

Concordia Theological Monthly



S E P T E M B E R • 1 9 5 2

HOMILETICS

Outlines on Synodical Conference Epistles

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ACTS 6:1-7

A working faith is one that regards and meets the total needs of all its fellow men. And our text gives us

AN APOSTOLIC EXAMPLE — IN CARING FOR THE NEEDS OF OUR FELLOW MEN

I. It is evident from the Apostolic example of our text that to meet the needs of the soul is to supply the greatest need

- A. To be worldly-minded, concerned for the needs of the body and of life, is the general thing. (Men slave for and labor for security in this life: work and family first; savings, home, and possessions first; Matt. 6:32.)
- B. In moments of danger men frequently acknowledge the higher values. (The jailer at Philippi, Acts 16:30; soldiers on fields of battle and in hospitals as reported by our chaplains; personal experiences of men indifferent until life began to be endangered.)
- C. Christ often had called attention to the importance of the eternal values. ("What is a man profited if he shall gain" etc., Matt. 16:26; "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God" etc., Matt. 6:33; "One thing is needful," Luke 10:42; Mary hath chosen the better part.)
- D. Our text offers to us the example of the Apostles, who regarded the ministry of the Word and prayer to have the pre-eminence (Acts 6:2, 4).
 - 1. Background — the Greek-speaking Jews in conflict with the Hebrew-speaking Jews over a so-called inequitable distribution of certain funds to be used for those in need, widows and others who needed physical or social or financial help, v. 1.

2. The Apostles held that, important as this work is, it ought never be allowed to hinder the more serious work of ministering to the spirit of man, vv. 2 and 4.
 3. In order that this work may not hamper their labors, they called for an assembly of all the disciples to keep these matters in their proper place, v. 2.
- E. We, too, must recognize the greater needs of the soul, hence we ought not to permit extraneous matters to draw away our pastors and teachers from their first work. (Settling questions of inheritance, dividing the congregational budget; participating in community work, delinquency projects on the purely social level, are all vital but can never be permitted to hinder the chief work of their calling. Synods must always keep these same standards.)
- II. *The Apostolic example reminds us, however, that to meet the needs of the body and of life, is nevertheless an obligation that must be met with equity*
- A. God acknowledges man's need of material things.
1. He personally provided for His people in the wilderness with water and food and healing. He fed His prophets and clothed His people even as "He maketh his sun to rise" etc., Matt. 5:45.
 2. Jesus: "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have *need of all these things*," Matt. 6:32, and taught that to meet just these needs will be especially acknowledged in the Judgment: "A cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple," Matt. 10:42; "I was an hungered," etc., Matt. 25:35.
- B. The Apostles did not evade or minimize this work.
1. They called together a special meeting of all the disciples and aroused the whole church to recognize and meet these needs adequately.
 2. They saw to it that outstanding men were chosen to assume the responsibility for this work, that it might be done with equity (James 2).
- C. We cannot neglect our responsibilities here either. (Hence besides preaching and teaching and mission work, the personal

care for those in need, in our neighborhood; through local charities; or through church-controlled charities.)

Conclusion: As we behold the love of God towards us, so beautifully described in John 17:23, 26; caring for our needs, both spiritual and physical (forgiving our sins, supplying our needs), despite our unworthiness; may His love truly be in us towards others. Amen.

Chicago, Ill.

THEODORE F. NICKEL

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

2 THESS. 3:1-5

Content: The text introduces the closing admonitions of Paul to the Thessalonians. *To loipon, was noch uebrig bleibt*, finally. The Apostle had commended the Thessalonians for their steadfastness in spite of persecution, 1:4-5, comforted them in their tribulations, 1:6-10, and especially instructed them concerning the second coming of Christ, about which they had been misinformed and which had led to confusion and disorderly conduct in the congregation, chapter 2. But paramount in the Apostle's thinking is the preaching of the Gospel. This work must go forward at all costs. Therefore Paul asks the Thessalonians to pray (cf. Col. 4:3; 1 Thess. 5:25) that the Word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified. *Trechee*, run; cf. Is. 52:7; Eph. 6:15: the Gospel is associated with feet and with running—a vivid picture of the rapid, unhindered, far-reaching spread of the Gospel. There is also a note of urgency. The Word is glorified when it is believed, i. e., Christ, the heart of the Gospel, is glorified. This is, of course, the work of the Holy Spirit. Cf. John 16:14; 14:26; 15:26.

In order that the preachers of the Gospel may continue their blessed work, the Christians are exhorted to pray for their deliverance from unreasonable and wicked men. *Atopos*, out of place, depicting an attitude contrary to what is right. *Poneeros*, actively wicked. Such opposition was common and not surprising, "for all men have not faith." Always the life-giving Gospel becomes to many a savor of death unto death, 2 Cor. 2:16; cf. John 3:18; 9:29.

"But the Lord is faithful." The Lord's faithfulness is the basis for the believers' constancy and security. Because of God's promises

the believers may count on God's omnipotence and love to keep them firm and to guard them from the evil one. *Tou poneeron*, best taken as masculine, referring to Satan himself. He is the instigator of all evil that assails the Christians. But the almighty God will stand guard.

Trust in this divine protection produces true Christian optimism as regards both the present and future actions of the Christians at Thessalonica and in every Christian congregation.

V. 5: A capsule description of motive and method for all church work. The love of God and the patience of Christ. Some take *Theon* and *Christou* as objective genitives, which would focus attention on the Christian's attitude toward God and his patient waiting for Christ's return. It is better, however, to take the genitives subjectively. When the love of God fills our hearts, we are given the strength and zeal to bear affliction and to do the Lord's work, and the patience which Christ has with us encourages and comforts us in our work.

Summary: The real work of the Church is that "the Word of the Lord may have free course," regardless of world or community or congregational crises and problems. At all times, under all circumstances, it is the task of the Christians to spread the Word (cf. the Collect for the Church: "that Thy Word, as becometh it, may not be bound, but have free course and be preached to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people"), to pray for its success, to work faithfully according to God's direction, and to trust firmly in His love, guidance, and protection. The results may well be left in the hands of the Lord of the Church.

Outline: The church year is running its course; the world is rushing to its dissolution; Satan's climactic onslaughts against the Church. Thoughts suggested by the eschatological emphases of Thessalonians. What of the Church? Text shows

CHRISTIANS IN ACTION IN THESE LAST DAYS

I. *Christians Trust Firmly in God*

- A. The sober realization of the power and viciousness of the opposition and of their own helplessness. (Collect: "Without Thee we are not able to please Thee.")
- B. Joyful confidence in God's sustaining power and protection.

II. *Christians Pray Fervently and Confidently*

- A. That the Word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified;
- B. That they may be delivered from Satan's attacks.

III. *Christians Do the Lord's Work*

- A. Constantly and devotedly;
- B. According to the Lord's will (Collect: "That Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts");
- C. Motivated by the love of God;
- D. Comforted and encouraged by the patience of Christ;
- E. That the saving Gospel may be brought to all people (Gradual: "Oh, praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise Him, all ye people"), Hymn 494:4.

Sheboygan, Wis.

H. J. A. BOUMANN

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

COL. 3:1-10

Introduction: The message of this text must be considered in the light of the chapters preceding it. Judaizing errorists had come to the Colossians, teaching that certain Law works ("Touch not, taste not, handle not," 2:21) and ceremonies were essential to Christianity. Paul says that Christians who are dead with Christ to the rudiments of the world do not need such pestering decrees. They have "received Christ Jesus the Lord," 2:6. They are "rooted and built up in Him and stablished in the faith," 2:7.

Prohibitionists and legalists are still found. Judaism, Romanism, and pietistic Protestantism are full of the errors Paul condemns. We must be careful not to judge true Christianity by false and legalistic standards. The true Christian life is not one of merely observing rules and regulations.

THE TRUE STANDARD OF CHRISTIAN LIFE AND CONDUCT

I. *The True Christian Sets Affections on Things Above*

- A. He is risen with Christ. He lives in Christ and by faith shares His resurrection.

- B. Even though he is on earth, he thinks and seeks the things above, where Christ is.
- C. It takes effort, because our physical and spiritual vision is so earthbound. Hence the repeated exhortations here.
- D. He is dead with Christ, away from the elementary things of the world. Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12, 20. (See Lenski's Commentary for explanation of this mystical phrase.)
- E. Christian life with Christ is now hidden, but later manifest with glory, vv. 3-4; 1 John 3:2. It is a mystical union of the believer with Christ.

II. *The True Christian Mortifies His Members, Which
Are upon the Earth*

- A. He breaks with the old vices. His dead members are incapable of being used for old sins. They are useless instruments of the flesh.
- B. The list of vices (see also Eph. 5:3-6)
 - 1. The four sexual sins.
 - 2. Covetousness which is idolatry.
 - 3. A second list in v. 8 — How especially susceptible we are!
 - 4. Lying is named separately in v. 9.
- C. Put off the old man (Eph. 4:22)
 - 1. The old man is derived from Adam.
 - 2. He continues to vex us.
 - 3. By God's grace in Christ working in us we put him off.
- D. Mortification of members is completed by putting on the new man, Eph. 4:24.
 - 1. This is not a separate act, but simultaneous with putting off the old man, like a crab that gets a new shell in losing the old.
 - 2. God creates the new being.
 - 3. The new man is after the image of God.
 - a. Restoration of the whole divine image begins in this life.
 - b. Complete restoration of the divine image is above, where our affection is.

Conclusion: The true Gospel standard of Christian life and conduct is opposed to all false standards. It rests on the power and force of God's Holy Spirit, not the deeds of men.

Baltimore, Md.

GEORGE H. SOMMERMEYER

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

1 JOHN 1:5—2:2

In Gen. 5:24 Enoch's walking with God is mentioned. Heb. 11:5 tells us that he walked right into heaven without seeing death. Like Elijah, those who have become sons and daughters of God through accepting Christ's forgiveness also enter into bliss but through the door of death.

The joys of heaven are not the only blessings of faith. We also have the happiness of walking with God throughout the days of this earthly life. This is a real privilege.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF WALKING WITH GOD

It is blessed because

I. This Is Our Heritage as Sons of God

- A. Adam and Eve walked with God until sin's middle wall of partition estranged God.
- B. Christ has restored us again to the status of children of God through His impeccable life and through His substitutionary suffering and death for us.
- C. Now we are restored once more to the relationship that Adam knew in the Garden.
- D. The joys it gives: peace of mind, assurance in trouble, comfort in sickness, and consolation in bereavement.
- E. But it is a challenge, too, to walk in the light. Text vv. 5-6. This is the proof of our being God's dear children. Chap. 2:3.

II. God Enables Us to Walk with Him

- A. Our own sinfulness a grave problem. "We daily sin much" in thought, word, deed in spite of our best efforts; sins of commission as well as of omission.

- B. The world and Satan are pitted against us with all their might to estrange us from God. Lead us to commit sin or attempt to make us believe that sin is not too vicious. This Epistle directed against Cerinthus and Gnostics, who claimed that they could do as they pleased without contamination. Today, too, men regard sin as a "natural" thing, as a "necessary development in attaining maturity." That man is essentially good is the belief of Unitarianism, Modernism, and Liberalism. More of this than we would like to admit exists also among Lutherans. Through keeping in touch with God in His Word we can avoid such pitfalls.
- C. But there is a state of grace possible through constant repentance and faith. First of Luther's 95 Theses. Text, v. 9. Confession is necessary. Illustrated from the burial of Franz Joseph. About to be laid to rest in the church of the Capuchins in Vienna with the Hapsburgs who had died before, a voice from within the church challenged the cortege: "Who is there?" One of the nobles responded: "His Serene Majesty Franz Joseph." The reply was speedily given: "I know him not. Who is there?" Once more one from the procession spoke: "The emperor of Austria and the apostolic king of Hungary." Again came the reply of the voice: "I know him not! Who is there?" Finally the answer came: "A sinful man who trusts only in the Lord for forgiveness." To this the voice within answered: "Him I know, let him enter." Not perfectionism, but constant forgiveness. Text, 2:2.
- D. Jesus Christ pleads for our forgiveness and strengthening in the faith. Text, 2:1. Growth in sanctification is the work of God in us through Word and Sacrament. Only by denying sin, through God's power working in us, can we have fellowship with Him. Text, 1:7. He is faithful and righteous, v. 9. True to His promise. He will forgive.
- E. Nothing in all the world can contribute so much to contentment and peace of mind.

III. *Walking with God Enables Us to Benefit Humanity*

- A. This is a challenge to us to evangelize the world. Christ died not only for our sins, but also for the world's sin. Text 2:2. We cannot rest until everyone has been told. Tragic to let them

die in sins that have been paid for, but whose remission has not been appropriated.

- B. Our "walking in light" is an incentive to those in darkness to investigate Christianity. Has always been a potent force in mission activity. Also helps to keep our fellow Christians whom we provoke thereby on the straight path.
- C. It gives us a wondrous fellowship with sons of God. This transcends every other earthly relationship. It moves us to sympathy, kindness, and every other form of brotherliness. Gal. 6:10. Together we walk to heaven.

Conclusion: Nothing more glorious nor more beneficial in all the world than "walking with God." The grave problems affecting our age would be ameliorated if the millions of Christians would walk closer with their God. We cannot effect full improvement at once. But while we can't do everything, we can do something. Your heritage, God's power working in you, and the world in which you live demand it.

San Francisco, Calif.

ARTHUR C. NITZ

REFORMATION FESTIVAL

ROM. 1:15-16

Two major streams of events are clearly discernible in modern history: 1) A majestic river bringing Heaven's blessings to individuals, who drink of its waters, and to nations touched by it. It burst forth from its underground channels at the time of the Reformation. 2) A threatening, devastating torrent of unbelief. It began its modern course above ground about a century after the Reformation.

Our fear-stricken generation must uncover afresh the source of power which fed the stream of Reformation blessings, and must drink deeply again of its living waters. The stream is none other than

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

I. *The Heart of the Reformation*

A. The Reformation *began* when Luther discovered in the Bible the Gospel of Christ. It was not a mere negation. On the contrary, it protested because it had something to affirm. When Luther

was led to understand what the Apostle meant by "the righteousness of God," and when he by faith appropriated unto himself that righteousness, then the enslaved Luther stood up as a revived, liberated, energized child of God. Then the Reformation began.

B. The Reformation *progressed* as Luther, "not ashamed," preached and taught the Gospel of Christ. Not only was the Gospel of Christ the great stake in that tremendous battle of spirits called "the Reformation"; its divine power unto salvation was gloriously manifested. The Gospel of Christ was the throbbing heart of the Reformation. Through Luther's Gospel witness the old fountains of Israel forced an outlet through the rubbish of a millennium of human ordinances and traditions, and in a stream of Reformation blessings caused the waste places of the Church to burst forth again into flower.

II. *The Divine Power of Our Evangelical Faith*

A. The Gospel of Christ is "the power of God unto salvation" also to us. It is the healing, uplifting, liberating power of God in our lives. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). The Gospel supplies both motive and power to live holy lives, to render selfless service, and to bring glad sacrifices of gratitude and love. It is the divine power which hallows even our daily toil and transforms this world of sin and sorrow into a field for our love's labors.

B. Has the evangelical faith lost its power? If the Gospel's power is not evident in the lives of many, the cause must be sought in the fact that modern men and women, steeped in the spirit of materialism and love of sin, and resisting the Gospel's power, refuse to stand in a prayerful, living, and personal relationship of faith to the Christ of the Gospel.

D. The measure in which this is true also of us is the measure of the power and earnestness with which there comes to us today the Reformation call to repentance.

III. *The Unfailing Promise of Victory*

A. Text. Here was Rome, at the zenith of its power, wealth, and worldliness. And here was Paul, with the pebbles of the Gospel

of the thorn-crowned Christ in his wallet. His confidence of Gospel victory over the Roman Goliath was not misplaced.

B. Also for Luther the Gospel of Christ was the promise of victory. In the Gospel truth that "*Christus Redemptor vivit*" Luther read the promise of certain and eternal victory. In an hour of temptation and grave concern for the Church, Luther went to his window and looked out to see the stars in the dome of heaven, supported by no visible pillars, held in their courses by the hand of the Lord. In faith he clung to the promise that the same almighty Hand shall uphold and preserve the Church of the Gospel against the gates of hell.

C. How does the future look to us? Will the threatening torrent of unbelief swallow up the Gospel stream of blessings? The Gospel of Christ is for us the unfailing promise of victory in the deepening darkness of the last days. It invites us to lift up our heads, for our redemption draweth nigh. Casting aside all fear, let us cheerfully, aggressively, and confidently perform our great and sober duties as evangelical Christians to hold aloft the Gospel light in the gathering shadows of sin and infidelity. Under the Cross of Christ the future is bright with promise.

St. Louis, Mo.

A. G. MERKENS