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## Homiletics: Outlines on Synodical Conference Epistles

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## HOMILETICS

### Outlines on Synodical Conference Epistles

#### THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

#### JAMES 1:2-12

Here is a wonderful thing—a way to take the trouble out of troubles! Eliphaz told Job, "Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7). Sparks still fly upward, and though our days be distant from Job's, we, too, are born unto trouble. This is for us!

"Life would be wonderful if it weren't for troubles," we say. Here St. James says: "When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends!" (Phillips, *Letters to Young Churches.*)

We must be different people to welcome troubles as friends. That's the beginning of the secret of

#### UNTROUBLING TROUBLE

##### *I. Jesus Christ Must Be Our Highest Good*

###### A. What this means

Like St. James, our brother, we must be "God's and the Lord Jesus Christ's slaves" (v. 1). You must serve only those two masters, who with the Holy Ghost are our one God. He has redeemed you.

Now see

###### B. How this solves our trouble problems

Our style becomes Christ's style, our goal becomes the things of Christ, and the things that would "cramp our human style" no longer affect us. "Bad" things work for our good; things we don't get "will be added unto us" as we "seek the Kingdom." Like rainy weather—if you intended to go picnicking, it's trouble. If you want your grass seed to grow, it's a blessing.

Our thorns in the flesh become spurs for the soul, working out His perfect strength in our weakness. It is good to see a boy working out to build himself up into a man. It must make our Lord happy to see us sweating out our troubles with joy because we want to quit ourselves like men.

Let troubles come — in Christ we untrouble them, for each one will make us more perfect and entire, until, wanting nothing, our strength is made perfect and we are indeed men of God!

Do you feel that you lack something of what it takes?

### *II. God Must Give the Needed Wisdom*

He will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask. It's His idea — He will not let us down.

This wisdom will be easy to take, too, from the Good Giver. We have taken the gift of Christmas, the offering of Good Friday, the victory of Easter, the power of Pentecost. "He gives generously to all men without making them feel foolish or guilty" (Phillips).

He gave us Christ — He will certainly give the needed strength to live the Christ life.

But make up your mind.

### *III. We Must Be Consistent in the Application of This Wisdom*

Don't be double-minded — saying you want to grow into a man of God while really you complain about your trials and want to be babied.

Be stable-minded — like the mind of Christ, who consented to be born in a stable and became obedient unto the death of the Cross that He might work the will of God for us. Rejoice, if you are poor, in your riches in Christ. Rejoice, if you are rich, in your humbling by God that precedes your exaltation.

But be consistent! If you want to quit yourself like a man, and you believe that God is the One who can make a man out of you, go to where He can be found — Word, Sacrament!

Kierkegaard tells the parable of a flock of geese that every seventh day came together in their pen to listen to an eloquent leader remind them of the goodness of God, who gave them wings



with which to fly. They thought it was wonderful. They really enjoyed the sermon. But "one thing they did not do. They did not fly; for the corn was good and the barnyard secure."

God wants to make of you a high-flying citizen of heaven! Will you be satisfied to complain about being born to trouble, or will you, like the sparks, fly upward? By the love of Christ in your life, by the wisdom of the Spirit in your living, by the consistent carrying out of your Christianity, untrouble trouble, and quit yourselves like men!

Silver Spring, Md.

GEORGE W. HOYER

#### FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ROM. 7:14-27

Text addressed to me as a Christian, as a forgiven sinner. In Christ I am sure of the forgiveness of all my sins (1 John 1:7). And yet I find myself yielding to sin daily. This sin in my life I want to overcome. But something within me keeps battling against that desire.

#### HOW CAN I WIN THE BATTLE THAT GOES ON WITHIN ME?

##### *I. By Recognizing Its Nature*

A. It is a *spiritual* battle between the two natures in me.

1. There are two natures in me, my regenerate nature and the old nature, my sinful flesh. At one time I had only the latter and could serve only sin (Rom. 6:20). Then I was dead in sin (Eph. 2:1). I could not believe in Christ (1 Cor. 2:14), nor did I want to (Rom. 8:7). I have become a child of God by His grace through Christ (Rom. 3:24). Now I have a new nature (2 Cor. 5:17). Yet I did not lose the old nature. I still have my flesh, and in that flesh dwells no good thing (v. 18).

2. These two natures are opposed to each other (Gal. 5:17). My spiritual nature recognizes the divine origin of the Law and its demands (v. 14), consents to the Law that it is good (v. 16), and delights in the Law of God (v. 22). According to the inner man I want to do the will of God (v. 18b) and avoid the things that displease Him. But my flesh works against these desires and efforts of my spirit. I fail to do the good that I want and commit

sins which I hate (vv. 15, 19). Good resolutions melt like ice in the sun, and sin pops up like a cork from under water. (Compare the experience of Peter, Matt. 26:30-35, 40-41, 69-75.) That is another nature working against my spirit, the sin power in me (v. 17, 20).

3. Since these two opposing natures are within the same body, and both of them are active, there must be a conflict.

B. It is a *real* battle.

1. Christ has conquered sin for me, and set me free (Rom. 6:17-23). My spirit is now king (Phil. 4:13). But the dispossessed usurper, the carnal nature in me, continues to war against me, seeking to establish himself again as ruler of my heart, endeavoring to make me again a slave of sin (v. 23). It is a fierce battle, for my carnal nature is sold under sin (v. 14b), and in it dwells not one good thing (v. 18a). That is why it is so difficult for me to overcome my indifference, control my temper, carry out good resolutions, etc.

2. This is not just an occasional lapse or exception to the rule. This is my daily experience. It is such a regular thing that it has the force of "a law" (v. 21). The Apostle would say: "This is the rule, that whenever I would do good, evil is always present with me."

C. Recognizing the nature of the battle will help me to win.

To win in any battle, we must know the foe, his method of attack, his field of operation, etc. So here.

## *II. By Trusting in Christ*

A. I cannot win in my own strength.

"With might of ours can naught be done," etc. When Paul cries out, "O wretched man," etc. (v. 24), he is not sinking into the slough of despair. He is expressing the utter futility of trusting in our own strength. The battle is fierce and long. The allies of my carnal nature are strong (Eph. 6:12).

B. With the help of Christ I can win (v. 25a).

In this battle I am not alone. Jesus Christ, my heaven-sent Savior, my Lord and the Lord of all who believe, is with me.



Paul is so sure of it that he breaks forth into a shout of victorious thanksgiving. Like Jacob, I will cling to Him, saying: "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." He will answer: "As a prince thou hast power with God and with man and hast prevailed" (Gen. 32:26 ff.). With His help I can prevail in this battle that goes on within me (Rom. 8:31b).

Conclusion: The battle will go on as long as we live (v. 25b). Note that the Apostle speaks in the present tense of continuing action. Let us not give up the fight and lapse into spiritual death. Let us not go to sleep on the battlefield, "for the foe, well we know, oft his harvest reapeth while the Christian sleepeth." Let us in His strength courageously battle against the old nature within us. When the right time comes, God will give us the victor's eternal crown (Rev. 7:13-17).

Kansas City, Mo.

WM. GRAUMANN

## FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

2 COR. 9:6-11

Paul uses the word "grace" some 100 times in his epistles. Usually he uses it in the sense of *favor Dei propter Christum*, the saving grace which covers all our sins. In fact, it is this unearned and undeserved grace of God in Christ Jesus which is the real source of all our gifts from God as Christians. However, Paul uses the same word "grace" a number of times to designate a fruit of this saving grace working in a Christian. He uses it in that sense in this text as he points to Christian giving as such a "grace." That puts this much-discussed phase of Christian living in its correct Biblical light. Giving which pleases God is actually a "grace" which He Himself bestows upon Christians.

It is a grace for which all Christians and all Christian congregations should seek and beg in honest prayer. So fitting for this Sunday.

(Here the standard Epistle, Gal. 5:25—6:10, and the standard Gospel, Matt. 6:24-34, might well be mentioned. Both of them emphasize by general statements what Paul applies in our text to a specific situation.)

## THE GRACE OF CHRISTIAN GIVING

### *I. The Measure of This Grace in Us Shows Itself in Our Total Attitude Toward Giving*

(Here the background of this text should be presented. An offering was being lifted for the poverty-stricken Christians in Jerusalem. The Corinthians had requested directions, and Paul had given them (1 Cor. 16:2). Paul had boasted of the early interest and plans of the Corinthians to the Macedonians (1 Cor. 9:2). Macedonians had, however, overwhelmed Paul with their liberality (2 Cor. 8:1 ff.). Now he surely wanted the Corinthians to be ready when he comes, especially if any Macedonians would come with him (vv. 3-5). But because of conditions in Corinth, Paul uses a very tactful approach and lays down general principles of Christian giving which still apply today.)

#### A. We reap as we sow in giving.

1. Sparing sowing means scant harvest. No wise farmer is that foolish (Prov. 11:24).
2. Sowing bountifully, according to blessings received, brings a bountiful harvest (v. 6).
3. God is eager to shower as many blessings as we are ready to receive.

#### B. God measures our grace of giving by the attitude revealed in it.

1. Deliberately, with thoughtful purpose; not haphazardly (v. 7).
2. Cheerfully (really hilariously), counting it a joyful privilege and never a legalistic duty or compulsion (Prov. 22:9).

Illustration: How foolish and altogether contrary to God's standards was the giving of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 6:1-2) and of Ananias and Sapphira! (Acts 5:1-2.) How different the spirit of the widow (Mark 12:44) and Mary! (Mark 14:3.) Present-day examples can be added very easily.

### *II. It Is God Alone Who Can Produce, Increase, and Bless This Grace in Us*

- #### A. God is the Source of all grace, especially also the grace in Christ Jesus. (Here in very hearty words, the preacher



should show the matchless grace and liberality of God in giving us His only-begotten Son (2 Cor. 8:9; Titus 3:7; Rom. 3:24; 5:15).

1. By this grace God adds various graces of Christian living to all those who trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior (v. 8).
  2. God is able and willing to grant to every Christian also the grace of Christian giving (v. 8).
- B. All through the ages God has granted this grace to believers and blessed it (v. 9).
1. Old Testament examples: Abraham, David (1 Chron. 29:9).
  2. Old Testament promises (Mal. 3:10; Ps. 112:9).
- C. Where this grace of Christian giving is produced and increased, many other blessings follow.
1. Bread for food. Today's Gospel (Matt. 6:33).
  2. Seed to sow. More money and goods to give away. Today's Epistle (Gal. 6:9-10).
  3. Fruits of righteousness (John 6:27; Rev. 14:13).
- D. God uses human needs and human instruments to let this grace prove itself (v. 11).

Conclusion: Hymn 441.

St. Joseph, Mich.

W. W. STUENKEL

## SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

### 1 JOHN 3:1-9

There are varying depths to the love of God. John 3:16 shows us one depth to this love of God, but Rom. 5:6-8, revealing that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," leads us into greater depths of that love. Ready to show us still greater depths of that love, St. John, in our text, invites us to

**"BEHOLD WHAT MANNER OF LOVE THE FATHER  
HATH BESTOWED UPON US"**

Speaking particularly of the love bestowed upon us Christians, John bids us note that



*I. Although It Does Not Yet Appear, We Are Already  
the Children of God and Shall Be Like Him*

The revised reading of v. 1 already brings us this astounding assurance. It not only calls attention to the manner of love, "that we should be called the sons [children] of God," but John adds by inspiration: "and we are!" This addition, found in old manuscripts not known to the translators of the King James Version, adds a punch that ought to stimulate our hearts. No longer need any Christian sing:

'Tis a point I long to know,  
Oft it causes anxious thought,  
Do I love my Lord or no?  
Am I His, or am I not?

John bids us say: "We are!"

Indeed, it doth not yet so appear (v. 2). We are still surrounded by the shadows of this dark world. Perhaps we ourselves are sick, afflicted, failing, dying; but "Beloved, *now* are we the children of God." NOW! We do not hope to become. We are *now*! God sees us now as we are going to be when He gets through with us (Eph. 5:27). "We shall be like Him" (Phil. 3:21). And it will all be real. "We shall see Him as He is." Do you sense the depth of this love? And do not hesitate to believe it, because you still see so much sin and wretchedness about you. Just listen as John leads you to still greater depths of that love and bids you note that,

*II. Although Sin Still Makes Us Stumble and Fall, God Through  
the Rebirth has Planted His Nature in Us So That We Cannot Sin  
(Cannot Will or Want to Sin)*

Had God, in Christ, done no more than pay for our sin and guilt, we would still have remained limp and impotent in our sinful natures (1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:7). So God's love went farther. In bringing us to faith, God planted a new life, a new incentive, a new nature in us, which takes up a battle with the old nature (Rom. 7:22-23). This new nature cannot sin. Each verse in our text from vv. 3-10 explains this purifying process that goes on in the reborn.

Behold, then, the manner of love bestowed upon you! As a Christian you, too, feel this new incentive, this new life within you, which does not want to sin. You, too, can then say with Paul (Rom. 7:20): "If I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." With the same force John assures us in v. 7: "He that doeth righteousness is righteous." This is the manner of the Father's love. He has planted a living evidence within us that we are His children (v. 10).

Answer, then, this manner of the Father's love, and sing Hymn 397:1:

O Love, who madest me to wear  
The image of Thy Godhead here; . . .  
O Love, I give myself to Thee,  
Thine ever, only Thine, to be.

(NOTE: If any would emphasize the powerful exhortations to sanctification in vv. 3-10, let him choose a different theme and approach and not spoil John's purpose in revealing the manner of God's love.)

Tacoma, Wash.

A. W. SCHELP