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## Homiletics: Outlines on the Nitzsch Gospel Selections

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## Homiletics

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### Outlines on the Nitzsch Gospel Selections

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#### NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Acts 16:16-34

Centennial of the Missouri Synod! What is the purpose of a Centennial celebration? Surely not to exalt man, but humbly to acknowledge the Lord's mercies. "The Lord hath done great things for us" must be the keynote of our celebration.

What of the second century? Great changes have taken place in one hundred years. Chicago had a population of 20,000 in 1847, now a world metropolis. In one hundred years, progress all along the line, in commerce, industry, science, arts. Men are adopting new means and new methods every day. Shall we conform to be up to date? Change our message? Indeed not! The old Gospel is still the only constraining influence, the only means of building the Church, also in second century. The Word alone can lead men to spiritual victory, peace, and salvation.

#### WHY REMAIN LOYAL TO THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST?

- I. Because without the Gospel there is sin and darkness*
- II. Because the Gospel alone brings men joyous confidence and peace*

#### I

Paul in Philippi in response to the Macedonian call. "Greece had everything but Christ, and so had nothing. Paul had nothing but Christ, and so had everything." No Gospel in Philippi, and without it there was sin and wickedness, unbelief and despair. The maid with the spirit of divination, vv. 16-18. Her statement concerning the Apostles (v. 17) was true, undoubtedly meant to harm them. Paul drives out the evil spirit and as a result suffers imprisonment and must leave the city, vv. 20-24. — This is typical of the unbelieving world. Without the Gospel, men please only themselves, seek to amass wealth, serve mammon. They hate the Word, and in their

enmity they pervert the truth, make false charges, resort to hypocrisy and defamation.

Without the Gospel of redeeming love, men are without hope in the world. Philippian jailer a case in point. Earthquake, attempted suicide. Here was blank despair. The only way out for the ungodly. "Cassius, when defeated, covered his face and ordered his freedman to kill him in his tent near Philippi." Judas, Ahithophel. War criminals like Hermann Goering, who told Chaplain Gerecke that the doctrine of blood atonement and other fundamental doctrines were twaddle. It has ever been thus. He who is without God is also without hope in the world. Without the Gospel, men are given to materialism, opposition to the Word, blank despair. But with the Gospel of Christ, there is joyous faith and confidence, inward peace, courage and boldness. Do you see why our Synod and every member of it cannot afford to ignore the Word of God, but have every reason, also in the second century, to remain loyal to the Word?

## II

Yes, we sing correctly, Hymn 5:2. Do you doubt it? Then let the record speak for itself, v. 25. "Songs in prison" — a violent contrast. True what maid unwittingly confessed. Were servants of living God, showed way of salvation. And now, despite dungeon, bleeding bodies, stripes, and stocks, they were not weeping or lamenting. They rejoiced in hope, were patient in tribulation, continued instant in prayer. It is a historical fact that Christianity is the only religion that inspires men to sing. Mohammedanism has no hymnal, nor has Hinduism, nor Buddhism. No glorious outburst of sacred song from the hearts and lips of the people ever awoke the echoes of any heathen or Mohammedan temple. It is "God, my Maker, who giveth songs in the night," Job 35:10. — That is proof of the power of the Word of God. It changes men's heart. No longer are they given to complaining and lamenting, even under the stress of affliction; but in sorrow they can always rejoice and exclaim with Paul, 2 Cor. 12:9. Many cross-bearers in our own churches eloquent proof of the truth of this statement. Gospel makes men exclaim, even in grievous afflictions: "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

And where the Word of God rules, there despair must leave and courage and confidence, fearlessness and peace reign. Jailer attempted suicide, not merely because he feared loss of prisoners, but, above all, because he had come to the realization of his sin. Feared wrath, saw hell open. Knew no way out of difficulty. Asks, What must I do? What did Paul answer? Be good? Atonement for own sins? No. Gave only correct answer that can bring peace to a troubled soul. Believe. Accept in humble faith Jesus as Substitute of sinners. Gratefully accepted, washed wounds, baptized. Gone was fear of God's wrath, gone was blank despair. In its place we find calm and childlike trust and certain hope.

Thus the Gospel of Christ ever has been power of God unto salvation. Dr. Walther in great spiritual distress as a young man. Wrote to Stephan. Before opening the letter, prayed that God might prevent his receiving false comfort. After reading it, felt himself elevated from the depths of hell to the bliss of heaven. Walther says that he could not resist, he had to come to Jesus. And so the peace of God entered his heart. (*Century of Grace*, Baepler, p.44.) When the Saxon immigrants were deprived of their leader and thoroughly disillusioned, they were in great tribulation. Were they still a Church? Right to celebrate Communion? It was Walther who by diligent study of Luther and God's Word brought clarity into the situation and restored to our fathers the joyous faith in Christ. Holy assurance took the place of discouragement and doubts and despair. Conversion of jailer repeated over and over in Missouri's history. Hundreds of thousands lived and died in peace thanks to the Gospel of the crucified and risen Lord.

Exhortation to steadfastness. Let us rededicate ourselves to the message of the past and proclaim it also in the future, thus preserving for ourselves and our children the only means of peace and salvation. Hymn 53:6. **PAUL KOENIG**

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## TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ACTS 17:21-34

What are we here for? The philosophers of the world have given different answers, but their answers all sum up to this: We are here to labor, to enjoy, to procreate, and to die.

God's Word gives us these answers: We are here to labor and to enjoy the fruits of our toil (Gen. 1:28; 2:15); to perform deeds of kindness toward others (Eph. 2:10); and to seek to know God. The last-named purpose of our being here is set forth in our text, v. 27.

### LET US SEEK TO KNOW GOD

- I. *By refraining from all idolatry*
- II. *By recognizing God as the Creator and Lord of the Universe*
- III. *By accepting the Son of God as our Redeemer*

#### I

Our purpose in life is to seek to know God. By nature man does not know the true God, 1 Cor. 2:14. Men have always sought to know God, but when they sought God through the efforts of their own minds, they erred in their quest. They thought that images of gold and silver were gods, or the sun, or the forces of nature. So St. Paul found it to be in Athens, v. 15. Everywhere there were idols and temples and people worshiping false gods. The whole city was given to idolatry. They even had an altar for the "unknown God," for fear that they might have missed one. And as it was in Athens, so it has been all over the world. Men seeking to know God and following their own minds in their quest have turned aside to worship idols. Wherever missionaries come to pagan countries, they find the people to be idolaters. And it should not really be so, because God is near enough to find, v. 27. And then all men are God's offspring, and therefore should know their Creator, v. 29. But sin blinded men in their quest to know the true God (Eph. 4:18), and they became idolaters. Those who seek to know the true God must refrain from idolatry.

There are other forms of idolatry — of which even Christians become guilty — and the fear and love of, and trust in, earthly things instead of God. When we see trouble ahead, and we comfort ourselves with our money, our friends, or our own powers, instead of trusting in God, that is idolatry, Jer. 17:5. When we are tempted to sin and we think first of whether we might get caught instead of thinking that God has forbidden the sin, that is idolatry, Gen. 39:9. All such idolatry

**we must refrain from in seeking God. Idolatry is a grievous sin. But God will bear with us, v. 30. God wants us to repent of the sin and to battle against it.**

## II

**We must recognize God as the Creator and Lord of the Universe. God created the world and all that is in it and made it an abode for the nations of mankind, v. 26. Everything in the world, the heavenly bodies and the plants and the animals of the earth and man, came to be by the word of the Creator. Many believe the doctrine of evolution, but we shall believe that God made all things. And God rules over the world and upholds all things, v. 25 b. He rules over men and nations, v. 26. We are much concerned about affairs in the world, labor and management, war and peace, communism and democracy, the atomic bomb. What will become of the world and our civilization? God rules in heaven. We can leave it all to Him. He is the Lord of heaven and earth.**

## III

**To know the true God, we must accept the Son of God as the Redeemer. God sent His Son into the world to live and suffer and die for the sins of all mankind; and God raised Him up from the grave again to assure us that the redemption was really completed, v. 31; Rom. 4:25. We must accept Him as our only Savior, John 14:6; Acts 4:12. Only then do we know God.**

**Not all will seek God this way. The Athenians mocked Paul, v. 32. But a few believed, v. 34. Those who seek God in this way will find Him. They will be fulfilling their purpose in life; they will enter into everlasting life.**

FREDERIC NIEDNER

## ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Acts 20:15-38

**Among the Apostles of the Lord there towers — Paul, far, far above all the rest.**

**Strange! Paul was not called to be an Apostle while Jesus was walking visibly upon this earth, saw none of His miracles, was not among the Twelve when Jesus spoke to**

them privately. The first time we hear of him he was a persecutor, Acts 8:1; 9:1.

But it was vain for him to kick against the pricks, Acts 9:5, for God had separated him from his mother's womb and called him by His grace, Gal. 1:15, so that without boasting he could declare: "In nothing am I behind the very chiefest Apostles."

Should we not give our earnest attention to this Paul? Our text presents to us an impressive picture of

### ST. PAUL, THE SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST

#### *I. In his faith*

In reading this text and noting Paul's varied activities, we ask, What was it that was driving this man? It was his faith, that same faith he preached to all men, v. 21. Quoting from the Old Testament: "I believed, and therefore have I spoken," he adds, "We also believe and therefore speak," 2 Cor. 4:13. Paul was not an hireling who entered the service of Jesus Christ for the sake of the loaves and the fishes. No, God had bestowed on Paul a true, living faith, not a faith of the head and mouth, but a faith of the heart. He did not simply believe in the Lord Jesus as a mere model or example. He believed in Jesus as his Savior. His beautiful confession is engraved forever in the Scriptures given by inspiration of God: "This is a faithful saying," etc., 1 Tim. 1:15-16. God had chosen him, elected him unto eternal life. He believed that God would not deceive him, even as he confesses: 2 Tim. 1:12 b.

Application. That is the true Christian faith, the faith which should live in our heart. Our faith may not always be as strong as St. Paul's faith, but there is no difference between *what* Paul believed and what each one of us should believe.

#### *II. Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, in his life*

Here in our text we see this faith of St. Paul working by love.

a. He undertakes these perilous journeys because of his love for *Jesus*, in order to glorify Jesus among men. Therefore he could say that he served the Lord with all humility, with many tears and temptations, his life constantly endangered by enemies and perils, v. 19 b. Cf. 2 Cor. 11:26-27. What rich, beautiful fruit of faith!

b. He bore all these hardships and labored day and night because he loved his *fellow man*. Think how he loved his brethren according to the flesh, the Jews, Rom. 9:3; 10:1. But he also loved the Gentiles. He was so devoted to their service in order to save their souls that he is known as the Apostle to the Gentiles, Acts 13:47; Gal. 2:9. Thus you see in Paul a pattern not only of a great sinner saved by faith, but you also see this faith working by love.

Application. Does your faith bear fruit? Is it a faith working by love? Let us not neglect to do what Paul tells us to do, 2 Cor. 13:5.

### III. *Our text shows Paul, the servant of Christ, also as a minister of the Word*

Paul had been called and appointed for a special work, namely, the work of the Gospel ministry, the work of an Apostle, and in this work he showed himself to be a true servant of Jesus Christ.

a. In his preaching he glorified Jesus, preached a full, unadulterated Gospel, 1 Cor. 2:2. He never hesitated to proclaim: 1 Tim. 1:15-16. He was not ashamed of this Jesus: Rom. 1:16. To know Christ and to proclaim Him was his one and only purpose. Text: vv. 24 and 21; Phil. 3:7-10. Before Jew and Gentile, before rich and poor, in private and in public, he preached Christ.

b. That does not mean that he never spoke of other men and things. No, he preached all the counsel of God, vv. 20 and 27; he warned against false teachers, vv. 28-30; he preached all the inspired Word, vv. 32 and 35.

Application. That is the Word which you hear in your church. Your pastor preaches what Paul preached—the Word which is able to save you. Do we appreciate all this as those people appreciated Paul's ministry? Vv. 37 and 38.

MARTIN S. SOMMER

## TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

### Acts 26:24-31

Three bound men met by God's appointment. One, though bound, was free; two, though free, were bound. The two denied freedom to the one who tried to make them free.



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## ALL MEN OUGHT TO BE FREE

I. *The men of God from the persecution of the world*II. *The men of the world from the captivity and tyranny of sin*

## I

Paul was free. The Son had made him free from sin and its dominion, John 8:36. The truth had made him free from all error, John 8:31-32. He was free from fear, Is. 41:10; Rom. 8:2, 15; Heb. 13:6. In this glorious freedom he was free and bold to speak the words of truth and soberness, v. 25. Paul was happy in this spiritual freedom, v. 29.

But he was physically bound. Evil men had caught him and sought to kill him, v. 21. They kept him in bonds, vv. 31-32; Acts 25:12. He was bound for the Savior's sake, John 16:2-3; 2 Tim. 3:10-11. Neither ecclesiastical nor political powers had authority to take and keep captive Christ's servant and brother. For he was innocent of any wrong, v. 31. His judges acknowledged his innocence and their duty to release him, and they regretted their inconsistency in retaining him, vv. 31-32.

Do we appreciate our spiritual deliverance and freedom? Vv. 27, 18. The children of God are free from fear, Rom. 8:15; from the condemnation of the Law, 2 Cor. 3; Gal. 4:5; Gal. 5:1; from the guilt, from the dominion of sin, and death, Rom. 6:7-14, 18, 22; free to speak the Gospel, at liberty each to reach one and more; free from legalism and the madness of much learning. Let us thank God for this freedom and apply it to His glory and honor, 1 Pet. 2:15-16.

But we must be prepared for experiences such as Paul had. 2 Tim. 3:12-13. According to prophecy and indication, many of our worldly-minded countrymen, who now merely tolerate us and confine their opposition to political, legislative, social, rationalistic, unionistic cunning, may suddenly instigate fearful persecutions. What should we do? Appeal to God, v. 29; appeal to the government, v. 32; Acts 25:11; depend on the Holy Spirit, John 16:8-11; Matt. 10:16-28; and by His power and in the innocency of our doctrine and life force from the lips of the world the admission that the men of God ought to be free from bondage and persecution, vv. 31-32.

*Transitus:* Though our captors bind us, we should endeavor to set them free.

## II

Agrippa, a king, and Festus, a governor, and Bernice, a beautiful woman of the world, and the entire court were free to meet their obligations to superior authority and free to seek their pleasure, such as it was. Physically they could move at large. The two rulers reigned not as cruelly as their predecessors did. In fact, King Agrippa showed favor to the Christians, receiving them at Pella, where they escaped the great horror of Jerusalem's destruction.

Nevertheless, these mighty and influential people were slaves. They were bound by sin and to sin. None of them believed the Gospel. John 8: 34-36; Rom. 6: 16, 21 b, 23 a; 1 Cor. 2: 14; Rom. 8: 5-8. They were held in that hopeless state as it is described in Eph. 2: 2-3. Soul, body, will: subject to sin, and no power of choice, as the text shows! What misery!

God wanted to liberate these people by the Gospel to the glorious liberty of the children of God. See vv. 16-23. Though free Paul is bound, the Word of God is not bound, 2 Tim. 2: 9. But Heb. 4: 2 applies to these hearers. They rejected God's grace.

The emancipation of man from the tyranny of sin is God's will, the purpose of Christ's redemptive work, the aim of the Holy Spirit, the joy of the angels, the prayer of the true Christian, the objective of his missionary life, the cheerful task of our congregation and Synod, the defeat of Satan's cause. Man's obstinacy, related in the text, must not discourage us; his tyranny, cruelty, and persecuting tendencies must not confuse us. Pray for the poor, bound, condemned man of the world. Remember Matt. 5: 16, 44. Paul is doing all of that. So must we. And God's blessing is upon us, Matt. 5: 10-12.

Today, at home, for your comfort and joy in the course of the Gospel, read the sequel, the last two chapters of the Acts of the Apostles.

G. H. SMUKAL

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## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

2 PET. 3: 17-18

Where there is life, there is motion and growth. This truth can easily be illustrated by a seed, a plant, animals, and people. Where there is absolutely no motion, no growth, no development, there is no life, but only stagnation and death.

What is true in the realm of the physical, is also true in the realm of the spiritual. Spiritual life comes from God through His Word and Sacrament. (Eph. 2: 1, 4-5; John 3: 5.) Christians, also Christian children, are twice-born people. They have a double life, therefore, to maintain and to develop. Christian children, so definitely in the period of physical and mental growth, should also in a special sense be in the period of spiritual growth.

Most parents, even those very weak in faith, still know the need and value of Baptism. Through Baptism spiritual life is engendered, but only too often this spiritual life is not fostered, not cultivated. Many parents do not see the real need of spiritual growth and therefore do not send their children to a Lutheran school or Sunday school. Only a fraction of our children, only about 28%, are now enjoying the advantage of day school training.

#### THE NEED OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND TRAINING

##### *I. Why is there such a need for spiritual growth?*

##### *II. How can this need best be met?*

A. There is real need for spiritual growth because Christian growth is definitely demanded by God (text v. 18). Even a child can understand the appeal of this text. Christian parents should have no difficulty at all to see that it is the will of God that there be spiritual growth. God takes this matter very seriously. Many Scriptural passages plead for Christian growth and development. (2 Pet. 1: 5; 2 Cor. 9: 10; Eph. 4: 15; 1 Thess. 3: 12.)

Many parents do not seem to understand the insistence on Christian growth. They realize the need of growth in general knowledge, knowledge of reading and writing and arithmetic, but many of them are not eager to have their children grow spiritually in the knowledge that has its source in Christ. They do not seem to understand that it takes effort on the part of their children to know Christ more clearly and more fully. This is the knowledge of Christ the Apostle Paul sought after and desired to attain (Phil. 3: 10).

B. There is also need of growth in grace (text v. 18 a). Peter had, in the beginning of the Second Epistle (2 Pet. 1: 5-8), exhorted to add one grace to another. He advises us to grow in all grace, in all Christian virtue. We are to become more

loving, more patient, more considerate, more modest. This is particularly true of Christian children. If Christian children do not receive sound, sustained Christian training, they are very apt to look upon these Christian virtues as something old, something foolish, something which they as modern children need not strive after. What an appeal, then, the appeal of God for Christian growth, for growth in Christian grace and the many Christian virtues!

C. Christian growth is necessary not only because God demands it, but also because it is the evidence of real spirituality. Small children often have a very limited understanding of God, of Christ, and of the fundamentals of Christian knowledge. They often think of God merely as the Ancient of Days, an old man with a flowing beard. They think of Jesus as a little babe, they even think of the Holy Spirit as a dove. How necessary that there be development and growth in the concepts of religion, in the concepts of Christian living! How sad when people do not grow up spiritually and always remain spiritual babes in arms, who never grow up in Christ!

D. Our children also need spiritual growth to accomplish their task in life, to prepare themselves for the job of worldwide missions. Our Lutheran Church has a glorious opportunity in the second century. To cope with the challenge of the times, our children dare not remain spiritually weak and spiritually dwarfed, but they must be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might (Eph. 6:10).

E. Our children, and also we, their parents, need spiritual growth to ward off spiritual danger and temptation (text v. 17). As long as children are very young, living under the sheltering roof of the parental home, the parents are able to ward off many dangers and temptations, but as the children grow up, as they go to school, they are frequently brought face to face with real temptation and sin. There is danger that the little plant of faith may be crushed and that they may spiritually die. It is another reason, therefore, why spiritual growth is so necessary. How may we best meet this need of spiritual growth?

## II

A. We meet this need for spiritual growth by increasing the influence of Christian home training. Throughout the Bible, in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, God

insists on home training. (Deut. 6: 6-9; Prov. 22: 6, Ps. 78: 4-7.) If there is to be real spiritual growth, the home and home training cannot be overlooked. Parents who shirk this responsibility shirk one of the greatest parental obligations they have. The influences of the home have definitely been weakened during our generation. Parents neglect their obligation of training and expect the Church and the school to make up the deficiency. This mistaken idea does not minimize the importance of home training, but it emphasizes the need of Christian schools more than ever.

B. The Christian seeks to satisfy the need of Christian growth by providing Sunday schools and Saturday schools, summer schools and daily vacation Bible schools. All of these have their place. All of these aid the spiritual development and growth of our children. All of them can and should be fostered in our circles. Emphasize the daily vacation Bible school.

C. The best means, however, to meet the need of Christian growth is by means of our Christian day school. In our Synod the Christian day school has now been utilized as a builder of Christian knowledge and Christian grace for more than a century. It has stood the test of time. It has added much to the strength of our Church. It has helped many a child to grow up spiritually. In the Christian day school, Christian teachers day after day have an opportunity to influence the children through the teaching of the Word of God. They also have a wonderful opportunity by Christian example, by Christian discipline, to influence the child to lead a better Christian life. What a pity, then, to think that only in a small portion of the congregations of Synod this best means of promoting Christian growth is utilized! The day school is not fostered and nurtured, but is rather looked down upon and despised as something old, as something that does not fit into our modern day.

May the Lord grant that we may be keenly aware of the needs of our children for spiritual growth and development, and realize that this need of spiritual growth can best be satisfied by sound daily training in the home, in the Christian day school.

E. L. ROSCHKE

