

Concordia Theological Monthly



AUGUST



1957

Outlines on the Ranke Epistles

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ACTS 8:9-25 (Extract vv. 12, 13)

The Acts of the Apostles is filled with many local situations. Death of Stephen. Caring for the poor. Conversion of Paul. Miracles by the disciples. Local color of our congregations would add many interesting details to the history of our church. The triumphant victory of the Gospel in a certain local situation is described in the text. Give a brief account of the story. This text shows that

God Gives His Holy Spirit by Grace in Christ Jesus

I. *God gives His Holy Spirit to all classes of men*

- A. The disciples and Philip. Acts 2 and the Pentecost miracle. John 15:26 ff. and the sending of the Comforter.
- B. The Samaritans (vv. 12, 17). They had been sinners following Simon.
- C. Simon the Sorcerer (v. 13). He believed and was baptized. He forsook, at least for a time, his ways of sin.
- D. The Ethiopian eunuch (context vv. 26 ff.).
- E. Apostle Paul (Acts 9). Conversion of Paul, who had hated Christ.
- F. Members of our church. From the highways and byways, from many parts of the city and state and nation, a congregation has been formed. The church of Jesus Christ is open to all classes of men as they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Through evangelism and missions all classes of men are invited to receive the Holy Spirit.

II. *God gives His Holy Spirit in faith*

- A. Through the Holy Spirit we believe (1 Cor. 12:3; John 3:5, 6; Eph. 2:8, 9).
- B. Through the Holy Spirit there is strength to cut the ties with the past (vv. 12, 13). Samaritans and Simon turned from past. This strength is also ours today.
- C. Through this Holy Spirit men still remain individual personalities. Men can fall away and reject the Holy Spirit (vv. 18-23).

Demas, 2 Tim. 4:10. Judas. Simon Peter and his betrayal. Losses to our church after confirmation, etc. Parable of the sower (Matt. 13).

D. Through the Holy Spirit there were special gifts in the apostolic age (v. 17). — Acts 10:44-48; 1 Cor. 12:7-13; Acts 2, the miracle of Pentecost.

III. *God gives His Holy Spirit by grace through certain means*

A. No talents of men can create faith. No money will buy God (vv. 18-20). Education, science, and philosophy cannot give us the Holy Spirit.

B. Through the Word God builds His kingdom.

1. The Law will show sin (Rom. 3:20). Repentance necessary (v. 22).

2. The Gospel shows the Savior (v. 12). Baptism also creates faith, and Holy Communion sustains faith.

God has given us the Holy Spirit by grace. We must exercise the faith. We must make diligent use of the means of grace so that the Holy Spirit will remain with us by the grace of God.

Buffalo, N. Y.

JOHN E. MEYER

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ACTS 8:26-38

The traveling Treasurer found treasure in a peculiar place (v. 26). Close scrutiny of the home office shows how hard he had been on the treasury. Many more who later agreed it was the most profitable trip any government official had ever made. It brought them the Treasure of treasures, Jesus Christ. Heaven will tell how many more have come into treasure because of

The Traveling Treasurer

This treasurer's junket has enriched the country. Five points to make point six: To step up the activity of all treasury agents.

I. *His office as Treasurer* (v. 27)

A. No doubt a good one. Conscientious. Treasury affairs continued under assistants during his absence.

B. Notion: Can you be high in the government and high in the church at the same time? Because of his high position in the

government, some might say, "Hands off, leave him alone."
Not so. He had treasure at home.

II. *He had another treasure in his lap, away from home*

- A. "Read Esaias the prophet" (v.28). Very expensive. Big, 24 feet long. Held in both hands, treasure. Hand written, Greek language. Roll and unroll.
- B. The Treasure, God's Word (Isaiah 53:7,8). Reading the biggest expense account of all time (vv.32,33). Read and reread; he was stuck. He knew there was treasure there. Somebody is doing something, making a sacrifice for good purpose, uncomplaining, voluntary. Biting on the coin of heaven, banging it on the cash register, listening to the ring. Genuine! But could not ring it up in till of his soul, until—and here he comes.

III. *Another treasurer, an agent from the treasury of heaven*

- A. On the road, by an angel. Traveling papers (v.26).
- B. Final directions, the Holy Spirit (v.29). "There he is, Philip; he's all yours. He's ready. Now you get ready. It's all set up; go after him." His credentials are in his mouth, with finger on the Scripture.
- C. On the double (v.30). The devil's counter agents suggest "holy caution." "Lord, what shall I say, etc.?" Use your head. Bear down on the accelerator with both feet. God's treasury demands delivery.

IV. *When two treasurers meet (vv.30,31)*

- A. What the agent sees. I hope you see the suspense of this moment. When Philip got the first glance of that man's carriage, in our language, he got an eyeful of the longest limousine he had ever seen. No doubt of the treasure *he* had! With credulity, "This one, Lord?" Must be, no one else in sight (v.27). What we observe so often in God's Kingdom; He can be so primitive at times. Contrast:

1. The Treasurer of Ethiopia
2. The Treasurer of Heaven

The handler of the heavenly coin on foot, running after and along; no carriage at all. The one had treasure in his hand, the other in his head. The one had treasure at home, the other in his mouth.

B. How the agent does (v. 30 f.).

1. Looking for an opening. He gets his cue, the tone of voice. So little to go on; he's a sharp agent. What a lesson! Though he has his orders from highest authority, he does not barge into the carriage, or rip the book out of his hand. He does not say, "Let's see what we have here." Or, "Move over, mister, let me tell you something!" He did not invite himself; he made himself available.
2. In Greek there is a pun on words, "Do you read what you are reading?" When he said that, it was a smile of Ask-me-and-I'll-tell-you sort of way. Reply just as open, "How in the world can I, if no one instructs me?"
3. The drama of this moment is considerable. When the treasurer of Ethiopia let go the treasure in his hand, as palm down turned to palm up, a turn of his wrist, and there was fulfilled the prophecy (Psalm 68:31), "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." When Philip put his foot into the carriage, he put his foot into all of Ethiopia for Jesus Christ, though he never saw an inch of it. To use an overworked American word, "Fabulous!" All that progress without radio or TV.

V. *Unpacking the treasury* (vv. 34, 35)

- A. "And preached unto him *the Jesus*." He showed the one who had spent more than all the sins of the world. How God financed the biggest indebtedness in Jesus Christ. In treasury language, God Himself had emptied His own treasury, in the very town he had just left.
- B. "At the same Scripture" he had in his hand. The door of the safe was deftly opened, dialing from one prophecy to the next. Each bolt tumbled into place in the soul of the treasurer of Ethiopia. "They are they" right there in your hand, Mr. Treasurer "which testify of me" (John 5:39). Philip selected the passages, and let Scripture speak, convert, convince. In no time at all, this treasurer was scooping up the treasure of Heaven as he gobbled up the Scripture. He was cashing in (vv. 36, 38).
- C. A new treasure is added. Did he quit his job? No. He now dispensed two kinds of currency: 1. The coin of his queen. 2. The coin of his King, Jesus Christ.

VI. *At this moment all should feel like a church full of treasury agents. That Treasure is Jesus Christ*

- A. You get your number at Baptism.
- B. Your credentials, orders, from God Himself.
- C. Expect to do a lot of running after people you don't know and have never seen. You may mutter, "What do I owe him? Having himself a time, chauffeur and all. What does he need from me?" You know what this man needed, though he had the Bible in his hand. He needed Jesus. Plenty of people today have the Bible but no Jesus. How come? You find out!
- D. Put yourself out to bring them in. Dish out the treasury. You may be on a desert road or a sweeping boulevard when you meet your Ethiopian. An agent's assignment is lifelong.
- E. Meanwhile, let's help people cash in on the Bank of Heaven, for we are *traveling treasurers*.

Schaumburg, Ill.

F. A. HERTWIG, JR.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ACTS 9:1-22

The Apostle Paul never grew weary of speaking about his conversion. He looked upon his conversion as the greatest event in his life.

We do well to follow his example. Nothing that can happen to us is more important than our conversion, regardless of when, where, and how this took place.

Conversion is a miracle of God. This was true of the conversion of Paul. This is true of our conversion.

The Miracle of Conversion

I. *The madness of unbelief before conversion* (vv. 1, 2)

- A. That conversion is a miracle of God becomes evident when we consider the madness of unbelief. Those who reject Christ in unbelief boast that they are reasonable people. It is a fact, however, that they are unreasonable. Just therein lies the madness of unbelief. Unbelievers think they are what they are not. As Paul in unbelief persecuted the Christians, he thought he was doing right. He imagined that his "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" was a serv-

ice to God. He was so zealous in his desire to serve the Lord by persecuting the Christians that he was on his way to Damascus to continue the work he had begun in Jerusalem.

- B. Unbelievers today may not act as Paul did. Some do. However, most unbelievers are outwardly honorable people. Let us not be deceived. The madness of unbelief is ever the same. It shows itself differently in different people at different times. But always unbelievers think they are what they are not. They think that their rejection of Christ is reasonable and good. Though spiritually dead, they imagine themselves to be very much alive. Though enemies of God, they imagine that they are God's friends. Hence only a miracle of God can account for their conversion.
- C. May we never forget that our conversion was such a miracle, regardless of whether we were born again as infants or brought to faith late in life.

II. *The power of God's grace in conversion* (vv. 3-8)

- A. Before we consider the power of God's grace, let us look at its beauty. Paul did not deserve mercy. He deserved God's wrath and punishment.

That is what unbelievers deserve today. That is what we deserved apart from Christ. Oh, the beauty of God's grace!

- B. The power of God's grace is evident first in the manner it crushed Paul. One moment Paul was sure that he was serving God, the next moment he was trembling in the dust at the knowledge of his guilt. This change was a miracle which could be accomplished alone through the power of God's grace.

The power of God's grace accomplished the very same when we were converted. It is good for us daily to be crushed by the knowledge of our guilt. There is no merit in such knowledge, but without this knowledge faith in Christ cannot follow.

- C. The power of God's grace caused Paul first to ask, "Who art Thou, Lord?" and then to see and to embrace Jesus as his Savior. The power of God's grace caused Paul to say, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" What a change took place within Paul! What a miracle!

This same power of God's grace is evident in the lives of all who believe in Jesus.

III. *The fruit of faith after conversion* (vv. 11 and 20-22)

A. After his conversion Paul immediately wanted to do something; however, he did not do what he thought needed to be done. He asked the Lord what to do. He quietly waited for the Lord to tell him.

We who believe are not to be idle. We are to do something — not what we think up for ourselves, but what the Lord Jesus bids us to do in His Word.

B. Paul did two things immediately after his conversion: he prayed and he preached. From blasphemy to prayer. From persecution of Christians to preaching of Jesus. What a miraculous change. The Lord Jesus looks for a rich measure of these two fruits of faith in our lives also.

Now that we have considered the miracle of Paul's conversion we understand why he never grew weary speaking about it. Let us keep in mind that our conversion was a miracle no less than the conversion of Paul. Let us rejoice and bear much fruit.

San Antonio, Tex.

ROLAND WIEDERAENDERS

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ACTS 11:1-18 (Key verses, 4-9, 18)

The Gospel is exclusive. We are saved alone by grace through faith in Christ to the exclusion of all personal effort. But the Gospel is also inclusive. Christ died for all, and God will have all men to be saved. The arms of the Cross include all people of all ages, not merely the "upper four hundred."

Christ Is for All

I. *Our resistance to this truth*

A. Peter's resistance. Refer to events in Acts 10. Peter was prejudiced against bringing the Gospel to the uncircumcised Gentiles. Elaborate. Similar to Jonah and his attitude toward Ninevites.

B. Resistance today. — How many of us have the heartfelt desire to save the perishing as Paul had in Romans 9:2, 3; 10:1? Our slowness to share Christ with the heathen world may be due to ignorance, prejudice, unbelief, pride, nationalistic background. Whatever the cause, it is wicked; needs repentance and forgiveness of Christ. Those who hinder the conversion of the sinner withstand God (v. 17b). We have been won to win. Yet in the

sophomore year of our Venture of Faith we have difficulty raising a \$14,200,000 budget, an amount less than Revlon (\$64,000 Question) spent on advertising and promotion last year.

II. *Divine intervention*

Through a vision (vv. 5-10) God corrected Peter's ceremonial law attitude concerning meats, and by means of this experience broke down his resistance to bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles. Relate. Notice the steps in this action of God to stir us to greater missionary zeal:

- A. God works on our resisting hearts through His Word in general. Even as He revealed to Peter through the spoken Word in the vision that Christ is for all (vv. 7, 8, 9), so He reveals the same compelling truth to us through His Word today. Through Christ we have been redeemed, converted, saved (Eph. 2:8). Without this Christ, men perish eternally (Mark 16:16b). God wants all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). He wants us to speed the Good News to men (Matt. 28:19). We do not need a special vision to remind us of this; or someone from the dead to startle us into action. We have "Moses and prophets" which reveal God's will in this matter.
- B. Intervention and work of Holy Spirit
 1. Directs us to go (v. 12). Three types of missionaries: Go-missionaries, those who personally take the Gospel to other places. Co-missionaries, those who cannot go, but pray and give that others may go. O-missionaries, those who omit missions from their heart and life.
 2. Descends with His blessings (vv. 15, 16). Recount blessings upon our own work: growth of our church, missionaries in 25 countries, Lutheran Hour, fruits of personal witnessing. Thereby He encourages us.
- C. Impact of entire *experience* changed Peter. In similar fashion God intervenes in our lives today in order to awaken us to His purpose. By losses, war, sickness, trials or unusual blessings, He refines us into better witnesses of His name and spurs us on to share Christ.

III. *The response of faith*

Peter went to Caesarea. He did not have a one-track mind so filled with prejudice that he could not be changed. He heeded (v. 6);

was persuaded by the Spirit (v. 12); went (vv. 12, 13). This was his response of faith. "Jesus went up. The Holy Spirit came down. We go out."

A. Immediately (v. 12). — We cannot afford to sit on dead center while 80 persons per minute go into eternity without Christ.

Suddenly before my inward, open vision
Millions of faces crowded up to view,
Sad eyes that said, "For us is no provision;
Give us your Savior, too."

B. Thankfully (v. 18). As these people thanked God for the work of the Gospel among the Gentiles, so we are grateful for the opportunity to carry the message of Jesus Christ into all the world. Tell of our work in India, Africa, New Guinea, colleges and seminaries, etc. It is a privilege to be identified with this work.

Christ is for all. God will have all men to be saved. This is represented in Christian art by a picture of the Reigning Christ. He stands with a crown on His head. In His hand He holds a globe. Surmounting the globe, representing the world He has redeemed, is a cross. He is counting on us to carry His cross to the whole world and has promised all the resources of His kingly power to back us up. In His name we go.

Topeka, Kans.

ALBERT C. BURROUGHS

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ACTS 14:1-20

"When an irresistible force such as you, Meets an immovable object like me, Something's gotta give!" The ancient theoretical speculation now a popular song. Let it be our theme. The immovable object, the world; the irresistible force, the Gospel; and when they meet, "something's gotta give." Thus the whole history of Acts. Thus also this snatch of history from St. Paul's first missionary journey. Thus our challenge today.

Irresistible Force and Immovable Object

(or the theme for the day: "The Christian Gospel in the World")

I. *The immovable object, the world*

A. The Vast World.

1. To a tiny handful of men, without wealth, prestige, or influence, the enormous assignment, "Go . . . all the world . . . all nations . . . every creature!"

2. This is our task. Our advantages: size of Synod, of Christendom; modern tools like printing, communications, transportation. Yet, a staggering command! How little of the world we reach, only 25 lands, and so tiny an effort in most of them! We don't even reach our own neighbors!

B. The Hostile World.

1. Note the resistance to Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:45, 50; 14:2, 5, 19). Men revered ancient traditions, hated truth and repentance.
2. World is still hostile. Men boast of own righteousness, delight in their wisdom and opinion, resist being changed. Nations cherish proud and ancient religious traditions. World self-satisfied, condescending, tolerant, indifferent.

C. The Corrupting World.

1. Clever Satan! If he cannot stop the Apostles by simple resistance, then he will pervert their Gospel! The gross attempt of Satan (vv. 8-13). The healing of the cripple was intended to "give testimony to the word" (v. 3). But these people take it as excuse for idolatry. Thus the temptation to compromise with paganism.
2. Gospel power often perverted by pagan elements. Even today, the tendency of men to praise the church, harness it as an agency of social reform and moral uplift, meanwhile despising the Word of God's grace in Christ as something secondary and unessential.

All this, the immovable object — the vast, hostile, corrupting world!

II. *Against the immovable object, God sets the irresistible force*

A. Does not appear "irresistible," like bulldozers and armies.

1. Two frail men, bearing a "foolish" message of a crucified Jew who rose from death, Son of God and Savior of the nations!
2. Do we ourselves feel like an "irresistible force," afraid of nothing? An "inferiority complex" grips us, an attitude of defeatism, willing to make a half-hearted effort, but not expecting victory. So little confidence have we in the power of the Gospel, that we are ashamed to speak it!

B. Then we had better understand the "irresistible force" that is ours! See it in these Apostles, who, for all human weakness, claim for themselves all power (Phil. 4:13; 2 Cor. 12:9, 10).

1. They know that they are instruments of God (Acts 13:2; 14:3,27). "They rehearsed all that *God had done* with them."
 2. They are possessed of their calling, have and desire no life but this. Called, they go. Driven out, they go on. Left for dead, they rise. They never flee *from*, but *to* (v.6. Cf. 13:51 with Matt. 10:14). As they go, they preach Christ (vv. 1, 3, 7).
 3. They will not be distracted. Not by fears, threats, punishments, sufferings. Not by temptations of the devil. To be exalted and worshiped as gods, they do not relish, but abhor! Single-minded, God-empowered purpose and work!
- C. As they were irresistible, so are we —
1. When we know what God wants done.
 2. When we are willing to be His instruments; to discover and fulfill our part in His purpose, whether by voice, or labor, or prayer, or by gifts which enable others to labor for us.
 3. When God's purpose so possesses our life, that we will ourselves suffer, even die, rather than retreat from it.
- III. *When the irresistible force meets the immovable object, "something's gotta give!"*
- A. Often it seems that the "force" has been successfully resisted, the object unmoved.
1. Were not the Apostles persecuted, driven from place to place, stoned and left for dead?
 2. Was not Christ Himself overpowered by the unanimity of a nation and an empire against Him, and sealed in death and grave?
 3. Are we not discouraged, resisted, defeated, sometimes to the point of utter surrender?
- B. But wait and see how the story ends!
1. Christ rose victorious; Satan, men, and hell defeated!
 2. These Apostles planted tiny churches wherever they went, and from dozens of such patches, the Gospel grew (v. 1)! "Many believed" (v.20). "*Disciples* stood round about" (vv. 22, 23, 27)!
 3. What of the hard hearts who resist, and will not be moved?

- a. They could not and cannot stop the Gospel, nor thwart God's gracious purposes.
- b. If they will not be moved by humble repentance, they will be moved when the Cornerstone they despised falls on them and grinds them to powder (Matt. 21:42-44).

Let us "seek first the Kingdom" (Gospel), knowing what we are here for! When Christ is at work through us, let the world rejoice—and tremble!

New Orleans, La.

PAUL G. BRETSCHER

TEXTS TO BE TREATED IN HOMILETICAL SECTION 1957—1958

Beginning with the first Sunday in Advent, the new series of texts will be the alternate series of Swedish Gospels (with several free-text exceptions). The first series was offered in this journal, 1954—1955. For pastors planning their series early, the selections are published herewith. Nearly 30 series in addition to the Old Standard selections are published in Paul Nesper, *Biblical Texts* (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1952), most of them providing Epistle, Gospel, and Old Testament selections; splendid lists of free texts are also offered.

Date	Day	Text
December 1, 1957	1 Ad.	John 18:36, 37
December 8, 1957	2 Ad.	Luke 17:20-30
December 15, 1957	3 Ad.	Luke 3:1-14
December 22, 1957	4 Ad.	John 3:22-36
December 25, 1957	Chris.	John 1:1-14
December 29, 1957	S. a. Chris.	Luke 12:32
January 1, 1958	N. Y.	Luke 13:6-9
January 5, 1958	S. a. N. Y.	John 1:29-34
January 6, 1958	Epiph.	John 8:12
January 12, 1958	1 a. Epiph.	John 7:14-18
January 19, 1958	2 a. Epiph.	John 4:5-26
January 26, 1958	Transfig.	Mark 13:31-37
February 2, 1958	Sept.	Matt. 19:27-30
February 9, 1958	Sexa.	Matt. 10:2-16
February 16, 1958	Quinq.	John 12:20-33
February 23, 1958	Invoc.	Luke 10:17-20
March 2, 1958	Rem.	Mark 9:14-32
March 9, 1958	Ocu.	John 7:19-31
March 16, 1958	Lae.	John 6:52-66
March 23, 1958	Jud.	John 11:47-57

March 30, 1958	Palm S.	John 12:1-16
April 3, 1958	M. Thur.	* Mark 14:22-25
April 4, 1958	G. Fri.	* John 12:31-36
April 6, 1958	Easter	Matt. 28:1-8
April 13, 1958	Quas.	John 21:15-23
April 20, 1958	Mis. D.	John 10:1-10
April 27, 1958	Jub.	John 14:1-12
May 4, 1958	Cant.	John 17:9-17
May 11, 1958	Rog.	John 17:18-23
May 15, 1958	Asc.	John 17:24-26
May 18, 1958	Ex.	Matt. 10:24-31
May 25, 1958	Pent.	John 7:37-39
June 1, 1958	Tr.	Matt. 28:18-20
June 8, 1958	1 a. Tr.	Matt. 16:24-27
June 15, 1958	2 a. Tr.	Luke 14:25-35
June 22, 1958	3 a. Tr.	Luke 15:11-32
June 29, 1958	4 a. Tr.	John 8:1-11
July 6, 1958	5 a. Tr.	John 1:35-51
July 13, 1958	6 a. Tr.	Matt. 5:17-19
July 20, 1958	7 a. Tr.	Matt. 17:9-13
July 27, 1958	8 a. Tr.	* Matt. 23:23-33
August 3, 1958	9 a. Tr.	Luke 12:42-48
August 10, 1958	10 a. Tr.	Matt. 11:20-24
August 17, 1958	11 a. Tr.	Matt. 23:1-12
August 24, 1958	12 a. Tr.	Matt. 5:33-37
August 31, 1958	13 a. Tr.	Mark 12:41-44
September 7, 1958	14 a. Tr.	Matt. 11:25-30
September 14, 1958	15 a. Tr.	Matt. 6:19-23
September 21, 1958	16 a. Tr.	John 11:1-44
September 28, 1958	17 a. Tr.	John 8:31-36
October 5, 1958	18 a. Tr.	Matt. 13:34-46
October 12, 1958	19 a. Tr.	John 9:1-41
October 19, 1958	20 a. Tr.	Matt. 21:33-46
October 26, 1958	21 a. Tr.	Matt. 16:1-4
October 31, 1958	Reforma.	* Luke 18:9-14
November 2, 1958	22 a. Tr.	Mark 4:21-25
November 9, 1958	23 a. Tr.	Matt. 7:12
November 16, 1958	24 a. Tr.	John 6:37-40
November 23, 1958	25 a. Tr.	Matt. 24:1-14
November 27, 1958	Thanksgiving	* Matt. 15:36-38

* Not a Swedish Gospel selection.