempted murder in a grenade and rifle attack that killed two of his comrades and wounded 14 others in Kuwait during the opening days of the Iraq war.

Prosecutors say [Hasan] Akbar ... coolly carried out the attack to achieve "maximum carnage" on his comrades in the 101st Airborne Division. ... Killed in the middle-of-the-night attack were Army Capt. Christopher Seifert, 27, who was shot in the back, and Air Force Maj. Gregory Stone, 40, who suffered 83 shrapnel wounds. The 101st was preparing to move into Iraq in support of the U. S. invasion when the attack occurred on March 22, 2003. ...

The mothers of the slain soldiers wept during closing arguments as prosecutors flashed pictures of their dead bodies on a screen. When a prosecutor pointed at Akbar, nearly yelling that he was responsible, Akbar sipped from a coffee mug. ...

Do you find it difficult to put your description of such a one into words?

It is no wonder that, in the midst of a war, David spoke to those who volunteered to fight with him. He announced to them: *"If you have come to me in friendship to help me, my heart will be knit to you; but if to betray me to my adversaries, although there is no wrong in my hands, then may the God of our fathers see and rebuke you" (1 Chronicles 12:17).*

It is no wonder that, in the midst of his play titled *Henry V*, Shakespeare put these words into the mouth of the king:

That he which hath no stomach to this fight,  
Let him depart; his passport shall be made  
And crowns for convoy put into his purse.

When such treachery takes place among the men of the cloth who have confessed the same truth and pledged to walk together, it is no less wretched. The initial reactions of shock, bewilderment, anger and revulsion are later joined with profound sorrow and grief.

The initial reactions occur because of where these pastors have gone and are going. Some make their pilgrimage to Rome. Many desert to Dallas. Others rush headlong over the edge in the East. Still other pastors, especially chaplains, are succumbing to the syncretic songs of Washington D.C. at the urging of those agents who endorse political correctness. More trek to Hollywood with their dog and pony shows. They stood with us. They counted on us. We counted on them. Together we said, "Here we stand." Going to these religious groups causes the anger to rise within us and to loath their desertion.

Our sadness and grief, which come later, are the result of pondering, not where they went, but contemplating what they left. They left Wittenberg. They departed from their confirmation vows. How terribly sad. They departed from their Calls, from their ordination vows, from the mutual consolation and conversation of the brethren, from the Sacrament, from the confession that justification by the grace of God through faith in Christ is the article upon which the Church stands or falls. How awfully tragic.

Faithful, Lutheran pastors shudder at the thought of neither preaching, nor hearing, nor believing that Jesus is our Redeemer and our Mediator, Who has taken our sin upon Himself and that we have forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation through faith in Christ. There is big fear and an awful dread at the thought of denying the Gospel and relaying such doubt to Christ's congregation assembled in His Presence to hear His Word rightly divided and proclaimed.

So, dear brethren, where do we go from here? Back to Wittenberg, standing side by side believing and confessing the truth - exposing and rejecting the error. Christ has called us to remain faithful unto death and be given the Crown of Life. Jesus has called us to be His undershepherds, tending to the flocks entrusted to our care - the Church that God has purchased with the sin-atoning Blood of His Son.

So, dear brethren, what do we do? Begin by understanding that we ought to take heed lest we fall as others have done. It is possible for any one of us to deny the faith once delivered to the saints. The Scriptures and the history of the Church provide abundant examples. Think for a moment. What circumstances could take place for you (singular) to depart Wittenberg, betray the brethren and go elsewhere? It could be a tragedy, an ensnarement by the devil, pressure from an ecclesiastical supervisor, itching ears, fear, a gross sin, succumbing to the theology of glory, alcohol, hearkening to the demands of a congregation's expectations for change, weary of the fight against the wolves and hirelings, pride, listening to the Old Adam's plea for works-righteousness, the catholic principle, doubt, a wife telling you to curse God and die, the cry for compromise at the very moment of personal weakness, the elevating of human reason over the Word of God. There are a legion more.

Second, let us hold one another to our vows, pledges, promises and confessions. None of us wants the office of the ministry to be tarnished by our sinful actions or words. Not one of us desires to have the Church suffer as a result of any false doctrine slipping forth from our lips. Therefore, let us pray for one another and let us confront and/or comfort one another as we go about our duties, encouraging one another as we see the Day drawing nigh.

So, do not permit me to depart from the faith, or violate my Call, or break my ordination vows without being confronted. If I sin and I say, "I'm sorry you feel that way," or "I'm sorry that

you are offended," do not let me get away with that. Approach me with the pastoral and brotherly love that will require me to confess my sins against God. Offer me the gift of repentance again and again. I desire to hold the confession of Christ as my only Mediator, Whom the Father has sent that I may have pardon, grace and mercy through the Holy Spirit wrought gift of faith. I truly desire this today and on the day of my departure and the hour of my death. God grant it for Jesus' sake.

Likewise, dear brother, I will attempt to do the same for you. I will call you to task for any departure on your part from God's Word and work. If you do not repent, I will visit you with the Law that always accuses your old sinful nature. If God grants you true repentance, then I will comfort you with the Gospel - that you have eternal life, that you are granted salvation, and that you are forgiven of all your sins in the Name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. God grant it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Today is October 25th and is the Feast of St. Crispin, a fourth-century martyr. Nearly a millennium later, the Battle of Agincourt was fought on 25 October Anno Domini 1415 when Henry V and his out-numbered longbowmen defeated the French. Nearly 200 years after that, in 1599, William Shakespeare used the event in his play, "Henry V." The St. Crispin's Day Speech is moving and worthy of being committed to memory. It stirs the hearts and resolve of the faithful brethren.

### ST. CRISPIN'S DAY SPEECH

Westmoreland:

O that we now had here  
But one ten thousand of those men in England  
That do no work to-day!

King Henry V:

What's he that wishes so?  
My cousin Westmoreland? No, my fair cousin:  
If we are mark'd to die, we are enow  
To do our country loss; and if to live,  
The fewer men, the greater share of honour.  
God's will! I pray thee, wish not one man more.  
By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,  
Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;  
It yearns me not if men my garments wear;  
Such outward things dwell not in my desires:  
But if it be a sin to covet honour,  
I am the most offending soul alive.  
No, faith, my coz, wish not a man from England:  
God's peace! I would not lose so great an honour  
As one man more, methinks, would share from me  
For the best hope I have. O, do not wish one more!  
Rather proclaim it, Westmoreland, through my host,  
That he which hath no stomach to this fight,  
Let him depart; his passport shall be made

And crowns for convoy put into his purse:  
We would not die in that man's company  
That fears his fellowship to die with us.  
This day is called the feast of Crispian:  
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,  
Will stand a tip-toe when the day is named,  
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.  
He that shall live this day, and see old age,  
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,  
And say 'To-morrow is Saint Crispian:'  
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars.  
And say 'These wounds I had on Crispin's day.'  
Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot,  
But he'll remember with advantages  
What feats he did that day: then shall our names  
Familiar in his mouth as household words  
Harry the king, Bedford and Exeter,  
Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester,  
Be in their flowing cups freshly remember'd.  
This story shall the good man teach his son;  
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,  
From this day to the ending of the world,  
But we in it shall be remember'd;  
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;  
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,  
This day shall gentle his condition:  
And gentlemen in England now a-bed  
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,  
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks  
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, Act 4. Scene III

*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you. Cast all your anxieties on Him, for He cares about you. Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, Who has called you to His eternal Glory in Christ, will Himself restore, establish, and strengthen you. To Him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen (1 Peter 5:6-11).*

A blessed Feast of Crispian to you and may the peace of the Lord be with you always,

a brother