

6-1-1947

Homiletics: Outlines on the Nitzsch Gospel Selections

A. E. Wagner

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Wagner, A. E. (1947) "Homiletics: Outlines on the Nitzsch Gospel Selections," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 18, Article 38.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol18/iss1/38>

This Homiletical Help is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

Homiletics

Outlines on the Nitzsch Gospel Selections

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Acts 4:23-31

Mustered by Satan for the final fray, the anti-Christian forces — materialism, atheism, Romanism, etc. — are rolling into unprecedented action.

Over against the many new, vehement attacks upon Christian faith and life the believer cannot afford to sit back in pious amazement. Against the "all-out" enemy action he must take action.

For the preservation of his own soul the Scripture offers him this inspired illustration of the proper

CHRISTIAN REACTION TO ANTI-CHRISTIAN ACTION

I. More Fellowship with Believers

Text. When released by enemies with new threats of persecution, what did John and Peter do? To steel themselves against approaching fury, "they went to their own company" (v. 23). As they reported their experiences, fellow believers listened and comforted them. Oh, how cheering the fellowship of this Christian rendezvous!

Application. This day of growing anti-Christian power is no time for separatism, which says: "I do not need the church, I read Bible at home; no services, Communion for me, I have my own devotions; I need not be told how to live, I wish to live my own life." That is not the proper Christian reaction. That is exposing self unnecessarily to enemy action.

Illustration. — Coals, separated from fire, die. Horses in storm crowd together. The fiercer the foes, the more fellowship "with our own company" is needed, in services, Bible classes, Lord's Table, etc.

II. More Thought of God's Power

Text. When Christians heard of powerful enemies — rulers, chief priests — they immediately thought of God's in-

finitely superior power. They reminded themselves (vv. 24-27) that before Him who made heaven and earth, all raging of heathen, people, kings, rulers, Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Herod, Pilate, Gentiles, Jews, is futile. Impotent are they before the Omnipotent.

Application. To think only of the mighty force of present-day evil and forget the tremendous, overruling power of God and His Anointed is not the proper Christian reaction. If, like Peter, we take our eye off Jesus, who not only walks on water, but also makes His enemies His footstool, we lose heart and sink. Courage, boldness, comes with more thought of His guarding power.

Illustration. Like Elisha: "More be with us" (2 Kings 6:16); Paul: "If God be for us" (Rom. 8:31); Luther: "A Mighty Fortress," "Though devils as many as tiles".

III. More Realization of the Bible's Truthfulness

Text. In all the hostility against Christ—and against themselves—Christians saw a striking confirmation of the Scripture's truthfulness. Turning to the Bible (vv. 25-28), they perceived that all this had been predicted. It was what they were to expect. The persecution, therefore, instead of shaking, strengthened their faith in God's Word and fired their determination to carry out "His counsel" (v. 29).

Application. Those who close their eyes to what the Bible has foretold of the latter days will be confused by the furious, sweeping action of anti-Christian powers. They will be sorely shaken, if not confounded. But to note how precisely our Lord has predicted this (John 15:19 ff.; John 16:2 ff.; 2 Tim. 3:12 ff.) is the proper Christian reaction. That will not only prepare us, but also confirm us in our faith.

Illustration. So Peter encouraged: "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial . . . as though some strange thing happened unto you" (1 Pet. 4:12).

IV. More Prayer for Boldness

Text. These Christians never neglected prayer, but amid threatenings of their foes they prayed the more fervently. And, what a prayer (vv. 29-30)! As His servants they prayed, not merely for deliverance, but for boldness to speak His

Word, for signs, wonders, healing, conversion of many souls, for the glorification of the name of Christ.

Application. Against all the wicked powers that rage about us, that is what we need—more prayer. When we see anti-Christian groups mobilizing for hostile action, threatening our churches, families, souls, let us fall on our knees and pray the more: "Lord Jesus, who dost love me" (554:5). That will prove a more successful reaction than seeking political pulls, lobbies, etc. Astounding as are His promises, He scrupulously fulfills them.

Illustration. Hardly had Christians said "Amen" when (v. 31) the place was shaken in token of God's gracious presence. His Holy Spirit with all needed gifts—boldness, fearlessness, joy, enthusiasm, zeal—filled them. So will it be with us.

A. E. WAGNER

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Acts 5:1-11

On this Sunday we are much concerned with the Christian's witness. How can he prove that he is God's man through Christ? Our text discusses one of the outstanding means for witness at the Christian's disposal. That is

THE CHRISTIAN'S CUSTODY OF HIS EARTHLY POSSESSIONS

As Christians we all live in a material world. We own property; we earn our livelihood.

- I. The Christian's use of his property is a part of his Christian life*
- II. He is in danger of succumbing to a hypocritical custody of it*
- III. God is anxious that his custody be godly and sincere*

I

A. The dreadful story of the text must be taken in connection with the whole account in Acts 4, the witness of the Apostles to Christ, and the unity in which the entire church joined in that witness. They did this particularly through wholehearted sacrifice in Christian charity, vv. 32-37.

B. The Christian man today is a witness to Jesus Christ. — He accepts His redemption for the forgiveness of his sins. 2. Christ is risen within him to a new life. 3. That new life shows itself especially in the management of his property. He may not have the convenient system which the first Christians used at Jerusalem; but he constantly faces these facts: his possessions are his to use and to administer, but as a Christian he administers them for God's purposes and the welfare of men, with the impulse of God's own Spirit guiding his actions.

II

A. Ananias and Sapphira succumbed to the temptation to deceive men about their custody of their property. — 1. Evidently they coveted the note which Barnabas and others achieved, 4:36-37, and they sought to appear more liberal than they really were. 2. This temptation besets Christians continually; in the organized Church, with its donations and charities; in life as a whole, for after all, every use of money is custody of it for God. The flesh wants to seem as good and praiseworthy as the next man.

B. Ananias and Sapphira actually lied to the Holy Ghost. — 1. They had completely distorted the meaning of property and of Christian giving. They did not attach the use of property to the life of the Spirit within them, but to their selfish ends. Thus they actually bade the Spirit depart; they shut themselves off from His influence; they died spiritually. More, they plotted together, v. 9; instead of helping each other, they destroyed their own souls. 2. The most dreadful damage in poor stewardship occurs under cover. When professing Christians allow the surface witness of their giving to camouflage inner selfishness and desire for praise, they are asking for the judgment of God upon them. Ezek. 33:31; Luke 12:15; 2 Pet. 2:2-3; 1 Tim. 6:10.

III

A. God cannot permit the faulty witness of hypocritical custody to continue. — 1. He struck fast in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. The gains of the Christian Church and the Gospel of the resurrection were in danger. 2. If we could know all that God does, we should see that He still acts. It is not mere accident that fortunes and nations crash, church

denominations become impotent though wealthy. 2 Pet. 2; James 5.

B. God stimulates his Christians to overcome the flesh and bring forth fruits of the Spirit.—1. The text strikes hard at the remnants of the flesh within us all. Vv. 5, 11; Col. 3:5. 2. God preserves us from overabundance to good purpose. Heb. 13:5-6. 3. God sets before us in constant supply the Gospel of our Savior, through which we may replace covetousness and pride with the glad readiness to serve with our property, humbly, like Christ. 1 Pet. 4:8 ff.; Acts 4:32-33.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Acts 8:26-38

The church work of the early Christians was based on the Scriptures. They would win members for the church, not through their social standing or by the use of flattery, but only through the everlasting Gospel of Christ. Accordingly their method is still applicable. With Philip we ask:

"UNDERSTANDEST THOU WHAT THOU READEST"

I

God gave the Scriptures to be understood.

God wanted the Ethiopian to understand the Scriptures. He removed the Evangelist Philip from his activity in Samaria to the deserted region of old Gaza. Vv. 26-30. Through His Spirit He directed Philip to approach the Ethiopian chariot. God still directs the affairs of men that they may know the Scriptures.

God's intent to have the Scriptures understood is evident from Psalm 119:105. The Bible is not a dark, obscure, and unintelligible book. For the meaning of some passages we must indeed search; the facts, however, are clear.

In trying to understand the Scriptures, we must not rationalize. 2 Pet. 1:20. Human reason dare not be admitted as a norm of Scripture interpretation. Accept the simple words of the Bible, even if they surpass your reason. Matt. 11:25; 1 Cor. 1:23-24. "But how this is possible Scripture

does not tell us, nor is it necessary for us to know." Luther. What the minds of the world's greatest philosophers could not grasp, little children may know and believe. Thank God that He has given us a Scripture which we can understand!

II

Only faith in Christ gives us the proper understanding of the Scriptures.

The meaning of Isaiah 53 was unclear to the Ethiopian as long as he did not believe in Christ. Using the chariot as his pulpit, Philip began with the Old Testament and presented to him the good news concerning Christ. Then the Scriptures became intelligible to the Ethiopian. Vv. 31-35.

"The entire Old Testament contains nothing else than Christ, just as He is presented in the Gospel" (Luther). Luke 24:27; John 1:45; Acts 10:43; 1 Cor. 2:2; John 5:46-47. The central theme of Scripture is Christ, the Savior of the world. Where this doctrine is overlooked, all the Scriptures become meaningless and useless. Christ is the Sun from which all else in the Scriptures receives its light.

Put your trust in Christ. He opens not only Scripture, but heaven itself. . . . As the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord (John 20:20), so joy will be yours when you see Christ in the Scriptures. . . . The knowledge of Christ removed the doubt of the Ethiopian. It will also establish you spiritually. *Lutheran Hymnal* 385:1.

III

A true understanding of the Scripture also produces blessed results.

The Ethiopian was not satisfied with the mere knowledge of Scripture. He also put his trust in Christ. Through Christ he wanted remission of sins by Baptism. The distinguished treasurer of Ethiopia stops at the side of the water and is baptized by a total stranger. Vv. 36-38. Baptism implied a confession of sin, a profession of faith, and an expression of love.

Faith founded on the Bible still produces blessed results. We are living in the Centennial year of Synod. The fathers based their teaching on the clear Scriptures and prospered. They permitted no council or synod to take the place of the

Scripture, but when the Scripture had spoken, the issue was settled. Based on this foundation, our Synod grew and became a blessing to many.

You have the Scriptures in a language you can understand. Christ is regularly preached to you from this pulpit as the only Savior of sinners. Examine your life. Is the outcome for you as blessed as it was for the Ethiopian? A careful self-examination of congregation and individual is in order.

Study your Bible. Attend the church services and Bible classes. Discuss the teachings of the Scriptures at home and with your friends. Place your trust in Christ, and show your love to the Savior in the life you lead. You will be blessed in the understanding of what you read.

VICTOR MENNICKE

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Acts 9:1-20

Christians are a titled nobility. The Bible gives them meaningful names: Children of God, chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, etc.

In this text the Christians are called "saints," v. 13. We confess regarding this: I believe in the communion of saints.

ACHIEVING SAINTHOOD

- I. *This is not the work of man*
- II. *It is the work of God alone*
- III. *It has wonderful results*

I

A. Text shows us Paul as nature's child, before he was a "saint." He has heard something about Christ and His Gospel, but what a reaction! His whole *attitude*: "Breathing out (Original: inhaling, *i. e.*, enjoying it thoroughly) threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," v. 1.

His *activity* is directed against the Gospel; his boundless *energy*, which later made him the greatest missionary, is directed to destruction: "He went unto the high priest," v. 1; he has his eyes on a city 150 miles distant to extend his

destructive influence. He is *ruthless*, desiring to break into homes in Damascus and bringing innocent men and even women into the prisons of Jerusalem. He was *not neutral* over against the Gospel, but actively fought it: "*Kick against the pricks*," v. 5.

B. This is the picture of man's *natural condition*. His attitude, activity, energy are directed to *resisting* the Gospel of salvation. Rom. 1:18; Rom. 8:7. We see evidences of this all around us: Attacks on the truth of the Scriptures, ridicule of the church which preaches the Gospel, denunciation of pastors who preach sin and grace, a sneering attitude toward those who still believe in miracles, revelation, etc.

But even one who is a *Christian* must realize that by nature he is an enemy of God. Paul does this long after he has become a Christian. 1 Tim. 1:13; Eph. 2:1-3. We have not achieved sainthood by being a little better by nature than others. Rom. 3:22-23.

II

A. The text presents a strange contrast between the plans of Paul and the plans of Christ. We hear nothing of Paul changing his mind gradually about Christ. He does *not change himself*; the Lord does it all: The Lord appears to Paul (v. 5), not vice versa. The Lord preaches the Law to Paul, v. 4; the Lord tells him what to do, v. 6; the Lord sends Ananias to Paul to baptize him, v. 11; the Lord maps out the future activity for Paul, v. 15. Paul is strangely passive in all this.

B. Achieving sainthood is the work of *God alone*. "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me."

Salvation is not a half-and-half undertaking of God and man; neither is man's rescue from sin, even to the smallest fraction, his own doing. Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 3:24.

If we have come to faith, it is solely and completely because God has brought us to faith. "Thou must save, and Thou alone."

III

A. The *results* of achieving sainthood are so evident in this text. Of Paul it is said significantly that "he prayeth."

He associates with the "disciples" whom he had come to arrest, v. 19; he goes to those synagogs for which he had letters, v. 2; but there he preaches that Christ is the Son of God, v. 20. His whole future life becomes one of service, vv. 15-16. He is now headed in the very opposite direction.

B. Achieving sainthood, if genuine, always has results. Faith is a living, moving, controlling force. It changes the direction of life and makes fruitful unto that which is good, Eph. 2:10.

H. O. A. KEINATH

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ACTS 14:8-18

The Gospel for this Sunday warns against false prophets. In contrast this text presents to us a true prophet, Paul, whom God used as His mouthpiece.

First missionary journey of Paul. Lystra off the main road and well fitted for a place of refuge from the Iconians. Said to be the home of Timothy. Very likely during Paul's stay here Eunice and Lois were brought to the knowledge of the Messiah. Scene of Paul's first recorded miracle.

Here Paul uses God's two books from which to preach to men: the Book of Nature and the Book of Revelation. God still speaks through these to mankind.

WHEN GOD SPEAKS

I. From the Book of Nature

Retell the story with special emphasis on vv. 11-18. This is the only book of the ancient Greeks and Lycaonians.

Reveals the living Creator, Rom. 1:19-20; His greatness, Pss. 19:1-6; 139; 14; Acts 17:23-28.

Man's conscience, another chapter of this book, confirms what nature all around tells us: There is a God, a living God, Rom. 2:14-15.

Men still read this book. They who are honest with their own reason give testimony to this fact. A. Cressy Morrison (Chicago U.), in *Man Does Not Stand Alone*, sets forth his belief in a creative Intelligence because of the mathematical impossibility that all the things which have had to happen together to make life possible could have happened by chance. Similarly Nobel-prize winner Arthur

H. Compton (Washington U.) "that there is something of a non-physical nature which controls the action of the atom is quite in the air today . . . it is permissible to postulate a fundamental unity or order in which all living things as well as all non-living things are controlled by something which approaches consciousness." (Cp. also his article in *Coronet*, July, 1946; also "Why a Scientist Believes in God." *Reader's Digest*, December, 1946, for other recent statements.)

Where does this knowledge lead man? It should prepare him as does the Law for the Gospel, but because of his blindness sin plays him tricks. Instead of finding God, he makes gods of men, v. 12. Glorifies man as though he were God. The result is that their gods, first flattering them, eventually enslave them in fear through their little "creations." The machine age is gradually enslaving the world; the use of atomic energy is threatening to overcome its little "maker."

Deifying man, worshiping nature, natural man walks in his own way, steeped in selfishness, materialism, ever seeking sense pleasures, v. 16. Eventually these are the gods which will perish together with their creator, Jer. 10:11-15.

Christians, too, must read this book, and though it doesn't give them a clear picture of God, it helps them together with God's other book carry out their purpose in life.

II. From the Book of Revelation

But God speaks to mankind also in His revealed Book. Paul had preached from it to the natives at the market place. Sin still persists when God speaks by it, but in the words of the Gospel lies the power of the Spirit, able to overcome spiritual death and hardness, creating a new life, imparting the gift of faith. As the Gospel was preached in Lystra, some heard and accepted, among them this cripple. Paul perceived this Gospel fruit within him and performed his first miracle.

When God speaks through this Book, the Word, instead of making gods of men, reveals God as man and through this Incarnate One gives men the full truth for a knowledge unto salvation, breaks the bondage of sin and death, reveals the all-pervading love of God to dispel fear, and gives unto us the power to walk in a renewed life. ARTHUR C. REPP