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Homiletics: Sermon Studies for the New Church Year

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Homiletics

A Series of Sermon Studies for the New Church Year

NEW YEAR'S DAY

Rom. 8:28-32

The Text and the Day. — Only the Christian can enter the portals of the new year with a cheering ray of real hope. The gift of Christ is the only ground for any legitimate trust in God. If Christ had not been given, there would be no foundation for hope in God. The text gives reassurance, it gives confidence of our blessed condition and assured hope in Christ. We need hope especially at the beginning of the new year. The text assures us that we can have all things with Christ.

Notes on Meaning. — V. 28. The distinguishing character of the saints: they love God. Our love of God makes every act of Providence sweet and profitable to us. Everything works for our "good" — namely, that we abide in the faith and are eternally saved. All our crosses and losses, our suffering and pain, will work out that way. This is the Christian's confidence. God will never destroy that confidence or let us down. The Christians "know" this to be a fact from God's Word, from divinely worked conviction, from personal experience. This solves the mystery of suffering.

V. 29. No matter what may happen to the child of God during the new year, that predetermined will of God that the Christian should be conformed to the image of Christ cannot be altered. In appearance and acts we should be like His Son. Christ is the only-begotten Son. We are sons by adoption, but we are partaking of the same bliss in richest measure with Christ. V. 30. This certainty of our salvation is based upon an unchangeable foundation — God has predestinated us unto the adoption of children. The eternal election of God is our guarantee that nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. We have been chosen through Jesus Christ and not because of any virtue in us. Christ's work is sufficient. Vv. 31-32. If God chose us from eternity to be

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conformed to the image of His Son . . . if God elected us to be His beloved children . . . if God's eternal purpose is our salvation . . . and it is . . . then God certainly will take care of us in spite of what may happen to us in the new year. . . . Herein lies a great challenge. V.31. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "The Lord is on my side." Ps. 118:6. All the resources of God are for those who are for Him. With God we are stronger than the entire world. V.32. Who can hinder God from giving us all things when He spared not His own Son? "Ye are Christ's, and all things are yours."

Preaching Emphases.—No chapter so beautiful. Its burden is the privilege of the believers. "All things with Christ." Christians enter the new year with the blessed certainty of their salvation. This certainty rests on God's eternal election. This certainty challenges us to carry on under all conditions. This certainty gives us power to face up to life in the new year. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Preaching Pitfalls.—The preacher should first direct men to repentance, to knowledge of sins, to faith in Christ, to obedience to God, before he speaks of the mystery of the eternal election of God. The doctrine of election can be a comfort to the believer when we consider it with all the facts and consolatory promises of the Gospel. Let the preacher not try to reason out that which God has not revealed. To bridge the gap between universal grace and election is humanly impossible. Rom. 11:33. Let the preacher never underestimate the unlimited scope of "all things." This is no blind exaggeration, but a divine fact.

Problem and Goal.—Uncertainty, doubt, trouble, and fear! Our world afflicted with the malady of evil. How can we say: "Happy New Year?" Human reason stands baffled before the sufferings of this life. Goal: "All things with Christ"—through His atoning love our blood-bought souls are safe for eternity. The God who gave the unspeakable Gift of His Son will surely meet the immeasurably smaller requirements of our lives. Therefore enter the New Year with confidence, courage, and hope. The Christian's faith rests on unshaken pillars.

Outline:

THE UNSHAKEN PILLARS OF OUR FAITH

- I. The all-sufficient promise of Almighty God. V. 28.**
 - A. To whom the promise is given. To loving ones. To called ones.**
 - B. The nature of this promise. Great, active, together, for good.**
 - C. The certainty of this promise. We know.**
- II. The eternal purpose of Almighty God. Vv. 29-30.**
 - A. He conformed us to the image of His Son.**
 - B. He called us according to His own purpose and grace.**
 - C. He predestinated us to eternal life.**
- III. The great challenge of Almighty God for all times.**
 - A. Who can be against us, if God be for us? V. 31.**
 - B. Who can hinder God from giving us all things freely? V. 32.**
 - C. Who can discourage us on the way? For in Christ every need is met.**

Conclusion. — God's goodness in Christ Jesus all our hopes shall raise also in this year. **EDWIN E. PIEFLOW**

SUNDAY AFTER NEW YEAR

JAMES 4:13-17

The Text and the Day. — Epistle and Gospel emphasize the fact that the events of history are in the hand of God to the end of the victory of His Son and His people. That is an insight which is important as the Christian looks into the inscrutable future of another year. The text sharpens the readiness of the Christian on this day to traverse that year, difficult and inscrutable as it is, in the name of God.

Notes on Meaning. — As often in this Epistle, the writer attaches himself most closely to the thinking of Jesus; cf. Luke 12. — St. James approaches his concept from two fronts. The bland assumption that life is in our hands and that we may make our plans as we please is folly, since life is unstable and our ignorance of the future complete; vv. 13-14. The one

way to live is to say: "If the Lord will," v. 15. The Apostle is thinking of much more, however, than the simple common-sense realization that God knows more about the future than we. He is concerned about the moral and spiritual implication of the mind which leaves God out of calculations; that is the mind that boasts in its own competence, and that boasting is evil, v. 16. The evil is not one of foolishness merely; but it involves sin, the attitude that gets along without God. Furthermore, the cultivation of the sensible and godly attitude of calculating life and making plans with God is difficult and essential. It is not a take-it-or-leave-it matter; omitting it is not simply silly, or bad taste; it is sin. — The preacher will want to incorporate in this as in other texts from James the emphases of the Wisdom literature. On the surface the statements appear to deal simply in common sense; actually they involve the grip on God which is the highest wisdom, the indwelling of God, which is the One Thing Needful. Cf. James 1: 17-18; 4: 4-8.

Preaching Pitfalls. — The preacher will be tempted to embroider his tale with the easily devised illustrations and applications from daily life and to neglect the more difficult but essential penetration into the concept "If the Lord will." God's will is more than the grinding of the wheels of fate. It is the plan which He has for us, the plan which in Christ utilizes our every moment and contact with others for the goals of His kingdom in ourselves and in other people; the plan which operates because of the redemption of Christ and through the work of the Spirit.

Problem and Goal. — The problem is capsuled not only in vv. 13 and 14, but in v. 16: rejoice in your boasting. The text is an indictment of pride, the readiness of man to regard himself as self-sufficient and to make his plans without God. The illustration which the text employs is homely and common, and thus the indictment is the more incisive. The pride against which the text warns is everyday, average, common; and the danger persists even in the Christian man that he may recognize the folly of pride and yet succumb to it, and thus succumb to sin. — Hence the goal of the sermon is to develop in the hearer the actual will to live life for, in, through God; to take God into the planning for life, to make Him the motive power for life.

Outline:

**LET EVERY PLAN OF LIFE BE BASED ON THE WILL
OF GOD**

- I. The difficulty of doing this.**
 - A. We seem to live through our own will, make our own plans, think through our own problems.**
 - B. The world about us, the godless world, lives according to its own desires and judgments.**
- II. The folly of not doing it.**
 - A. We do not know the future, the plans of God for us.**
 - B. When we desire and plan without God uppermost, we are actually cutting ourselves off from God; we sin; and thus we die.**
- III. The means for achieving it.**
 - A. God Himself must give us the wisdom to make His will ours. He has redeemed us from godlessness through Christ; He gives us the power of His Spirit to make His will ours.**
 - B. It remains for us to make Christ and the Spirit ours through the Gospel and to recognize every step of the journey before us as one lived for God's purposes and livable through His gracious will.**

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

Col. 1:21-29

The Text and the Day.—The accent of the Propers is upon the fact that Christ is revealed as Savior also to and for the Gentiles. This text stresses the idea by pointing out that the redemption applies also to the Gentiles, that its mystery is revealed also to them, that the Gospel is the device by which also they share in its glory.

Notes on Meaning.—The description of the redemption and of justification applies both to Jew and Gentile, vv. 21-23; yet Paul is thinking particularly of the Gentiles, vv. 23 and 27. —Christ's work completed a reconciliation between men and God, a change in their relation, v. 21; cf. 2 Cor. 5:19. But this reconciliation, accomplished through the work on the Cross,

is to the end that they might be holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in the sight of God; that is achieved through faith in the Gospel of this Christ, v. 23. — The faith of the Gentiles is achieved through the Gospel ministry of St. Paul. His sufferings to that end are, in essence, the suffering of Christ for he is one with Christ and His body, the Church, and Christ Himself now enables the Apostle's ministry and prays for its success: v. 24; cf. Rom. 8:17; 1 Pet. 2:20; 3:14; 4:16; 5:10; Matt. 5:11. — The mystery reminds of the Greek mysteries, which were not irrevocably hidden, but which were revealed to the initiate; so the Apostle made the supreme mystery clear to the Gentiles. That mystery is not mere information, but is literally "Christ in you, the hope of glory," vv. 25-27. — The goal of the Gospel for the Gentiles is their perfection in Christ Jesus; the power for it, not merely the labor of St. Paul, but the working of Christ in and through him, v. 29.

Preaching Pitfalls. — This text is adequate for a number of sermons. The preacher will do well to clarify his purpose — at this time, the Epiphany — and concentrate on the great fact of the Atonement and the Gospel reaching out to those who were outside the Old Testament covenant. — This is one of the great texts on the "objective justification," or better, reconciliation. The preacher will do well not to by-pass the doctrine as abstract and unworkable, but exploit it, for it is central to the concept of the Gospel's being also for the Gentiles.

Preaching Emphases. — Epiphany emphases pervade the entire preceding section of Colossians, e. g., vv. 4, 6, 12-13, 20, namely, the accent on the world-wide bearing of the Atonement and the Gospel. — The personal nature of the text makes it possible to stress a number of ingredients in the plan of God for the salvation of the Gentiles: the Atonement, the Gospel as a means of grace, and the sacrifice and effort of the Christian messengers.

Problem and Goal. — For the Colossians the problem was that they, as Gentiles, might not be wholly alert to their position in the Church which was organized by Jews. For a modern Gentile Christian audience, the problem is rather that it may not be aware of the plan of God rooted in eternity, consummated on the Cross, and carried out through many generations of Gospel witness, by which it, too, has become

believing. — The goal of this text is a deeper faith in the universal grace of God and a deeper gratitude for a place in the Church of Christ. Particular mission emphases do not seem appropriate at this time, i. e., exhortations to undertake mission work. They may well be postponed to subsequent Epiphany services.

Outline:

**GOD'S MIGHTY PLAN OF SALVATION
FOR THE GENTILES**

- I. Undertaken through the redemption of Christ.**
 - A. A thorough redemption, on the Cross.**
 - B. A universal redemption, reconciling the world.**
- II. Applied through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.**
 - A. A Gospel powerful to work faith in the redemption.**
 - B. A Gospel witnessed through the Apostles and through Christians, at the expense of suffering and persecution.**
 - C. A Gospel setting up the life of Christ in the new believer.**
- III. Hence the object of the gratitude of the Gentile believer.**

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Eph. 6:1-4

The Text and the Day. — This text fits very well into the emphasis of the First Sunday after Epiphany. The Epistle for this Sunday brings the appeal of Paul for a life of Christian stewardship of body and mind to the glory of God. The Gospel brings the story of the Child in the Temple, revealing the 12-year-old Jesus as the One who must be about His Father's business, but stressing also the proper relationship between parents and children. In the Gospel the parents show deep concern for the physical and spiritual welfare of the Child Jesus, and the Child Jesus shows definite respect, honor, and obedience to His parents. (Luke 2: 51-52.)

Exegetical Comment. — Our text begins with the appeal of the Apostle to children. The Apostle expects to find children in a home and in the church, where the Epistle is to be

read. He knows nothing of race suicide, of deliberate limitation of the family, of excusing children from church attendance. His emphasis is on obedience, obedience of the children to their parents. It is the natural law that children obey their parents, but this law the Gospel sanctified, and therefore Paul adds the phrase "obey your parents in the Lord." The obedience of the Christian child is to be the fruit of the child's relationship to God. "For this is right" means that the Lord has pronounced this verdict upon the conduct of the obedient Christian child. "For this is well pleasing to the Lord" (Col. 3:20). Paul does not enter here upon the pitiful case of parents who would demand obedience of children in things that are unrighteous and sinful. In vv. 2 and 3 of our text the Fourth Commandment is quoted. Children are to honor their parents. Honor includes more than love. It includes respect, esteem, and reverence. It is well to note that father and mother are placed on the same level in relationship to their children. In life this frequently is not done. The Fourth Commandment is the first commandment with promise. This does not mean "first" in the sense that there is no promise attached to the First Commandment, cf. Ex. 20:3-6; Deut. 5:16; not "first" in the sense as though there are other commandments following it also having promise; but "first" in the sense of foremost. The promise of the text is well-being of obedient children in this life. Questions may trouble us when we see Christian children who are cripples or Christian children who die early, but this is a problem of all afflictions in the Christian life. Cf. Ps. 73:3 and 12; also Luke 13:2-5, and John 9:1-3 on questions of guilt. V. 4: "Ye fathers" includes also the mother as indicated in v. 2. "Provoke not" means that parents are not to treat their children in a harsh, cruel, inhuman manner. This was frequently the case among heathen parents. Today the prevailing sin is Eli's softness and careless indifference. "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" can be translated: "but nurture them in discipline and admonition of the Lord." The process of training and rearing Christian children is a continuous process. "Discipline" equals measures according to the regulations of the home, the transgression of which brings chastisement, yes, spanking when necessary. Coupled with "discipline," holding children to proper conduct, is admonition, training by word, word of encouragement, but also word of remonstrance and reproof. In the early years

both are necessary. As children grow older, admonition alone will remain.

Preaching Pitfalls. — Do not lose yourself in minute description of the contrast between ancient homes and modern homes. Do not lose yourself in a long discussion of juvenile delinquency, or progressive education, or the psychological approach to child training. It is well to know about these things, well to mention all of them as dangers of modern child training, but it is best not to expand them too fully. Our text has much of the directive of the Law, and there is danger of using the Law only in the sermon. The phrases "in the Lord," "admonition of the Lord," however, give us opportunity to bring in also the Gospel message.

Preaching Emphases. — Paul in the Epistle to the Ephesians stresses the "una sancta." In the Church we find children and parents, find them in the most intimate relationship of the ties of blood, but also with reference to spiritual ties and obligations. To bring the message of the text, mutual obligations are to be stressed: obligations of children to parents and obligations of parents to children. The application of the text to modern, everyday living with its great problems of child training, with its many broken and disrupted homes, is very readily made.

Hearers' Need. — In this day and age of the breakdown of the modern home, of much juvenile delinquency, of Federal and State prisons overcrowded with youthful criminals, the message of our text is definitely needed. Disrespect for authority usually begins at home, is carried into the school, is carried into life, and causes people to take the path of crime, which leads to prison. In this day and age of many neglected children and bewildered parents, modern parents who have read a few books on child training, or a few articles in a magazine, it is definitely needful to stress the sound divine guidance for parents and children as indicated in the text and in other passages of the Bible.

Outline:

GOD'S BLUEPRINT FOR A HAPPY MODERN HOME

I. How Christian children fit into God's plan for a happy home.

A. God brings children into the home. Gen. 1:28 a; Ps. 127:3-4.

- B. God expects of children obedience, honor, reverence, and respect for parents. Fourth Commandment, Text, v. 2.
 - C. Into a home where children follow God's direction, God brings blessings, temporal and eternal, material and spiritual, Text, v. 3.
- II. How Christian parents find their place in a happy Christian home.
- A. Appeal to parents. Text, v. 4. Both father and mother are meant by God, but especially the father.
 - B. Wrong principles of child-training. Eli (1 Sam. 3:13), modern parents.
 - C. Proper principles of child-training. Text, v. 4. Continuous training, discipline, admonition, Gospel appeal.

E. L. ROSCHKE

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Rom. 1:16-25

The Text and the Day. — The Propers, being of seasonal content, serve well as an introduction.

Notes on Meaning. — V. 16; Acts 10:34. Jewish guilt and pharisaical worship in spite of Moses and the Prophets is as damnable as pagan guilt and idolatrous worship. All are in need of the Gospel. Acts 13:46. It was only by divine grace and promise that the Jews should be approached first. — V. 17: "From faith to faith" does not indicate a progressive revelation or faith. "From faith": The righteousness of God is bestowed by way of faith only; "to faith": The righteousness of God is fashioned to be receivable by faith only. The phrase describes the righteousness of which God is the Author. — Vv. 18-25: *asebeia* and *adikia* denote the depth of depravity which consists in deliberate, inexcusable (v. 20) opposition to the truth. The created universe "shows" the existence of God, His wisdom, power, and goodness, Acts 17:22-31; but it does not "reveal" God as Father and Savior. This section is Law. Note the many contrasts and opposites in the text: salvation — wrath; faith — godlessness; righteousness — unrighteousness; truth — lie; the almighty Creator and just Judge — the impotent creature and guilty sinner; blessings

— ingratitude; unashamed (v. 32) sinners — unashamed Christians (v. 16).

Preaching Pitfalls. — Vv. 18-25 is too serious a section to be used as an outline for undue moralizing thunder; rather glorify the justice of God, Dan. 9:7a; Ps. 5:4.

Preaching Emphases. — There is a God. Man provokes Him to wrath. Yet God saves man. God must be just. He cannot deny Himself. Ps. 50:21. We cannot worship Him as perfect if He would not execute His threats even upon us. Hence we cannot quarrel with Him when His justice strikes us. We fear and tremble, work under the Law, rebel, defy, despair, and neither Jew nor Gentile can help us. God reveals to us salvation in Jesus Christ by the Gospel. The natural knowledge of God as Creator and Judge cannot save us from death; but the Gospel offers life by faith in Jesus. The righteousness of which God is the Author is bestowed by way of faith and is receivable by faith, with the result that the just shall live by faith. In His overwhelming wisdom and grace God fashioned the Gospel and the saving faith to interlock. He glorifies man that man may glorify Him. God shows His attributes to the Gentiles and the Jews; but they do not worship Him. Therefore the believers must preach the Gospel to them that sit in darkness, Jesus being the Savior of all.

Problem and Goal. — We cannot exhaust the text in the space of 25 minutes. But there is time in earnest and sincere pity to expose the ravages of sin on man's soul, spirit, mind, attitudes, philosophies, accomplishments, faculties, heart, body, life, death, and to proclaim God's righteous wrath and just judgment; then to tenderly heal the broken hearts, and in exultant joy and passionate love preach Jesus, His powerful Gospel of salvation, hope, life here and yonder; then to encourage to bold confession and missionary service. Hymn 346.

Outline:

**THOU HAST DESTROYED THYSELF; BUT IN ME
IS THINE HELP**

I. His total depravity dooms man to self-destruction.

A. In its nature man's depravity is a masterpiece of Satan and appears as ungodliness and unrighteousness, v. 18; in its action it never fumbles, James 1: 14-15; in its power it is penetrating and relentless;

in its extent it is universal, active in Jew and Gentile; multiplex in its form, vv. 18, 21, 23-25; treacherous, v. 22, and hell-bound in its course; thorough in its destructiveness, vv. 21, 24-25; defying God, vv. 18 b, 21 a; inexcusable, vv. 19-20; damnable in its guilt and, in every form, mortal, vv. 18, 24.

B. Not the atomic bomb, but his own depravity is also today the awful power by which man destroys himself and in which he invokes God's wrath and justice upon himself. — Are you still in the grip of this depravity? What form of it is holding you captive? Are you doomed to eternal death?

II. God offers and extends His help by the Gospel.

A. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is in its nature a masterpiece of God's wisdom and grace, 1 Pet. 1:10-12; in its action it never fumbles; in its power it saves; in its form and content it is simplex, Gal. 1:8; heaven-bound in its course; amazing and overwhelming in its healing, comfort, peace, life; in its value priceless, yet free to all sinners, Jew and Gentile.

B. Acts 16:31.

C. Ps. 50:9-10; Acts 4:20.

G. H. SMUKAL

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

EPH. 5:11-14

The Text and the Day. — Christ as the Light of the world is the central theme for the Epiphany season. The declaration in v. 14, "Christ shall give thee light," makes this a practical Epiphany text.

Notes on Meaning. — V. 11: "works of darkness," mentioned in vv. 3-6, Rom. 1:24-32; 13:12-13; Gal. 5:19-21. They spring out of moral darkness, are done under cover of physical darkness, and lead to eternal darkness. — "Unfruitful": that is for any good purpose; produce nothing that is pleasing to God and helpful to man. Contrast: Cp. v. 9 (best texts read "fruit of the light"); Gal. 5:22; Mark 3:8; Phil. 1:11. Works of

darkness bear terrible fruit, Rom. 6: 20-23. — "No fellowship": have no part in such works nor associate with those who do them; for association leads to participation; cp. v. 7. — "Rather"; the Greek is more intensive=rather even; RSV has "instead." A merely negative attitude is not enough. A Christian must take a militant attitude toward social evils. "Bad company ruins good morals," 1 Cor. 15: 33 (RSV). — "Reprove them": Christians must fearlessly bear testimony against evils that bring the wrath of God upon individuals, families, communities, and nations. History bears ample testimony to the corroding influence of social vice. Though the life of a righteous man is a standing rebuke to a life of sin and shame, oral rebuke is also called for. — V. 12 is no argument against oral rebuke, but rather a condemnation of the levity with which the heathen spoke of the licentiousness practiced in the groves of Ephesus and elsewhere. Christianity brought a new sense of virtue, decency, and delicacy into the world. — V. 13. A general principle is here introduced to support the foregoing admonition; cp. John 3: 19-21. It is the very nature of light to banish darkness. Christians are to let the light of God's Word expose the nature of these works of darkness. — V. 14. Not an exact quotation of any O. T. passage, but rather a free rendering and application of the thought contained in Is. 60: 1 and similar passages. — Many members of the church at Ephesus had been "darkness" and now were a "light in the Lord"; cp. v. 8 and John 8: 12.

Preaching Pitfalls. — The exegetical difficulties of this passage should not be brought into the pulpit. — In referring to the works of darkness of our day the preacher must maintain the delicacy of speech called for by a mixed congregation, and yet be specific enough that the sins of the flesh will be recognized in their true nature and fearful results. — When the last words, "Christ shall give thee light," are not used as a theme, care must be taken that the light of Christ and His Gospel are not overlooked but rather set forth as the only real antidote to the works of darkness.

Preaching Emphases. — Assuming that on previous Epiphany days Christ has been proclaimed as the true Light (John 1: 9), emphasis in the use of this text should be on the lure, the contaminating influence, and the soul-destroying power of the works of darkness of our own time (the general

night life) and the duty of Christians to avoid and reprove them.

Problem and Goal.—While Satan paints the works of the flesh in attractive colors, the preacher must with becoming delicacy, yet with sternness and fervor, reveal the real character of these works of darkness by turning on the light of God's Word. Christ must be exalted as the Savior, who delivers us from the power and the love of sin as well as from its curse.

Outline:

THE UNFRUITFUL WORKS OF DARKNESS

- I. They must be recognized in their true character, as
 - A. Darkness; done in secret.
 - B. Unfruitful; not helpful but harmful.
 - C. Shameful; too indecent to be spoken about (except for corrective purposes, II B).
- II. They must be avoided and reprov'd by Christians.
 - A. We are admonished to avoid these deeds and the fellowship of those who live in them.
 - B. We are to reprove and rebuke them by word and the example of our life. 1 Pet. 4:1-4.
 - C. Christ through the light of His Gospel will enable us to recognize the sinful nature of these works of the flesh and enable us to escape their seductive and damning power.

Appeal.—1 Pet. 2:11. Eph. 5:1-8. For those who repent and believe there is cleansing in the blood of Christ; otherwise no inheritance, but destruction of soul and body in hell.

MARTIN WALKER

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

1 Cor. 3:1-10

The Text and the Day.—The Epiphany season reflects the Christmas glory. The Gospel manifests the glory of Christ in the stilling of the tempest. Is this glory reflected in our sanctification? The Epistle, Rom. 13:8-10, insists that "love is the fulfilling of the Law." The Collect makes reference to the "frailty of our nature." So does our text.

Notes on Meaning. — Note the contrast between πνευματικοῖς and σαρκίνοις, vv. 1, 3-4, between those who are sanctified and led by the Spirit and those who live according to the flesh. Christians are harassed by the old Adam. — “Ye walk as men,” v. 3, as unregenerated men, not Christlike, not “secundum Deum, humano more.” — V. 6, Ἐγὼ ἐφύτευσα (aor.), Ἀπολλῶς ἐπότισεν (aor. punctiliar action), ἀλλὰ ὁ θεὸς ἡύξανεν (impf. continuous action). “In juxtaposition the aorist lifts the curtain, and the imperfect continues the play.” Robertson, *Grammar*, p. 838. Eph. 2:8; Ps. 127:1.

Preaching Pitfalls. — V. 9a does not teach synergism. Ministers are not co-authors of faith, but God’s instruments. — Weak Christians torn by a party spirit should not be treated as being extra ecclesiam. They might be babes, but they are still “in Christ,” v. 1. Rom. 14:1; 15:1. — At Corinth, Paul, Apollos, Cephas, were orthodox preachers. Of such it can be said ἐν εἶσιν, v. 8. They have the one and the same objective: salvation by grace through faith in Christ.

Preaching Emphases. — V. 4. “True religion makes men peaceable, and not contentious.” Matthew Henry.

Problem and Goal. — The aim of the preacher must be to get his hearers out of the “carnal” and into the “spiritual” class of Christians. Babes in Christ should be nurtured to full manhood. Spiritual strength augurs well for peace and harmony in the Church.

Outline:

ST. PAUL’S PLEA FOR THE PEACE OF THE CHURCH

I. The status of peace in the church at Corinth.

- A. St. Paul addresses this church with all its frailties as “the church of God which is at Corinth,” 1 Cor. 1:2. They came behind in no gift. Ch. 1:2-9.
- B. Yet there were divisions in that church. Text, vv. 3-4; 1 Cor. 1:11-12. The need for St. Paul’s plea. — Christendom at large today. — Disunity within the Lutheran Church. — The spirit of partyism at times is rife among the members of a congregation.

II. What disrupts the peace of the Church?

- A. Certainly God is not the author of confusion. The

enemy sows the tares, beguiles the believers, goads the flesh.

- B. The Corinthians were swayed by a carnal mind, by the old Adam, the flesh, vv. 1, 3-4; Rom. 8:7; Col. 2:18. Here is the foul source of envy, strife, divisions, sectarianism in the Church.**

III. How is the peace of the Church to be cultivated?

- A. God alone is the Author of faith and of peace. Vv. 5-7, 9.**

- B. God employs the means of grace and "ministers" as instruments of His grace. Vv. 5, 9.**

- C. These "ministers" are "laborers together with God" as they employ what the Lord entrusted to them, His inspired Word. Vv. 5, 10. — Bottle-fed babes must crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, such as "envying, and strife, and divisions," v. 3, and must grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Savior and of His Word, vv. 1-2; Eph. 4:1 ff.; Phil. 2:1 ff.**

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