

10-1-1946

Homiletics: Outlines on the Standard Epistle Lessons

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Recommended Citation

Baepler, Walter A. (1946) "Homiletics: Outlines on the Standard Epistle Lessons," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 17, Article 60.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol17/iss1/60>

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Homiletics

Outlines on the Standard Epistle Lessons

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

PHIL. 1:3-11

You are a Christian. You believe in your Savior Jesus Christ. And you know that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

But will you persevere in faith? The devil and the world are enemies of your soul. Your sinful flesh is their strong ally. What assurance have you of remaining in faith? And what certainty have you of salvation?

The Apostle answers this question in our text in which he speaks of

THE CERTAINTY OF SALVATION

showing

- I. Its foundation* *II. Its effects*

I

A. The Apostle thanks God for having brought the Philipians into the fellowship in the Gospel and for having preserved them in this fellowship until now (vv. 3-5). Fellowship in the Gospel is nothing else than faith — believing appropriation of the blessings of the Gospel. (Show from Acts 16:14-40 how the congregation at Philippi was founded.) Such faith is given by God (Phil. 1:29), and is a gift of grace (v. 7). Explanation of Third Article. It is God who worketh all spiritual life (v. 6; Phil. 2:13).

B. What God has begun, He purposes to finish (v. 6). God does not convert a person on trial. His sincere purpose from the very beginning of the new life in a person is that the end, everlasting life, shall be reached (2 Pet. 3:9). We are not left to shift for ourselves, but are the object of God's care (Ps. 103:13; Eph. 3:14-21). God is almighty, so that no one can pluck us out of His hand (John 10:29). And this is the promise God gives to the believers (John 10:28-29; Is. 54:10; 49:14-16; 1 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; 1 Pet. 1:5; Rom. 8:38-39).

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C. Thus the certainty of our salvation is not founded upon anything within us — our emotions, pious living, etc. — but solely upon the gracious will, mercy, promises, and power of God. And this certainty is a certainty of faith (v. 6).

II

A. Some people think it is a mistake to assure the believer of the certainty of his salvation. They say such teaching leads to carnal security, undermines the doctrine of sanctification, and destroys Christian life and zeal. (Cf. *Trigl.* 1,065.) Such people do not understand what it means to be in the fellowship in the Gospel, nor do they grasp the significance of the certainty of salvation.

B. Certainty of salvation is a certainty of faith which God works in us through the Word. Faith is not an inactive conviction, but a powerful force which controls and permeates our thoughts and life. Faith produces good works. And the more the believer realizes that he owes everything concerning his salvation to God, the more eager he is to show his appreciation by serving the Lord. Hence, v. 9-11. Certainty of salvation will induce a believer to abound more and more in love toward God and man, in knowledge and in judgment, so that he may approve things that are excellent and may be found sincere and without offense on the day of Jesus Christ. Of course this implies the use of the means of grace. Cf. also Phil. 2:12 b. Thus the believer will be filled with fruits of righteousness, as Paul enumerates some of them (Gal. 5:22-24), not for his personal glorification, but for the glory and praise of God (v. 11).

C. Such certainty of salvation is a great comfort to the believer at all times, particularly in days of trials and tribulations, as Paul's experience, while writing this Epistle, shows, and should move the believer to thank God throughout his life (v. 3).

WALTER A. BAEPLER

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

PHIL. 3:17-21

As in his other letters, the Apostle lays the foundation of saving knowledge first. In this instance he had set forth in particular the glorious fruits of the resurrection of Christ as the foundation of every believer's knowledge of salvation,

with justification and sanctification most intimately connected and urging the Apostle to call out, v. 12, and to give the pledge for the future, vv. 13-15. And now follows the climax of his admonition, centering in the thought

OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN

Therefore we should

- I. *Conduct ourselves in accordance with the Apostle's example*
- II. *Prepare for the glories of the heavenly inheritance*

I

The thought which governs the entire paragraph is evidently that chosen as our topic. This governs the Apostle's entire argument, as in Heb. 13:14. The plea particularly significant and effective in the case of the Philippian Christians because of their pride in being citizens of the Roman Empire. No matter how great the advantages and privileges which believers may enjoy here on earth, their foremost allegiance, beside which all others fade away into nothing, is that toward their Savior and His promise of heavenly glory. Therefore all Christians should conduct themselves in agreement with the Apostle's example. Why?

A. Because of the warning example offered by the conduct and fate of the enemies of the Cross (vv. 18-19). These people, of whom Paul speaks only with the deepest commiseration and sorrow, were enemies of the Gospel of the Cross. They would not accept for themselves, nor would they sanction, the preaching of the truth which the Apostle makes basic for all Christian teaching (1 Cor. 2:2). Such apostates and renegades made the work of the true Apostles in those days extremely difficult. But the Apostle knew that their end would be destruction, as a final punishment by the outraged God, because they served only earthly things. In spite of all show to the contrary, they did not give their wholehearted service to the Lord Jesus, but served their own selfish desires, interests, and goals.

B. On the other hand there was the stimulating example of the Apostle's life, to which he could point without undue boasting (2 Cor. 11:16 ff.). He could rightly call upon his readers to become imitators of himself, since he knew him-

self to be wholly devoted to the service of his Savior, to whom he owed everything that he held dear (vv. 8, 10). If all Christians will, at all times, keep the example of the Apostle Paul before their eyes, they will be properly prepared for their citizenship in heaven.

II

But since this citizenship is theirs by faith, through the grace of God and their Savior, therefore they will also strive, in the strength of the Lord, to prepare for the glories of the heavenly inheritance. Why?

A. Because we look forward to the glory of Christ in His second coming. No longer will He be in the form of a servant, in the lowliness of His humiliation. He will come as our triumphant King, as the Victor over all enemies. (Eschatological discourses.) His body, although still bearing the marks of His substitutionary sacrifice, will nevertheless be invested with the glory which He had with His Father before the world began (John 17:5). At His coming all believers may look up with joy, for their final redemption comes to them in Him.

B. Because our bodies, in the heavenly glory, will be fashioned like unto His glorious body (v. 21). We shall see our God and our Savior with the eyes of the body that we now have (Job 19:25-27), but everything that connects us with sin and the consequences of sin shall be taken from us (Rev. 21:4). He to whom we owe our life and being in the first place, will make use of His creative and governing power to make our bodies fit for the heavenly kingdom (2 Tim. 4:18). Then our citizenship will see its glorious fruition, when we shall see Him face to face and be with Him in everlasting happiness.

P. E. KRETZMANN

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

COL. 1:9-14

A faithful Christian will pray "for all men" (1 Tim. 2:1). The contents of his prayer briefly are: "Thy Kingdom come." Particularly will the Christian pray for his congregation. Thanksgiving for God-given faith in Christ and petition for

spiritual growth for the pastor and the members (Col. 1:9). Whereas the first part of this chapter (v. 3 ff.) contains the thanksgiving, the words under consideration present

**PAUL'S PRAYER AN EXAMPLE OF THE CHRISTIAN'S
PRAYER FOR HIS CONGREGATION**

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>I. For more knowledge</i> | <i>III. For Christian patience</i> |
| <i>II. For a godlier life</i> | <i>IV. For a thankful spirit</i> |

I

"We," Paul and Timothy (v. 9 b). After thanking God for the gift of saving, fruitful, and hope-giving faith, Paul now desires for them more spiritual knowledge — "filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (v. 9 b). Paul recognized the subtle danger of losing sight of God's will concerning their soul's salvation (1 Tim. 2:4). This danger described in Col. 2:8. The antidote lies in greater knowledge, wisdom and spiritual understanding. Hence this prayer (Col. 2:7). How intense the loving concern of the Apostle for the Colossian Christians! What a challenge to them to search the Gospel!

Have we as a congregation need of more knowledge of God's will concerning our salvation? (2 Pet. 3:18.) There are so many things to delve into, so many fields of knowledge to divert and pervert our attention. Oh, the need of pleas like this! Oh, the need of congregations today to ask God for an increase in Christian knowledge, the knowledge of the Gospel. That is the real "dynamis" (Rom. 1:16), first and above all the dynamic of God unto salvation through faith in Christ and then also the power unto a godly life.

II

The Colossians had experienced the sanctifying power of God unto a godly life through the Gospel of Christ. There is to be no standstill. Hence Paul's prayer continues: "That ye might walk . . ." (v. 10). "Worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." Not selfish, but selfless lives (2 Cor. 5:15). Service to fellow men (Matt. 20:26-27). "Fruitful unto every good work." As a tree watered and nourished well is to increase in production, so the Colossians (John 15:16 a; Phil. 1:11). This power not found in their natural being (Rom.

7:19). Without Christ-given power no fruits at all. God must give both the willingness and the doing of these works. So Paul prays for that very willingness and power for them. What a loving concern for them breathes in this plea! What a challenge to them to remain connected with the "power of God, the Gospel of Christ!"

God give us such praying Christians today, that there may be in these days of ever-increasing wickedness an increase within the Church of the fruits of the only saving faith.

III

Conditions then were such that much patience was needed. Persecutions from without. The irritation of weak brethren and sisters from within. But joyful patience and long-suffering not found in natural man, nor produced by own might. Therefore the next plea: "Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power" (v. 11). How this prayer must have helped them to lift their eyes confidently unto the hills from which alone they could expect help for patience in persecution and for long-suffering in counteracting the provocations from their own ranks.

Conditions the same today for bold confessors of Christ and His Word of Truth. Persecuted by the world. Taunted by the weak in faith within the congregation. What a blessing, then, if pastor and members pray for joyful patience and longsuffering for themselves and their fellow members.

IV

Man's natural inclination is to grumble, complain. Colossians no exception. Hence Paul's prayer (v. 12). However, He does not list earthly, physical benefits, *e. g.*, health, prosperity, peace, etc. Rather as sources for a constantly thankful spirit he points to their God-given inheritance in heaven (v. 12 b); to their God-wrought conversion (v. 13); and to their redemption, the glorious forgiveness of sins through Christ, as the true and lasting source and reason for genuine thankfulness. Compare Eph. 5:20: "in the name of the Lord Jesus."

We also need such pleas for thankful hearts. Christians can use the same reasons today for rousing gratitude, because these blessings are constant and unchangeable.

"Ye have not, because ye ask not" (James 4:2). This applies to both pastors and members. "Ask, and it shall be given you" (Matt. 7:7), however, applies with equal force. God grant us praying Christians after the example of a Paul for Jesus' sake.

EDWIN H. PFLUG

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

1 THESS. 4:13-18

Scripture teaches a resurrection of all the dead (John 5:28; Matt. 25:32). The purpose of resurrection is twofold, either unto life or unto damnation (John 5:29; Matt. 25:32b-46). St. Paul bent every effort to attain unto the resurrection of life (Phil. 3:7-14). In order to inspire us to the same unwavering faith in our Redeemer and to like zeal in holiness and good works, let us direct our attention to

THE GLORY OF OUR RESURRECTION

It is

- I. Glorious in its nature II. Glorious in its comfort*
III. Glorious in its certainty

I

The marvelous glory of the resurrection unto life is described vv. 16-17.

A. The Lord Christ Himself shall descend from heaven, not in humility and poverty, in the form of a servant, but as the Lord and King of heaven and earth, riding on the clouds as on His royal chariot, surrounded by the innumerable hosts of heavenly spirits (Matt. 25:31; 26:64). He shall come "with a shout" of authoritative command; "with the voice of the archangel" (cp. Jude 9; Rev. 12:7), the ruler, under Christ, of the heavenly host accompanying (Matt. 25:31); "with the trump of God." The shout, the voice, the trump, all have but one purpose — Arise, awake, ye saints of the Lord!

B. "And the dead in Christ shall arise." From their graves, wherever they may be, on land or in the sea, they will come forth, not in their sinful, mortal bodies, but glorified (Phil. 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:42 ff.). Those still living will then be changed (1 Cor. 15:51) and, together with those revived,

will be caught up in the clouds, the chariots sent by the Lord to His brethren and sisters, to meet with the Lord in the air. What a happy meeting that will be! (Cp. 1 Pet. 1:8.) And then the Lord of Glory, the Captain of our salvation, and all the vast multitude of believers (Rev. 7:9) will be led by God Himself (text, v. 14), into the very presence of the Lord of Hosts, to the home prepared for us, to glory unspeakable (Heb. 2:10; John 17:3-4; John 17:24). All this shall happen "in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:52), for there shall be no more time; then we are in eternity.

Thus shall the Lamb upon the throne (Rev. 5:6) and we with Him reap the final and full fruits of His victory on Calvary (1 Cor. 15:54-57; cp. Rev. 5:11-14). What an incentive to unswerving, loyal faith!

II

The Apostle's purpose in reminding us of this glorious doctrine is stated vv. 13, 18.

A. "Others" includes all non-Christian religions. They have no hope (v. 13; Eph. 2:12). Point out the hopeless views of paganism, Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Modernism, etc. They mourn either in stoic resignation or in despairing wailings, raving against cruel fate, blaspheming God.

B. Christians feel keenly and mourn sincerely the death of their loved ones; Lazarus' sisters (John 11:31-33); Jesus (v. 36); Paul (Phil. 2:27). Yet Christians have the hope of the resurrection unto life. This tempers their sorrow, enables them to say: John 11:24; Job 1:21; 19:25-27; Rom. 14:8-9. Death is gain for the believer (Phil. 1:21). They are asleep (vv. 13-15); they rest from their labors (Rev. 14:13). What a gain! Cp. *Lutheran Hymnal*, 589. And on that day the dead will not be at a disadvantage. Those living will not "prevent," precede, come before, them in any wise. The dead in Christ shall rise first, before the glorification of the living, and only then they together shall meet the Lord. Let this comfort sink deep into our hearts, whenever the death of our beloved ones or thoughts of our own death seek to disturb our minds.

III

Is that hope certain? If anything, then the Christian's hope of a resurrection unto life everlasting is sure and certain.

A. The Apostle voices not his own views and speculations. "These words" (v. 18) are the word of the Lord (v. 15) and therefore absolutely reliable (2 Cor. 1:20). There is a resurrection unto life!

B. It is God who will bring those asleep back to life. This God is omnipresent. He is with us and we in Him in life and in death, in the grave (Acts 17:28). He is omniscient. He knows exactly what becomes of every particle into which our bodies disintegrate. And He is not a disinterested spectator. "Whether we live," etc. (Rom. 14:8-9). He knows that these are the particles which He has promised to re-assemble into our body, no matter how far they may be scattered, and which He has promised to re-unite with our soul. And He is almighty. Not even this thing is too hard for Him, the Creator and Preserver of heaven and earth (Is. 40:22, 26, 28). This God will raise me from the dead unto life eternal.

He will do that through Jesus (v. 14). That was the purpose for which Jesus was sent to be our Redeemer, for which He lived and died and rose again, that there might be a resurrection out of death to everlasting life. And therefore those who sleep in Jesus will God bring unto Him. This is most certainly true.

Comfort one another and yourselves with these words and cling to this Jesus and to this God in true faith, in sincere love, in willing service.

TH. LAETSCH

