

Concordia Theological Monthly



J U N E



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Outlines on the Ranke Epistles

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ACTS 3:9-26 (Read vv. 19, 20, 26)

The healing of the lame man in the name of Jesus. The coming together of the people and the same wonder and amazement that we find at the miracles of Jesus, but no faith. All the evidence was again there for them to behold, but evidently more was needed. Well might Peter have insisted that there never would be faith, especially in view of the many opportunities that these people had had and had rejected. But Peter was true to the purpose of God, which he knew so well from his own personal experience of forgiveness for all, even for a denier. So even to these who crucified (vv. 14, 15) he preached that in the Crucified there is forgiveness for all, for them.

At least two things must be noted throughout: (1) the fact that people are erring does not exclude them from the grace of God in Christ, and (2) the erring must be brought the Word of God, which is nothing less than God's grace in Christ. These points are most admirably brought out by the text.

God Still Sends His Son to Bless You

I. *All sin is choice against Jesus, the Son of God* (v. 14)

- A. Sin is a refusal to glorify Jesus as God did (v. 13). This verse gives special emphasis to the fact that God, who sent Jesus, is the Covenant God and the God whom they have always claimed as their God. But He cannot be their God so long as they deny Jesus.
- B. Sin, the rejection of our true King, is always rebellion. V. 13 reminds us of the plea before Pilate: "We have no king but Caesar!" If God did not forgive sin, they would therewith have thrust themselves out of the kingdom of God.
- C. Sin is the denial of God's Holy and Just One (v. 14). It is revealed most dramatically in the choice of Barabbas over Jesus.
- D. Sin is the killing of the Prince of Life (v. 15) and therewith the destruction of our only hope of life.

NOTE: Sin must ever be seen before repentance is possible, but it can be seen in its true dimension only when it is seen as rejection of the love of God. This is especially true of error, because, in the very

nature of the case, the love of God, revealed by God, must be held and taught. Sin is the frustration of the purpose of God as expressed in the theme. Error denies that God sent His Son for the purpose stated.

II. *Ignorance, far from being an excuse, is the source of sin and as such is doubly condemned* (v. 17)

- A. The Jews to whom Peter was preaching had the mouth of the prophets (v. 18). Ignorance is the refusal to see Jesus in the light of what God says either by His prophets of the past or by His preachers of the present.
- B. They had Moses (v. 22). Moses was their boast, the foundation of their hope, and with this they condemned themselves because Moses condemns all that will not look away to the Prophet greater than himself, all who refuse to hearken to that Prophet. Thus they literally boasted of their condemnation.
- C. They are the children of Abraham (v. 25) and thus in the covenant. But they refuse to examine the covenant again and hold only to the name of Abraham. The terms of the covenant condemn them because they refuse to be blessed in Him in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed.

NOTE: This shows the nature of error in particular. It is always failure and refusal to take God at His word; it is a renewal of the basic rebellion which rejects Christ as the Revelation of God, Jesus as the One in whom dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily. This is the truth that is held out to those who err, and they err in that they do not acknowledge it as God's truth in Christ.

III. *But God still sends and pleads and blesses, but His sending is still the sending of the same Jesus and the pleading and the blessing are in Him alone*

- A. God Himself used sin to free us from sin (vv. 17, 18). This it is that robs sin of all power because its power has been exhausted in Christ. The very means by which the Jews rejected Jesus are the means by which He saves them if they now accept both the judgment and the grace implicit in this.
- B. God blots out sin (v. 19). This is the wonderful grace whereby Jesus, the Lamb of God, bore the sins of the world and bore them forever out of God's sight and memory. See your sins there in Christ, and your sin is remembered no more. Thus sin per se is no longer the basis of judgment; relationship to Christ is.

- C. He shall send as final Judge the very Jesus who was rejected (vv. 20, 21). This is comfort and threat. Error sees Him wrong who is final Judge and must be revealed as error in the light of the final Judgment. Faith is comforted in the fact that the Jesus who died for us is the Jesus who will judge.
- D. He raises us up in the power of the rejected Jesus' resurrection-life (v. 26), and this is the proclamation of Jesus' ultimate victory and therefore the victory of all them that are His.

NOTE: This section is the presentation of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, which sin and error reject. It is that sending of which the theme speaks. It is Jesus, the only Savior, offered as Savior again for those in sin and error. He is the only Savior and the full and perfect Savior of all who come to God by His name.

Minneapolis, Minn.

WILLIAM A. BUEGE

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ACTS 4:1-22 (Read v. 20)

The first Christians' eagerness to proclaim the Gospel and to win others into their fellowship was not dictated simply by obedience to a divine command; it sprang spontaneously out of an inward urge to share what they had discovered. They were new men in Christ, and the newness of life stirred them so powerfully that they had to try to pass it on. To be a real Christian in the early church was to be an ambassador. To fail here was to fail in being a fellow worker with Christ. When St. Paul reminded the Philippians that they were shining "as lights in the world, holding forth the Word of life," he was stating an accepted fact. The Church of Christ knew that through her alone shone out the light of the Gospel in a pagan world; through her total life alone could the Word of life be discovered.

God's witness can say, "I was there, I experienced, I know, thus saith the Lord, etc."

Witnessing Is Speaking Boldly What You Have Seen and Heard

I. *Bold witnessing makes enemies*

- A. The assertion that Christ died and lives is a "stumbling block" and "foolishness" to the unbeliever (1 Cor. 2:14).
- B. The text gives ample evidence of the opposition faced by Peter and John.
1. Temple captains and Saducees were grieved (vv. 1, 2).

2. They put them in prison.
 3. Rulers, elders, scribes, Annas, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander were called together to try Peter and John for their witness (vv. 5, 6).
 4. The enemies question the power of bold testimony and miracles (v. 7).
 5. Enemies can be expected to try everything possible to suppress the witness (vv. 17, 18, 21). They may employ the power of the sword, the power of government.
- C. We take courage from the fact that the power of enemies is limited. Ultimately and finally they will fail (vv. 16, 21). Even communism cannot stop the witness (v. 19). 20,000 communists are gaining on 600,000,000 Christians only where the witness is weak.

II. *Bold witnessing makes disciples*

- A. God uses "foolishness of preaching" as His means of bringing salvation to men (2 Cor. 1:21).
- B. The simple positive statement of the truth from a convinced heart is God's method of adding to the church.
- C. In Jerusalem the number of believers grew quickly to 5,000 by this method (v. 4).
- D. The powerful Holy Spirit speaks through weak men.
 1. Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit (v. 8).
 2. The Spirit can use the unlearned and the ignorant (v. 13).
 3. The wisest of man cannot stop the operation of the Spirit (vv. 14-16).
 4. The Holy Spirit opens eyes and ears to make the witness bold (v. 20).
- E. Bold witnessing stands on the name of Jesus Christ.
 1. The work of redemption is its message.
 2. The apostle who denied His Lord on Maundy Thursday spent his life preaching "no other name" (vv. 11, 12).

III. *Bold witnessing is needed today*

- A. Sins must be named (v. 10).
- B. The promises of the Gospel must be proclaimed.
- C. This is the work of laymen as well as pastors.
 1. Ministers are to train and equip laymen (Eph. 4:11, 12).

2. The PTR has right emphasis on lay witnessing (program and results of PTR can be cited).
- D. The number of witnesses (preachers) in every congregation can be increased from 1 to 500 (or whatever the membership is).
- E. The whole Book of Acts is a powerful example of lay and pastoral witnessing—the kind of bold witnessing we need. Half-hearted and shallow convictions did not produce apostolic witness with Pentecostal results. Be strong in the Lord!
- F. We are not to remain babes in Christ, Lilliputians of the Lord, tots of the truth.
- G. We must be Spirit-filled, staunch, stalwart men of God. We are messengers of peace, ambassadors for Christ, stewards of God's mysteries, fishers of men, voices in the wilderness of the 20th century, mouthpieces of the Most High!

Baltimore, Md.

G. H. SOMMERMEYER

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ACTS 4:23-31

Since church in existence, from Creation until now, mission work done, at times energetically. Salvation for all men, yet not all saved. Due to man's perversity. Number of unbelievers is constantly growing. More mission zeal and greater consecration required. But also assurance that cause good and victory certain.

The Church Wins Through to Victory

I. *When its task is understood*

- A. Our purpose: to win the world for Christ. But our task is to preach the Gospel by proclaiming Word and administering Sacraments. Holy Spirit uses these means to convert and win.
 1. The *Word* we preach. Bible, God's Book, but specifically the Christ of the Bible. Every text reveals in some way the Gospel message of sin and grace. Any other use of the Bible results in distortion, error, or worse, cheap moralizing. Even genealogies and table of nations must be so understood. Prophets and apostles always preached the Gospel from the Bible. So must we.
 2. The *preaching* of the Word. Not enough to print Bibles. While powerful, the Word must be understood. Hence the living voice. The Ethiopian and Philip (Acts 8:30,31).

Hence preachers, teachers, lecturers, radio, TV, house to house, mass meetings, PTR. The Great Commission. Also Sacraments, Tracts, Devotional Booklets, etc.

B. The Word must bear fruit. Healing. Signs. Wonders (v. 30).

1. The Gospel always brings results: spiritually, mentally, physically. Civilization, culture, arts and sciences follow Gospel. Orphanages, homes for aged, hospitals, sanatoria, Christian doctors and nurses. Where Gospel repudiated, as in North Africa, poverty, disease, ignorance, brutality result. The conquered Evil One returns when the Conqueror is not wanted (Luke 11:21-26).
2. Faith healers and their ilk are not included here because of false doctrines. Are false prophets. Like Pharaoh's magicians, who could imitate Moses' works up to a point. Jesus' and apostles' miracles always instantaneous and complete and devoid of sensationalism. Faith healers cannot raise dead.

C. This the business of the church. Faith must work in love. The social implications of Gospel must be understood. But our business to preach Gospel. Providing fellowship, games, entertainment, physical facilities, as churches and schools, raising moneys, solving social problems, as race discrimination, are corollaries and must always be resolved with the motivation and the control supplied by the atonement. The preaching of the Word our great task, and through it the victory will be won. But only—

II. *When hindrances are taken into account and prepared for*

- A. Powerful forces are pitted against the Gospel. Herod, Pontius Pilate, Gentiles, kings of the earth, rulers. So today, too. Governments of China, Russia, Spain, Italy, etc. Christian goodness infuriates wicked heathen.
- B. Some of these from within the church. Sadducees, Pharisees, high priests, Sanhedrin. Today: Ecumenicity that ignores doctrines of Scripture. Church union dominated by modern and liberal thinking. Church unions built on compromise. Roman Catholicism, lodgery, etc.
- C. Indifference on the part of masses permitted hindrances and abetted them. A great hindrance itself. Materialism the great concern also today. Makes the church task most difficult. But this can be overcome, and the task can be completed.

III. *When every resource is tapped*

- A. God's governing omnipotence is exercised in behalf of His church (v.24). He is with us, too.
- B. Prayer of God's children (v.24) claims God's help, gives courage (vv.23,29,31). Prayer important for all endeavors in evangelism. For PTR, church services, adult classes, Bible classes, devotions, etc.
- C. Knowledge of God's Word (v.25). Knew Psalm 2. We ought to know Scripture too. Only by this means are we equipped to fight the Lord's battles. Eph. 16:11-17. Study Word.
- D. The Holy Spirit's Indwelling. V.31. Comes through Word and Sacrament. Indwells, convinces, strengthens, encourages, emboldens. Vitally necessary for Christian witnessing today.

Humanity's eternal welfare depends on church. Can we refuse to grasp the victory God has put into our hands, when so much depends on it? You too are needed. What if Peter or Paul had failed the Lord? What would history and geography show today? What will eternity reveal if you fail? Press on to assured victory by performing your task!

San Francisco, Calif. _____

ARTHUR C. NITZ

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ACTS 4:32—5:11 (Read 4:32,33)

(Again the Ranke series achieves an interesting focus by lengthening the span of a text. Acts 5:1-11, always troublesome for the preacher because devoid of both goal and Gospel, recedes into the perspective of a powerful goal with both light and shadow.)

How shall a Christian take care of his money? "Give as much of it as you can toward the purposes of the church," say its leaders. "Don't have any money, live on other people," says one form of the monastic ideal. "It's a bad question," say many; "my Christianity is that part of my life which has nothing to do with my money—except my church contribution." Does anybody say: "The church should have some, give whatever looks right"? Our text describes how people under the first glow of Pentecost handled their money; some did well, some badly. From their experience we can learn:

Christian, Let the Grace of God Steer Your Giving of Money

I. *Christians have use for money*

- A. They need money for the care of their needy (v.34). They may be in their own families (1 Tim. 5:8), or in the congregation at large, or in other places of the world (2 Cor. 8).
- B. They need money for the provision of the Gospel to themselves and others (1 Tim. 5:17; Gal. 6:6).

II. *Christians give this money in various ways*

- A. In the first church they "had all things common" (v.32) — the easiest way. Thus their poor were nourished (v.34), although they had to exercise care (Acts 6:1). We don't find this possible for *all* of our possessions.
- B. Other early Christians gave for the needy on a freewill basis (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8:2). This is the method of our churchly giving.

III. *When Christians give money, let the grace of God steer it*

- A. It is of first importance that Christians give because they are prompted by the grace of God, i. e., God's redeeming work in Christ Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit (v.33).
- B. When people purporting to be Christians display their giving from source and motivation other than that of the Spirit, they lie to the Holy Ghost (5:3,9). The early church received special help in its discipline to thwart such giving (5:1-11). But it is just as important for the church today to forestall this procedure.
- C. The church preaches the power of the resurrection (4:33). The whole church must reinforce this witness through the demonstration of the Spirit and of power in the lives, including the giving, of Christians (4:33-37; cf. 2 Cor. 8:3-5).
- D. To that end the members of the church need to strengthen the grace of God in their own hearts through their mutual witness (cf. Acts 2:42-47; 4:31,32).

How shall we take care of our money? Turn it over to each other for disbursement? That would be one way; we do so with a substantial portion of our money, and we call it the "budget." But it is of first importance that we turn over *all* of our money — also that for food and fun and taxes and shelter — to God, because of the living God in our hearts. Otherwise we run the risk of lying to the Holy Ghost. Let us rather be witnesses of Christ's resurrection!