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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

#### THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

GAL. 3:15-22

The word "Gospel" has various meanings, but its primary Scriptural definition is: the glad tidings of God's grace in Christ Jesus.

Though the word "Gospel" does not occur in the text, unmistakable reference is made to it and its essential meaning in the statement: "Now to Abraham . . . were the *promises* made. . . . And to *thy Seed*, which is *Christ*." V. 16.

Precious beyond all telling is this Gospel; and, to evoke a still greater appreciation of it, the inspired Apostle here describes

#### THE GOSPEL AS GOD'S TESTAMENT

- I. *Because it conveys to us the riches of God's grace*
- II. *Because it is unalterable*

#### I

**Exposition:** Of the Gospel promise made to Abraham concerning Christ, "the Seed," St. Paul says, it is "the *covenant* confirmed before of God in Christ." Vv. 16, 17. In so saying, he "speaks after the manner of men," v. 15, *i. e.*, he uses an illustration from daily life. He compares the Gospel to a human contract, covenant, or better, a last will, or testament, through which a man permanently, effectually, generously bequeaths or conveys his possessions to his survivors. And because the Gospel similarly conveys to us all the treasures of divine grace, he calls it — God's testament.

**Illustration:** A man clips an item from a newspaper that his uncle has left him a million dollars. When he shows this as proof of his claims to the judge, he is laughed out of court and told: "That is only a news clipping; where is the testament? Only the words of the testament can convey to you that fortune." Even so the Gospel! Were it but a bit of news, it could do little for us. But it is a confirmed testament. It not

[617]

only informs; it actually, effectually transfers into our possession all the riches of God's grace. Luther: "He that believes these (Gospel) words, *has* what they say and express, namely, the forgiveness of sins."

*Application:* Think of it, the Gospel, a testament of God to make you and me the heirs of heaven! How astounding! A lawyer, engaged to examine a number of long, involved wills, found it tedious work. But, when suddenly he noticed his own name mentioned as the heir of a vast estate, all boredom vanished. With new, excited interest he now scrutinized every phrase. But, what is earth's largest estate in comparison to heaven, 1 Pet. 1:4, which God through Christ's Gospel has truly placed into our possession? Ought that not excite our undying interest and appreciation?

## II

*Exposition:* If a man's testament is deemed so inviolable that "no man disannulleth or addeth thereto," v. 15, how much more should that be the case with God's testament, the Gospel, which He Himself confirmed with solemn oaths, attested with mighty deeds, and sealed with the Sacraments? Even the Gospel promise given to Abraham centuries before Moses could not be disannulled, no, not even by all the thundering Law of Sinai, v. 17. To attempt to annul, change, add, or detract from it is a heaven-crying offense. Rev. 22: 18-19.

*Illustration:* A young man secretly changed his father's will, inserting his own for his brother's name. Thus he changed only *one* word. But the alteration, when discovered, brought him a ten-year prison sentence. How much greater an offense to alter a word of Christ's Gospel! Is that not God's unalterable testament? Does not Paul, verse 16, stress how much depends even on so little a matter as the plural or the singular form of the one word "seed"?

*Application:* Beware, false prophets! To add or detract the slightest from the Gospel is a soul-killing offense. — What followed when the Galatians added certain conditions to it? "Christ became of no effect," 5: 4. — Take comfort, dear Christians! Men's covenants may be disannulled, but God's testament never. Your heavenly inheritance is sure.

ALVIN E. WAGNER

**FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY****GAL. 5:16-24**

Collectively the Christian's enemies are called the powers of darkness. The Holy Spirit names and characterizes the executives of their realm. He teaches us how to meet victoriously each assailant and never fails to strengthen us in the fray. In the text He exposes the flesh and offers instruction and strength for our conflict with it. Those who heed have in their struggle and victory an external evidence of their salvation.

**THE CHRISTIAN'S CRUCIFIXION OF THE FLESH  
BY THE SPIRIT**

*I. It is a daily, bitter struggle*

*II. It is an external sign of the Christian's spiritual life*

**I**

The executioner is the spirit, the new nature, John 3:6; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:4-10; Ps. 1. The spirit is of God and an annoyance to the flesh. He is strong in the Lord, zealous and determined in the task of subduing the flesh.—The knave and outlaw to be crucified is the flesh, the old nature, inclined to all evil, John 3:6; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1-3. He endeavors to escape his fate by diplomatic and deceitful maneuver, by self-defense and by aggression, pleading, whining, demanding, threatening, seeking compromise, to have his way in false doctrine and sinful life.—In full agreement with the judgment of God, the spirit judges the flesh, the old sinful man, and condemns him. Did he not crucify Jesus? Does he not attempt to crucify Him anew? Are not his intentions against the spirit just as fierce and cruel? Does he not endeavor to control the spirit?—The executioner and the outlaw are in daily mortal struggle. Every day must mark the superiority and victory of the spirit. Daily the spirit must do to the flesh as the flesh would do to the spirit. He must do more than police the flesh. As at a prize fight the boxers never argue, but slug and punch, so it is dangerous and useless to argue with the flesh. The spirit is always kind and gentle, but never so to the enemy in the Christian's own bosom. Toward him he must be justly heartless and in holy hatred and glee

rejoice in fighting, buffeting, paining, downing him. Does the flesh deserve less for his murderous intention of killing the new man and the Christian's body and soul? Matt. 5:29-30. For if the flesh conquers by but one of its works, then v. 21 b; but if the spirit conquers, then vv. 16, 18, 23. — The entire flesh must be crucified, also the slightest affections, as they approach in single file, each trained to different tactics, or as a regimental front. Under the guidance of God, the spirit meets them by the positive works of his nature, that he might walk in unhindered freedom for the purpose of accomplishing his will under God. Difficult? Yes. Noble? Yes. Possible? Yes, but only in the power of God's might. The process of crucifixion is to the flesh most painful; but the spirit delights in his daily sanctification. — Many Biblical characters — children, youths, adults — are presented as executioners and subduers of the flesh. They stood their ground, faithful unto death, vigilant and sober, serving God and loving their neighbor. — Because the conflict is spiritual, the spirit musters under the direction of God's Word all spiritual, intellectual, mental, physical powers given him, and consecrates all his possessions and opportunities for victorious opposition to the flesh, for holiness of life.

## II

They that are Christ's, whether children or adults, are the true believers. They are given Him by the Father, redeemed by Christ, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, John 6:37-40.— These only have the two natures. These only are engaged in the conflict, notwithstanding the unbelievers' claim to righteousness. — The title of honor "They that are Christ's" offers the comfort of final victory, in spite of failings and defeats. The spirit is borne by the Holy Spirit. Faith and trust in Christ is always fruitful. Also the crucifixion of the flesh is wrought by the Spirit of God. Ungodliness, being the fruit of unbelief, is, beside unbelief, the cause of damnation. Ungodly life is the external sign of the unbeliever's approach toward his damnation. Holiness of life is the external sign that God saves us without the Law, the external evidence that we are saved. From what we do we properly conclude what we are and will be, for sanctification is the consequence of justification. — Are not our failings and defeats a

testimony against us? They that are Christ's rise again after each fall. Their repentance, wrought by God, is a victory over the flesh, an external testimony and evidence of their salvation. *Trigl.*, pp. 228—234. G. H. SMUKAL

## FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

GAL. 5:25—6:10

In the *Collect* appointed for this Sunday we as a congregation call upon God, saying: "O Lord . . . let Thy continual pity cleanse . . . Thy Church." We pray therein: first, that despite our unworthiness God would continuously declare unto us, for Jesus' sake, the remission of all our sins and thus cleanse us juridically, 1 John 1:7, 9; and secondly, that by such mercy He would also move us "to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit," 2 Cor. 7:1, and thus purify us by the renewal of our lives. And in the Epistle of this Sunday, the Lord calls upon us as His household, 6:10, to purify ourselves before Him. Hence:

### AS CHILDREN OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH LET US WALK IN THE SPIRIT!

- I. *Why should we walk in the Spirit?*
- II. *How should we walk in the Spirit?*

#### I

A. Because "we live in the Spirit," 5:25, that is, because we, as regenerate children of God, live in a new life; we are God's children in "the household of faith," 6:10. 1. As we are constituted by nature, we are "children of wrath," Eph. 2:3, spiritually dead, Eph. 2:1, enemies of God, Rom. 8:7, and captives of the devil, Eph. 2:2. As such we cannot know the things of the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 2:14. Therefore, except we are born again, John 3:5,6, or are brought to faith, John 3:15,16, we cannot enter the Kingdom of God nor walk in the Spirit. 2. But we *have been* born again through the means of grace, John 3:5; Rom. 6:3-11; 1 Pet. 1:23; Eph. 2:1,6, so that we are no longer dead, but alive through Christ, Rom. 6:11; 2 Cor. 5:19,21; Eph. 2:1,6. We are children of God, Gal. 3:26,27. As such we have a new will, Phil. 2:13, a new

heart, Ps. 51:10; Heb. 10:16; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 3:17, and consequently are new creatures, 2 Cor. 5:17, who live in the realm of the Spirit, in "the household of faith," and, therefore, are enabled to walk in the Spirit. Hence, 5:25.

B. Because it is dangerous to walk in the flesh. 1. God will not permit us to "mock" (lit., "turn up the nose" at) Him through sin, v. 7. 2. Sowing to the flesh will bring spiritual destruction and death, v. 8; Rom. 8:13. Despite the warnings of its parents a child may play with dangerous explosives, but it does so at the risk of its life, which, if lost, it cannot restore. Even so, to play with sin despite God's warnings, is to risk spiritual death, from which we cannot revive ourselves.

C. Because it pays. 1. Only through continued faith in Christ, 1 Pet. 1:5, the gift of the Spirit, 1 Cor. 12:3; Phil. 1:6, can we be saved, for 6:8 b. 2. All deeds of love, though not the cause of our salvation, Rom. 3:23-28; 4:4-5; Gal. 2:21; 3:10, shall be rewarded "in due season," v. 9; now, 1 Tim. 4:8; and hereafter, Luke 14:14; also Matt. 5:12; Luke 6:35; 1 Cor. 3:8; Heb. 6:10.

## II

A. By remembering that we are children of the same household, and as such avoiding everything that causes vain-glory, defiance, and envy, 5:26; 6:3; 1 Cor. 12:18-31.

B. By treating a brother "overtaken" (lit., "detected") in sin with tenderness, in the spirit of meekness, 6:1; "considering *thyself*" (note the change from the plural to the singular, 6:1 b); Matt. 7:1-5.

C. By sharing one another's burdens, 6:2 (lit., "heavy loads"). Matt. 7:12; John 13:14, 15.

D. By doing our part in the Church, 6:5 (lit., "every man shall carry his own pack"), according to our gifts, 1 Cor. 12:4-18; Rom. 12:3; without making comparisons with what others do, 6:4.

E. By suffering no undue anxiety about our earthly possessions (cp. the Sunday's Gospel, Matt. 6:25, 33), but rather "sharing" them in unselfish and thankful support of our pastors and teachers, 6:6, 10.

**F.** By not becoming weary, 6:9 a, or permitting ourselves to be overcome 6:9 b, through thanklessness and opposition, for example, Paul: 2 Cor. 4:1 ff.; 12:15; 11:24-29.

**G.** By v. 10.

**Conclusion:** When we look upon our efforts to walk in the Spirit, surely we must say: Is. 64:6. How gracious of God to keep with us the Spirit, whereby we are able to believe in the remission of our sins! How kind of Him to allow us to continue as His children in the household of faith! As such let us walk in the spirit. **THEODORE F. NICKEL**

## SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

**EPH. 3:13-21**

The Lord expects fruit from every tree He plants, Luke 13:7. He wants to see more than lusty leaves in the life of Christians, Ps. 1:3; Luke 3:9; Matt. 21:19. Nor should they be satisfied with sparse fruit, a mere sign of life; hence the many admonitions to grow, 2 Pet. 3:18; to increase in fruits of their faith, 2 Cor. 9:10; 1 Thess. 4:10. This growth does not come automatically; striving for it is a lifetime job for every Christian; and there are many obstacles and disappointments. Hence the Apostle's admonition to the Ephesians and all Christians:

**FAINT NOT!**

### I

*The admonition is necessary.*

It is an arduous task, not only to remain in the state of grace, but to grow and become stronger in the inner man.

**A.** Conditions often are discouraging. Paul, to whose preaching the Ephesians owed their spiritual life, was in prison. Christians were scattered abroad by persecution.—The story of the Church is one of continuous battle, without a decisive victory; when outward enemies are overcome, internal corruption and disruption threatens her.—In the personal life of Christians it remains true, Acts 14:22; 2 Tim. 3:12. That is the rule without exception; if there is no cross in our life, we had better examine our Christianity whether it is genuine, Luke 14:27.—It is so easy to faint when the scoffer cries, Where is now thy God?



**B. The new man within us is often weak. — St. Paul is not writing to people who are still dead in trespasses and sins, but to Christians who are regenerated; the new life has been planted in them. But this "inner man" needs strengthening. Some are ignorant of that fact and say with the Laodiceans, Rev. 3:17; or even with the Pharisee, Luke 18:11; they are well satisfied with their condition; they do not strive for growth. — But none of us are as we should be; we lack fervor in prayer, strength in battle, courage in adversity, trust in affliction, backbone in temptation; we are selfish rather than self-denying. — We must grow, or we die. The seed that does not grow rots; water standing still stagnates. There is no standing still in the spiritual life; either advance or retreat, either growth or decay. Therefore, faint not!**

**C. Moreover, Matt. 24:13; Heb. 3:6, 14; 1 Cor. 9:24. — Nor will the way become easier as we approach the end (both of the world and of our life), so that we could afford to rest on our laurels, Rev. 12:12. Therefore Heb. 12:12, 13. Faint not!**

## II

### *How may we comply with this admonition?*

**A. All spiritual strength must come from God. He plants the new life in Baptism; He must continue it and strengthen it, Phil. 2:13; 2 Cor. 3:5-6. Therefore follow the Apostle's example, v. 13; He who wrought that marvelous change in the disciples on Pentecost Day can do wonders in us; by His Spirit He can and will strengthen us in the inner man.**

**B. God has not promised to send His Spirit directly; He comes to us in the means of grace. Therefore 1 Pet. 2:2. Christians who seek strength must be good churchgoers; we have no real desire to grow if we neglect hearing the Word. Especially the second Sacrament is given us for the strengthening of the inner man; neglect of it, as well as abuse, results in spiritual weakness and death, 1 Cor. 11:30. Family and private worship.**

**C. Faithful use of these means will have the result: v. 19 b. Faith will be strengthened, v. 17; knowledge will be increased; we shall be led to fuller knowledge and greater adoration of the love of God and Christ, which makes our**

## HOMILETICS

625

salvation possible and actual; deeper comprehension of God's wonderful ways of building His Church, v. 18, both in general and particularly in our own life. It will have its effect on our life in rooting and grounding us more firmly in love toward God and our Savior and toward all men. So shall we "from strength to strength go on, Wrestle and fight and pray, Tread all the powers of darkness down And win the well-fought day."

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow, vv. 20-21.

THEO. HOYER

## SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

EPH. 4:1-6

The Christian religion tells us not only *to believe*, but also *to do*. Good works are a necessary fruit of faith. Therefore Paul in his Epistle from which our text is taken, after having presented the doctrine of salvation, encourages Christians to lead a godly life. Let this be our theme:

WALK WORTHY OF THE VOCATION WHEREWITH  
YE ARE CALLED

- I. *How we should walk worthy of our vocation*
- II. *Why of necessity Christians must so do*

I

A. To walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called means, being Christians we should live as Christians, v. 1; Rom. 12:1, 2. "The most orthodox orthodoxy divorced from practice is like the dried flowers which botanists put between sheets of blotting paper with no perfume nor color nor growth nor life in them — the skeleton of dead beauty." (Maclaren.)

B. In giving this admonition Paul has in mind the "one body," v. 4, of which all Christians are members, the holy Christian Church; and that Christians, having still the sinful flesh in them, need to be admonished and encouraged to live a Christian life, also in their attitude toward one another.

C. Christians should live together "in the bond of peace," v. 3, and to this end should walk worthy of the vocation

wherewith they are called, "with all lowliness," in humility, not exalting themselves above others; "and meekness," ready to serve and to share with others, rather than to make demands upon them; "with longsuffering," having patience with others who, too, still have their faults and their imperfections; "forbearing one another in love," love being the prompting motive for such Christian conduct, 4: 31, 32. Disturbances are caused among Christians when these admonitions are not heeded.

D. In the remaining part of the Epistle Paul gives forth explicit directions for the Christian life, such as, "put off the old man, put on the new man," 4: 22-24; "let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth," 4: 29; "grieve not the Holy Spirit," 4: 30; "be not drunk with wine," 5: 18; "give thanks always," 5: 20; "wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands," "husbands, love your wives," 5: 22, 25; "children, obey your parents," 6: 1; "fathers, bring them up, etc.," 6: 4; "put on the whole armor of God," 5: 11.

E. Thus Christians should "endeavor," strive, "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," v. 3, that unity which the Holy Spirit Himself has established among Christians, which already is there and should not be disrupted by unholy living.

## II

A. Christians of necessity must "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," v. 3, for the Holy Spirit has established that unity among them. Loyalty to the Triune God, to the Spirit, vv. 3, 4, to the Lord their Savior, v. 5, to the Father of them all, v. 6, demands that Christians live in peace with one another and that they show forth Christian virtues.

B. The Apostle enlarges upon this thought of spiritual unity by pointing out that Christians have been united into "one body," the mystical body of Christ, the Christian Church, the Church Invisible, by "one Spirit," who operates in their hearts, who has brought them to faith, keeps them in faith, and directs their life, and has "called them in one hope of their calling," all having their minds and hearts turned to the same goal of eternal life. All Christians also have only "one Lord," only one Savior, who redeemed them with His precious blood; "one faith," that faith in Christ which has

the promise of salvation; and "one Baptism," by which they were made members of Christ's body and assured of their eternal salvation. All Christians also have only "one God and Father who is above all," governing, directing, and keeping them; and "through all," the same God and Father working through the Christians here upon earth; and "in all," having made His abode in them. Being thus united, Christians, whosoever and wherever they may be, cannot have different interests nor different objectives, but by virtue of the unity of the Spirit these are all the same. Therefore they should all live the same Christian life and live peaceably with one another.

All this we confess in our Creed, saying, "I believe in the holy Christian (catholic, universal) Church, the communion of saints." Every time we recite the Creed we should be reminded of the spiritual unity that exists among all Christians and be encouraged to keep that unity in the bond of peace, not letting an unholy life and dissensions disrupt it, but rather, being assured of the same grace of God by the same faith in the same Savior, do honor to our God by manifesting the spiritual unity existing among us and thereby also, as it is given expression by our Christian life and peace among ourselves, give a testimony of our Christianity to the ungodly world that surrounds us, "giving no offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God," but "whether we eat or drink or whatsoever we do, do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor. 10: 31, 32.

J. H. C. FRITZ

