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## Outlines on the Eisenach Epistle Selections

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## Outlines on the Eisenach Epistle Selections

### Sixth Sunday after Trinity

Acrs 8, 26—38

The Bible tells us of God's vengeance upon His enemies, e. g., Pharaoh, Saul, Judas, etc.

But this same Bible tells us also of God's gracious work of salvation. Naaman, Thomas, Paul, etc. That is a Christian's delight to hear and behold how God graciously rescues those whom Satan has misled and ensnared. And these narratives are not only interesting and beautiful, but they are very instructive. They answer our prayer "Show me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths," Ps. 25, 4. Now, here in our text we have such a helpful and precious narrative. It tells us

#### How God Saved the Ethiopian

##### 1. He gave him the Word of God.

a) We do not know just how this Ethiopian down there in Africa had learned of the Word of God, but in His own way God had brought it to him. Perhaps some Israelite had told this Ethiopian of the hope of Israel. While there were many careless people in Israel who paid very little attention to their duty of publishing God's Word, there were always some who told others about the Messiah of Israel. It was just in this way that the Wise Men of the East had heard of the Star of Jacob and came up to Jerusalem to worship Him. God ever had His "other sheep" who were not of the fold of the Hebrews, and these "other sheep" God never neglected. Through His missionaries, the believers, who, like that little Hebrew maid in Naaman's household (2 Kings 5, 3), remembered to tell the heathen of the precious truths which God had given to Israel, many of these strangers from the commonwealth of Israel were found and drawn to their Savior.

b) That is God's way to this day. When a soul is to be saved, that soul must be made acquainted with God's Word. Salvation is to be accepted by faith, but: Rom. 10, 14. Just as God has decided to quench our thirst through water, to satisfy our hunger by proper food, so it pleased Him to reveal Himself and His salvation to us *through His Word*. If any one is to be saved, God's Word must be brought to him, or he must be brought to God's Word. Wherever we read of souls saved, we read that they were saved through the Gospel. Therefore God has told us to preach the Gospel in all the world and has promised that all they who believe it shall be saved and receive remission of sins. Rom. 1, 16; 1 Pet. 1, 23.

*Application.*— Let us be sure to appreciate this Word, to use it diligently, and to spread it, so that it may reach those who are still without this light.



2. *God saved this Ethiopian by sending to him a teacher.*

a) He told the deacon Philip to go to him. Though the Ethiopian read the Scriptures, revered this Word of God, yet he did not fully understand it. There was many a perplexing question which gave him much uneasiness and torture of soul. Therefore God gave him a teacher who explained the Scripture to him, v. 35. Oh, what burdens, what perplexities, what doubts, were taken from this Ethiopian through the explanation, the teaching, and the preaching of Philip.

b) It is true, the Word of God as we find it in the Scriptures is the power of God unto salvation. But the Good Shepherd is filled with such ardent love for our souls that He has done more than to give us the written Word. He also gives us teachers who proclaim this Word, Eph. 4, 11, 12. He has instituted the holy ministry that men should give themselves wholly to the study of God's Word and then proclaim it and teach it to all, believers and unbelievers, Titus 1, 5. These teachers are to do what Philip does here, serve God and His elect, by teaching, by explanation, by refuting error, and by confirming the truth through pertinent application of the Word of God. And the Lord wants all men to hear His ministers who proclaim His Word, Luke 10, 16. God wants preachers, calls preachers, sends preachers, because it has pleased Him by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe, 1 Cor. 1, 21.

*Application.* — By establishing the Christian ministry, God has shown His love for you. Be sure that you appreciate and use properly this gift of God. Accept the pastor's ministrations, his teaching, explanation, warning, and direction, also his reproof if that be necessary. And remember, when he is speaking God's Word to you, you are hearing not the minister's wisdom, you are hearing God's wisdom.

3. *He seals the Ethiopian in Baptism.*

a) V. 36. Philip had not only spoken in general about the Gospel, but he had told the Ethiopian also about the Sacraments. And the Ethiopian did not say, I believe in Jesus now, I have heard the Word of God, and that is all I need. No; he recognized the preciousness of this message and learned that God wants to seal us, confirm our faith, and enter into a covenant relation with us through Baptism. As soon as they came to a place where there was water, he requested to be baptized, and Philip by the command of God baptized him. The Ethiopian made a beautiful confession of his faith and was received by adoption through Baptism into the family of God.

b) Here again we see the great loving-kindness of the Good Shepherd. Not only does He give us the Word, not only does He



send us teachers, but He has also given us a visible means of grace, baptism with water, whereby He assures us that, as certainly as we are baptized, so certain we may be that we have a gracious God and that God has through this Sacrament adopted us into His family as His beloved children. In the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper He gives us His body and His blood to confirm us in our faith in the redemption of Christ, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.

*Application.* — Do you often think of your baptism and what it means to you and what a high honor, what a precious gift, God has bestowed upon you through this Sacrament? Are you found at the Lord's Table frequently? Do not look upon your attendance upon the Sacrament as a part of the Law, as a painful duty, but look upon it as a means whereby God wishes to confirm you in your faith and bestow upon you His most precious gift, the Holy Spirit, forgiveness of your sin, and power against the foes that would destroy you for time and eternity. See, then, in this whole narrative a picture of how God also deals with you graciously and mercifully.

MARTIN S. SOMMER

### Seventh Sunday after Trinity

1 TIM. 6, 6—12

The key-note for this sermon is in the word *αὐτάρθεια* ("contentment"), v. 6, and the introduction should familiarize the audience with that thought. Perhaps I would say that there are two kinds of contentment. One is the rocking-chair kind, which says: "Oh, well, we must take what comes; whatever is to be will be, and there is no use worrying." The other is a far more active thing, and that is the kind our text refers to. It is the exercise of an intelligent mind which does not lose its equanimity and self-control in any situation and always regains and retains the dominant note of joy and love. If time permitted, I might illustrate from the characters of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, who from the standpoint of pagan philosophy exhibited remarkable mastery of themselves, the one in extreme weakness and poverty and the other in the abundance of power and wealth.

#### The Self-Mastery that Befits a Christian

1. *The importance of this virtue*
2. *The struggle it entails*

#### 1

Vv. 6—10 give ample material for this part of the sermon. In v. 5 St. Paul speaks of false teachers who follow religion for profit. What an odious thing in any professing Christian! Cf. Balaam. Often people turn to religion for the "better luck" it is expected to



bring them or for mere social or business reasons. The story of John 6 gives occasion for observation and introspection. We readily denounce the thing in others and may be very blind to our own sins in this respect.

But certainly v. 6 is true where the practise of piety is connected with perfect self-mastery no matter what befalls. Phil. 4, 11—13. There are far greater values than those which clothing, food, and money represent. Matt. 6, 25 b.

And is not v. 7 true? (Eccl. 5, 15; Ps. 49, 17.) Hence v. 8. (Present this and all the sermon as a gracious instruction of our heavenly Father, who loves us for Christ's sake.) Heb. 13, 5.

V. 9. They that set their minds on acquiring riches fall into temptations and snares, into lusts that are foolish and bring disgrace and are hurtful and destructive to happiness, both in your own case and in the case of those who follow your example. These lusts drown, submerge, you in ruin of body and soul. Hence be wise; v. 10: The love of money is a mean and debasing thing, the root of all evil. Many Christians have reached out after it and have erred from the faith. By degrees that evil propensity has turned them farther and farther away, and they have only reaped heartache.

By such contrast you see the importance of that contentment by which the Christian evidences his high position as a child of God. To serve is better than to have. The craving to have and the mere having do not bring happiness. To be envied indeed is the person whose heart, in the rich possession of God's grace, is set genuinely on serving and who thinks correspondingly little of having.

## 2

But this frame of mind calls for a struggle and is not attained without it. They who take it lightly will not attain. The difficulty lies within you. Be alert, vigilant, awake. Your Christian faith is no mere sentence to be stored in your mind for occasional reference, but it calls for vigorous exercise. 1 Tim. 4, 8.

V. 11. First there are things to flee, just as a soldier must flee things that debilitate, enfeeble, deceive, benumb, him and put him off his guard. Flee the love of money! — Then exercise yourself in, and pursue, those things that make for Christian self-control, so that every ounce of your physical, mental, and spiritual energy is at the command of your regenerated mind. Strive for righteousness and holiness (a piety that is honest in behavior), for faith and love (these two must be inseparable), for patience and meekness (pride at once ruins and prevents persevering contentment).

V. 12 gives excellent occasion for vigorous *ad hominem* exhortation. Note that it calls for a fight of faith, the Christian faith,



faith in Jesus Christ, our Savior. It is a fight against the insidious things that would rob you of your faith, such as greed, discontent, murmuring, complaining. Your faith is the victory over all that. Faith fights and wins. 2 Tim. 2, 5; Eph. 6, 10—18. Lay hold even now, like a winner in a race, upon the prize which the Lord holds out to you. The Lord Himself will uphold you by these very instructions and encouragements. Remember how He has helped you in the past, how you felt His power within you in the hour of your baptism or your confirmation or when you made a sincere confession of your faith. Be true to that, live that. Heb. 4, 14 c; 10, 23.

O you child of God, you have been called to a high and noble life and to a wealth which far exceeds any earthly riches. Live that life; be true to yourself; be a consistent Christian. H. M. ZORN

### Eighth Sunday after Trinity

ACTS 16, 16—34

Ps. 19, 7. Yes, the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ makes a difference, brings about a change. That is why St. Paul writes to the Corinthians concerning drunkards, thieves, adulterers, liars, etc., and adds: 1 Cor. 6, 11. Word and Sacrament effected the change in the Corinthians. Only the influence and the power of the Word can satisfactorily explain the transformation in a few years of man-eating savages into civilized human beings. Let us take note today of

#### The Wondrous Power of the Gospel

We shall consider

1. *From what depths of sin and despair it rescues*
2. *To what heights of faith and joy it exalts*

#### 1

We find in Philippi the spirit of crass *materialism, covetousness, love of money*. Briefly narrate vv. 9—15. When Paul went to the place of prayer again, a maid, a slave-girl, who had a spirit of divination, followed him. She was possessed of a devil. Though this was a terrible calamity to this poor damsel, her affliction proved a source of revenue to her greedy owners, for she brought them much gain by soothsaying. — As in the days of His flesh the spirits recognized Christ, calling Him the Son of God, so the demon in this poor girl caused her to call after Paul and his companions for many days, v. 17. A true testimony indeed, but no doubt one intended to harm the cause of the Gospel. At last Paul drove out the evil spirit. But this miracle of mercy was responsible for his suffering in that city and of his being compelled to leave Philippi.—



Is not the spirit of these owners of the slave-girl common with us? Materialism is the order of the day; love of money is men's obsession. Innumerable people are like Israel of old; they worship the golden calf of earthly gain. Such men have not as yet come under the blessed influence of the Word of God, or they have turned away from the Lord.

When the masters of the girl saw that their hope of gain was gone, they displayed a *spirit of bitter antagonism* towards the messengers of Christ. "Touch a man's pocketbook, and very frequently you touch the only sensitive spot he has about him." Paul and Silas were drawn to the market-place and taken to the magistrates. And now listen to the hypocrisy of their persecutors: vv. 20, 21. What downright perversion of the truth! Paul had proclaimed the only message that can make men happy, had freed a poor girl from a life of wretchedness, but had in no wise troubled the city. But the mob spirit was incited, vv. 22—24. Where was the famed Roman justice? — Is not this the way of the world and of the devil, who rules the children of this world? They hate the Gospel of Jesus and the messengers of the true God. Their cause is lost when tried on its merits, and so they resort to violence, lies, slanders, and persecution to remove those whose testimony is unpleasant to them. In our country men may shrink from using physical force, but they resort to the same hypocrisy, deception, slander, and persecution to harm Christ's cause and those who espouse it.

Our text directs our attention particularly to the Philippian jailer, vv. 24—27. In blank *despair* the jailer was ready to fall upon his sword, to kill himself. That is the spirit of unbelief, of the ungodly man. He flies to suicide before he ever knows whether misfortune has befallen him or not. This was true Roman doctrine. "Cassius, when defeated, covered his face and ordered his freedman to kill him in his tent near Philippi." That is the wisdom of the world, all its comfort, when its earthly castles of fortune are wrecked. It was the only way out for Judas and Ahithophel, and it is seemingly still the only recourse of the heathen in Japan and elsewhere. Thus men plunge themselves from darkest ignorance here into the eternal night of suffering hereafter. That is the spirit of men without the Gospel of Jesus Christ: the spirit of crass materialism, of violent opposition to the Gospel, of blank despair. But with the Gospel there is Christian fortitude, cheerful witness-bearing, joy in suffering, humble acknowledgment of sin, and fervent trust in the Lord Jesus and His promises.

## 2

What a contrast do the apostles present in this story! They knew the dangers confronting them; yet they hesitated not to preach the message of Jesus and His love, to the Jews first, but



with the end in view of reaching the population of the city in general. It was an unwelcome endorsement of their activities which they received from that evil spirit, v. 17, but it was the truth for all that. They had but one purpose in life, to show men the way to salvation. There can be no more exalted task in life. And now behold their Christian courage and fortitude amid trials and tribulations. Their bodies still bleeding from the merciless beating of the lictors, their feet in stocks, these two men in the dungeon did not give way to weeping and lamenting. No; v. 25. That is the blessed influence of the Gospel. When men have found their Savior and learned to trust in Him, they are content to suffer wrong for His sake; they can be patient in tribulation and rejoice in hope. Do these two men in prison not put you and me to shame when we sing a song of lamentation because of the burdens of life? Instead of praying we worry; instead of rejoicing we weep; instead of singing songs of rejoicing we complain. Go to that dungeon and learn to say with St. Paul: "Most gladly will I rather glory in mine infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me," 2 Cor. 12, 9.

Observe also the marvelous change wrought in that jailer of Philippi. His attempted suicide was frustrated by the quick action of Paul, v. 28. The Spirit of God was at work in his heart. Here was a man at the brink of despair, not merely because he feared the loss of his job, but because there had awoke in his heart a most terrible consciousness of his sin and just punishment due him. He actually saw hell open. Hence he asked the question. He knew that he needed salvation. And they gave him the most glorious answer ever given to that question, the only correct advice to be offered to a sin-sick soul, v. 31. Accept in humble faith that Son of God, that Substitute of sinners. The moment you accept Him you have peace with God, assurance of forgiveness and the certain hope of heaven. V. 32—34. Despair had been changed to childlike trust, fear to rejoicing; an unbelieving heathen had been turned into a believing Christian. — 'Tis ever thus. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Without it there can be no happiness, no joy, no peace, but only sin and wickedness and sorrow and discouragement. You may envy the unbeliever today; he may seem so much happier than you; but his death is horrible, leading him to eternal ruin. Which do you choose? A life with or without the Gospel? Surely one with the Gospel. Then use it; accept it; live according to it, not only for yourself, but see that your whole house is under the spell of the Word. Make your religion a family religion. Thou shalt be saved and thy house. Above all, thank God that you have the answer to that question of questions as to the way of salvation, and show your gratitude by bending every effort to have others learn that answer and finally be saved.

PAUL KOENIG



## Ninth Sunday after Trinity

Acts 17, 16-34

The Lord tells us Christians to preach the Gospel to a perishing world. There are millions of unchurched and heathen people. Are we personally speaking to those whom we can reach and sending workers to others (350 available ministerial candidates)? God has given to our people the necessary money. Why are we permitting the Church's work to suffer because of a lack of funds? God has for one hundred years kept for our Synod the Gospel in its truth and purity. Do we appreciate this blessing, and are we enthusiastic enough about it to let others share it with us? Do we lack consecration? Have we left our first love? Do we lack courage? Have we lost faith in the power of the Gospel? Do we no longer believe the Lord's promises? Do we realize that we are facing a serious situation? When the Jews despised the Gospel, the Lord took it from them and gave it to others. Will we likewise bring the curse of God down upon us? We need encouragement. The Lord of hosts has not yet forsaken us. He is still willing to use us in His service. In our text the Lord presents for our encouragement Paul in his missionary labors at Athens.

**Paul at Athens a Mighty Encouragement for Us to Preach the Gospel to a Perishing World**

1. *He grasped the opportunity to preach the Gospel*
2. *He remained undaunted in the face of severe opposition*
3. *He adapted his message to the needs of his hearers*

## 1

a) How the opportunity presented itself to Paul. Paul had just come from Berea to Athens. There he waited for Silas and Timothy. While waiting, "he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." "His spirit was stirred within him," chap. 17, 1. Paul was moved with compassion, cp. Matt. 9, 36. He saw an opportunity; he grasped it. The people at Athens were much in need of the Gospel.

b) How Paul grasped the opportunity. He first went to the synagog and spoke to the Jews and the devout persons, i. e., the proselytes of the gate. To the Jews, God had first of all given His oracles, Rom. 1, 16; Acts 13, 46. They were given also the first Gospel opportunity. From the synagog Paul went to the public market-place, v. 17, and from there to Mars Hill, v. 22. Paul spoke to the common people and to the learned; he passed none by.

The Lord does not say to us, "Wait," but He says, "Go," 1 Cor. 2, 14. The Lord does not send us to a few people or a certain class, but He says: "Go ye into all the world." The Lord does not tell us to convert the world, but He tells us to preach the Gospel to the



world. Like Paul we should use our opportunity to do so (our daily contact with our neighbors while about our business, while traveling, etc., John 4). When we find cities and districts that have no church at all or no Lutheran church, we ought to look upon that as a missionary opportunity. We should not neglect the distant lands of Asia, Africa, and South America. When the Macedonian cry: "Come over and help us," Acts 16, 9. 10, is heard, we should not turn a deaf ear to it. Even now, as in Athens, some may be attracted to us and our mission efforts by mere curiosity, vv. 19—21; but let us, as Paul did, "cash in" on that.

## 2

a) Paul preached the Gospel in spite of much opposition. The Jews were not friendly towards Paul, vv. 5. 13. The Epicureans and the Stoics were not friendly toward him; they called him a "babblers," "a setter forth of strange gods," v. 18. (The preacher should study, and in a popular way present, the philosophy of the Epicureans and Stoics.) The Athenians as such were not friendly toward Paul; they mocked, v. 32.

b) Paul remained undaunted in the face of opposition. He disputed, discussed, reasoned, with the people daily, v. 17. He met the challenge to speak in the very midst of Mars Hill, where the philosophers and learned were assembled, vv. 19. 22.

We are often too timid, even ashamed at times, to confess. We fear ridicule, mockery, Matt. 26, 69 ff.; 10, 32. 33. May Paul's example inspire us to take courage! We are representing a good cause. We have the Lord on our side, Matt. 28, 20. We have a great blessing to bring to the world, the one thing that it needs.

## 3

a) Paul preached Jesus, v. 18. That is the Christian message; no other will save. The Church is a soul-saving institution. The Gospel is the means.

b) Paul adapted his message to the needs of his hearers. When he spoke to the Jews, he made his approach on the basis of their knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures, showing that Jesus is the promised Messiah, Acts 13, 16—41. When Paul addressed the Athenians, who had no knowledge of the Old Testament, he made his approach on the basis of their natural knowledge of the existence of God. Over against the materialism, pantheism, and polytheism of Greece, Paul preached the *living God*. The Athenians worshiped many gods, but the true God was to them "the unknown god." This God, Paul declared unto them, v. 23. This true God is the Creator of the world, who can therefore not be confined to any temple made with hands, v. 24; nor can He be worshiped in the



form of man-made idols, vv. 25. 29. The true God made all nations of one blood and made man a responsible being, who, although he cannot by nature know God, can know that the Godhead is not like unto gold, silver, or stone, graven by art or man's device, v. 29. God overlooked the ignorance of the heathen by suffering its debasing influence to develop, but now "commandeth all men everywhere to repent," etc., vv. 30. 31. All men will be brought to the judgment-seat of Christ, the very Christ who died on the cross for the sins of the world in order that all might in Him have eternal life. For all this, Christ's resurrection from the dead is God's positive assurance. Surely, those who hear the Gospel will have no excuse. It should also be noted that Paul calls attention to the fact that this entire world is not left to Stoical fate or Epicurean chance, but is governed by God, the Creator, according to His will and pre-arrangement, v. 26. (Paul's very fine line of argumentation in this Athenian address should be carefully studied.)

Like Paul we should preach Jesus and His pure Gospel of salvation. In our days of indifferentism, unionism, apostasy, this needs to be particularly stressed. 1 Cor. 1, 23. 24; Mark 16, 15; 2 Tim. 4, 2—4; John 8, 31. 32; Gal. 1, 6—10.

But, like Paul, we must adapt our message to the needs of our hearers, making our approach accordingly. When we speak to such as once were Christians, we can well remind them of what they learned from the Scriptures; but when we approach the people of this world and the worldly-wise, we may have to appeal to their natural knowledge of God, Rom. 1, 19. 20, to the Law written in their hearts and accusing their conscience, Rom. 2, 14. 15, and thus lead them on to a better understanding of the full Law of God, their responsibility to God, their utter sinfulness, the curse of God, so that they may be brought to a knowledge of their sins, Rom. 7, 7, for the purpose of then bringing to them the message of the Gospel and all its comforting sweetness.

Paul at Athens is an example to us of a preacher who had a compassion for souls and the courage fearlessly to preach the Word of God, the Gospel of salvation. Verily, the world needs such preachers today!

J. H. C. FRITZ

