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## Homiletics: Outlines on the Standard Epistle Lessons

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## Homiletics

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### Outlines on the Standard Epistle Lessons

#### NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

1 Cor. 10:6-13

Often Christians are inclined to hold a wrong view on temptation. Two classes: (1) worried whether they will be able to resist temptation and remain in faith to the end; (2) presumptuous: they think they can go into any situation because they are Christians and therefore cannot fall. Paul gives some necessary instruction on temptation by putting the right estimate on temptation. He warns against two errors: overestimation and underestimation. Let us take to heart his

#### TWO LESSONS ON THE RIGHT ESTIMATE OF TEMPTATION

##### *I. The first lesson: It can be fatal: beware!*

This lesson is simple and yet difficult.

A. The easy part of the lesson: It has been fatal to *others*. The story of Israel, as Paul refers to it, is simple:

1. All Israel had great spiritual blessings (context chap. 10:1-4).

2. Many thousands succumbed to temptation and died in the wilderness. They "lusted" after evil things. This lust expressed itself:

- a) They were "idolaters," Ex. 32.
- b) They "committed fornication," Num. 25.
- c) They "tempted" God, Num. 21.
- d) They "murmured" against God, Num. 21.

B. The difficult part of the lesson: It is always dangerous for *you*.

One of the most successful devices of the Tempter is to have us feel we are different. "If *we* had been in the days of the fathers, we would not have been partakers with them—" (Matt. 23:30).

a) Therefore the Apostle does not only refer to the experiences of Israel as an academic recital of events, but he

makes a very direct application to his readers and to us: "our examples" (v. 6) "for ensamples" (v. 11). Rom. 15:4; Heb. 4:2. The New Testament Christian ("ends of the world") has the same Old Adam (lust) in him. James 1:14-15. The New Testament Christian has the same temptations: idolatry, sensuality, presumption, discontent (application to present conditions).

b) He adds the insistent warning: v. 12. Thinking we stand is not courage, but a rash security. We do not flee, we play with, temptation. The result is: we fall. 2 Tim. 2:22; Prov. 6:27.

*II. The second lesson: It need never be fatal: take comfort!*

This lesson also is simple and yet difficult.

A. The easy part of this lesson: God's instructions are very simple facts.

He says:

1. Temptations are common to man; every temptation comes by God's permission and is not beyond human endurance.

2. God is faithful, and He provides a way out of every temptation.

B. The difficult part of this lesson: to find the comfort of these facts in the heat of *your* temptation.

a) It seems your temptation is unusual, but it is not. Heb. 4:15.

b) It seems your temptation is insurmountable, but it is not. Rom. 6:14; 8:37; Heb. 2:18; 2 Pet. 2:9.

*Conclusion:* Beware! 1 Pet. 5:8-9. Take comfort! John 10:28.

W. R. ROEHS

## TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

1 COR. 12:1-11

The text speaks of spiritual gifts concerning which we should not be ignorant (v. 1), for we too have received such gifts and should learn how to use them profitably. The theme is expressed in the words "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."

**We learn:**

- I. That every believer in Jesus has spiritual gifts**
- II. That these gifts are given to the believer to profit withal**

### I

a) No man has spiritual gifts by nature, for natural man is a Gentile, serving dumb idols, as were the Corinthians before their conversion (v. 2), and as such calls Jesus accursed (v. 3 a).

b) Spiritual gifts come from the Holy Ghost, who alone can bestow them. The Holy Ghost converts man so that he acknowledges Jesus with the full consciousness of His work of redemption (v. 3 b). Cf. explanation of the Third Article. To the believer in Jesus the Holy Spirit gives gifts (vv. 7, 11), which are called charismata (v. 4), for they are gifts of grace.

c) The gifts mentioned in the text are of two kinds. There are the extraordinary ones: the gift of healing diseases without the use of medicine (v. 9 b; cf. Acts 28:8); the working of miracles (v. 10 a), e. g., the raising of the dead (Acts 9:40); divers kinds of tongues (v. 10 d) — either speaking in languages which a person has never studied (Acts 2:8), or, rather, praising the Lord in an unknown tongue (1 Cor. 14:2); and the interpretation of such language (v. 10 e), the ability to translate the unknown language for the benefit of the hearers. These extraordinary gifts served a specific purpose when the Church was being established but are now no longer necessary. Another kind of gifts is given to believers to this day: to speak the word of wisdom (v. 8 a), having a thorough knowledge of the great truths of Scripture; to speak the word of knowledge (v. 8 b), applying the Word of God to individual cases; faith (v. 9 a), not justifying faith — all believers have that — but heroic faith; prophecy (v. 10 b), not so much the ability to foretell as to tell forth (cf. 1 Cor. 14:3); discerning of spirits (v. 10 c), distinguishing between false and true teachers.

d) These and other gifts (1 Cor. 13; Gal. 5:22-23) are given to the believers. Not all believers have all spiritual gifts nor the same gifts (v. 11; 1 Cor. 12:28-30; Rom. 12:6), but every believer has a spiritual talent (vv. 7, 11).

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## II

a) The Holy Ghost equips the believer with spiritual gifts for a specific purpose. It is not in accordance with His will that the believer neglect the gift within him or wrap it up in the napkin of indifference (Luke 19:20). Nor is it His purpose that they be used for mere display or for personal aggrandizement (1 Cor. 4:7). Thereby schisms and divisions enter the Church, as it happened at Corinth.

b) The gifts are called *διακονίαι*, v. 5 (to serve) and are to profit withal (v. 7). They are given not only for the profit of the recipient but also for the welfare of the church. As the members of the body serve the other members and the entire body, so the spiritual gifts should be employed (Rom. 12:4; 1 Cor. 12:12-27). They come from one source and therefore have one purpose, the edifying of the church (v. 11, v. 7; 1 Pet. 4:7). Apply to local conditions.

c) The gifts are also called *ἐνεργήματα* (v. 6). They energize, are effective in their use. Through them the kingdom of God is built. Therefore we who have such gifts must be interested in the work of the church, work for it knowing that because the Holy Spirit is working through us, our labor will not be in vain (1 Cor. 15:58). Apply to the work in the congregation and to the program of Synod.

d) We shall have to give an accounting of the use we made of our spiritual gifts (Luke 12:48 b; Matt. 25:14-30).

WALTER A. BAEPLER

## ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

1 Cor. 15:1-10

We like to read about great men, both in secular history and in the Bible. Children and adults are interested in the life and deeds of Abraham, the man of great faith; of Daniel, the man of great courage; of the good Samaritan, the man of great kindness. So we shall be interested in

### ST. PAUL, THE GREAT PREACHER

He was a great preacher

- I. Because he preached the Gospel
- II. Because he was a humble Christian
- III. Because he was a zealous laborer

## I

From the time that Jesus appeared to him on the way to Damascus till his death, Paul had only one message for men, the Gospel of Christ (vv. 3-8). Other men in his day taught history and philosophy, the arts and sciences; Paul knew much about these things, too; but he preached only Christ crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). No matter where he was, in Corinth or Ephesus, at Athens or in Rome; whether he spoke to a Roman governor (Acts 24:25) or to women gathered at a river (Acts 16:13); whether his message was received with joy (Acts 17:11) or with mockery (Acts 17:32), always he preached the Gospel of Jesus. That was his pulpit program. He preached this message because he had received it from Jesus and because it would save the souls of those who believed (vv. 1-2).

That is what makes a man a great preacher today. There are many preachers; some preach in beautiful churches, some in simple frame chapels; some can speak in polished phrases and silvery sentences, some do not have a ready tongue. But the truly great preacher is he whose message is the Gospel of Jesus. If we want to hear great preaching, we must hear the message of the Gospel, the salvation of sinners through the blood of Christ. That message comes from God; and it proclaims the only way to salvation; it is the greatest need of the human soul.

## II

Paul had persecuted the Church of God (v. 9; Acts 9:1). The vision at Damascus changed him into a believer and an Apostle. But he did not forget the past, his hatred and persecution of the Church. He repented of his sin and sought pardon of God (1 Tim. 1:15; Rom. 7:24-25). He remained humble. There was no pride in his heart. He was a humble child of God.

Ministers must be humble Christians. They confess their sins with the congregation. They go to the altar for Communion with their members. They pray the same Lord's Prayer and ask for forgiveness. A preacher might be ever so eloquent in his pulpit; if his life is not that of a humble Christian, he is not a great preacher. And all those who work with the minister: teachers, Sunday school teachers, elders and officers in the church, and all the members, all must be humble Christians, contrite and penitent, believing

in the Lord Jesus. They may be ever so efficient in their activity, but they will fail if they are not children of God. 1 Cor. 9:27.

### III

Paul was a zealous laborer for the kingdom of God (v. 10). He does not speak in a boasting spirit, but for the glory of God (1 Cor. 1:31). He would let nothing stand in his way. He made long and arduous missionary journeys, endured many hardships (Acts), and suffered many privations, all in his indefatigable labors for the Gospel (2 Cor. 11:28; 1 Thess. 3:10). God's grace gave him the power and endurance for his zealous labors.

So the minister today must labor zealously. The work of missionaries is arduous; the labors of a faithful pastor are hard. And all those who labor in the church, teachers and officers and all members, must follow the example of the great Apostle and be diligent workers. Nothing must stand in your way. And if we will all undertake the tasks that God assigns to us, His grace will bless our labors and give us success. May God give His Church great preachers and zealous Christians.

FREDERIC NIEDNER

## TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

2 COR. 3:4-11

Two groups belittle the Gospel ministry. They are those who worship at the shrine of science and those who believe that mankind must work out its salvation by keeping the precepts of the Law. That is an old situation, which St. Paul encountered and fought in Corinth. His arguments, which are most timely still today, we find in the Epistle Lesson. He presents:

### THE MATCHLESS GLORY OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY

- I. *For this ministry God Himself provides the qualifications*
- II. *The Gospel ministry brings a message of life*
- III. *The Gospel ministry is God's permanent institution*

### I

God has endowed the human beings with reason and intelligence, and many other natural gifts, which differ vastly in individuals. It is in harmony with God's desire that man-

kind should use all these gifts for the purposes for which they were given. Reason and intelligence in the course of centuries has produced amazing results. One generation taught the other. An imposing array of marvels of art and ingenuity lies before the world. The mysteries of nature have been explored. The choicest wisdom of the sages has been stored in books. All this is something truly wonderful.

Nevertheless all the achievements of man do not approach in glory the Gospel ministry. For this office all the acumen of the human mind is of no help. What St. Paul says v. 5 holds here. The human mind can not fathom the depths of sin and the mystery of the atonement through Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 2:14). Let the wisest of men carry on his research, and still 1 Cor. 1:18 a holds good of him. Yet the Gospel ministry is able to preach the truth about sin and proclaim justification through the blood of Christ. For this are needed able ministers (v. 6) who are taught by God Himself (v. 5 b). God Himself must teach men divine truth (John 16:13). God must bring His ministers of the Gospel to Christ (John 6:44). If, then, the function of teaching the things of this world is glorious, how much more glorious is the office of the Gospel ministry which, taught by God, teaches men the divine truths of salvation.

## II

But St. Paul had to contend at Corinth also with those who held up the glory of the Old Testament Law over against the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They pointed to this Law as God's revelation, and in proof of the glory of the Law cited Moses' appearance recorded Ex. 34:29. Their argument was from the lesser to the greater.

St. Paul grants that the Old Testament Law was glorious (v. 7), but he makes the point that the Gospel ministry is far more glorious. The Law was a letter (v. 6 a). It could not give life. It told man what God expected of him, but did not show him how to do His will. As a result it merely damned man (Gal. 3:10). The ministry of the Old Testament was therefore a ministry of condemnation (v. 9 a). If that was glorious, St. Paul may well ask: v. 8. The New Testament ministry through the Word brings the Holy Spirit into man's heart and creates saving faith, which gives righteousness in



the sight of God (v. 9). In comparison with the glory of the Gospel ministry the glory of the ministry of the Law fades away (v. 10).

### III

Just as the Old Testament Law lacked life, it also lacks permanence. It was given the children of Israel by God for a purpose. They were kept under bondage (Gal. 5:1). All the detailed observances were a burden to make the children of Israel yearn for the day of redemption promised by the Prophets. The Law was merely temporary (Heb. 8:13).

Now the temporary ministration of condemnation is done away with (v. 11). The ministry of the Gospel abides for all time to come. Since Christ has come and fulfilled the Law and brought to light life and salvation, the ministry of the Gospel proclaims the glorious news of salvation. No other revelation will come from God to man. What a glorious ministry, therefore, the ministry of the Gospel since it is permanent!

God grant that our eyes may not be dimmed to the glory of the Gospel ministry. G. V. SCHICK

## SCHOOL SERMON

### DEUT. 4:10

Moses had been chosen to lead the children of Israel. Yet, when he neglected the proper spiritual care of his son, the "Lord sought to kill him" (Ex. 4:24). Also we have been chosen as leaders in God's work (1 Pet. 2:9). Lest we forfeit our God-given privilege, let us properly train our children. We aim to do so especially through our Christian schools.

### HEROES OF FAITH IN THE MAKING

#### I

*To train heroes of faith the congregation itself must be grounded in faith.*

The children of Israel were about to enter the Land of Promise. This conquest of Canaan was a work for heroes, possible only through their faithful observance of the Lord's statutes and judgments. Num. 13:28—14:9. To instruct them, Moses used our text. Had their fathers followed the injunction given them at Horeb, the desert wandering would have

been different. This time they obeyed and were successful. But in and through them also their children were to possess the land which the Lord had given them. As the fathers the children too would have to prove themselves heroes of faith. That calls for proper training. Not only the individual (Deut. 6:7) but also the people as a whole are held responsible. Similarly, not only the parents as such but also the entire congregation is held to provide proper Christian training.

If heroes were to be trained in Israel, the people themselves must be thoroughly trained. The elders must be firmly grounded in the faith if they are to provide the proper religious training. They were to come together not merely for social contact, but to receive this instruction. They were to assemble as God's people, as a congregation. Even in those early days there was only one means to train the people. It was the Word of God, revealed by the Lord and now taught by His servant Moses. The Lord himself is the causative force in the Word. The aim of this training is to reverence the Lord. They had beautiful models to follow; cf. Heb. 11:7; Gen. 22:12. The training is to be continued throughout life. It must be a matter of growth—"that they may learn." Even the old people among the Israelites were still to learn.

The divine injunction has not been revoked. A congregation which would properly train its children to become heroes of faith must itself continue to be trained. Faithful attendance at divine worship. Devotions at home. Reading of Christian literature. Adult Bible class and religious education stressing Christ as Wisdom, 1 Cor. 1:30.

## II

*To train heroes of faith the congregation must provide proper instruction.*

The religious training of children in the Old Testament was to be dominated by the Word of God. Not only their formal instruction but also their work and play were to be governed by the Word of God.

That we may properly train our children as heroes of faith our congregation has established a Christian day school and Sunday school. The entire atmosphere of our school is to be pervaded with the spirit of Christ, to give formal

instruction in the Christian doctrine, to give the children an opportunity to put into supervised practice what they have learned from the Scriptures. Our Christian schools are the most complete and approved means which we as a congregation have to provide the proper spiritual training.

Our children need the best possible training we can provide. They have many conflicts to face. To be successful, they must be heroes of faith. Eph. 6:10; 1 Cor. 16:13; cf. Christian Questions, No. 20. Our children are sinners. Gen. 8:21. They are living in a world corrupted by many godless men. In our country about 70,000,000 citizens are outside the Christian Church. "A total of 1,565,541 major offenses were reported by the nation's police" in 1945. Especially children are exposed to these dangers. Most crimes are committed by boys and girls of 17. Many homes have grown lukewarm, like the church at Laodicea. Let us support our school wholeheartedly and pray for its success.

That our children may be trained to become heroes of faith in this world and finally possess the heavenly Canaan, let us send them to our Christian school. Let us also encourage others to attend. That we may properly co-operate with our church in this training let us continue to train ourselves by using God's Word in a rich measure.

VICTOR MENNICKE

