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Homiletics: Outlines on Hannover Epistles

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HOMILETICS

ST. JOHN THE APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST'S DAY DECEMBER 27

1 JOHN 1:1-10

Christmas is the festival of God's love. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son" (John 3:16). And John, who recorded the Christmas Gospel in a nutshell, is the Apostle of love. In his writings, especially in his Gospel and his three Epistles, he emphasizes the love of God for all mankind and in particular the love of the Savior for him. He repeatedly calls himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

The Christmas season should emphasize the same things for us. God loved the world. Jesus loves *me*. What is more, in His love God not only sent us a Savior from sin, death, and the power of the devil, but also brought us to saving faith in that Savior by His Holy Spirit, through whom we come to be united with God and with all our fellow saints in the highest fellowship of all:

THE FELLOWSHIP OF FAITH AND LOVE A FELLOWSHIP
WITH GOD AND WITH ALL OUR FELLOW SAINTS

I

*"Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son
Jesus Christ," 1 John 1:3*

The Holy Spirit is not excluded, but He is mentioned ch. 3:24. We are received into communion with the Triune God by Baptism (Catechism, Qu. 248).

"Fellowship": *koinonia*; union, communion. Thayer: "[This] fellowship, according to John's teaching, consists in the fact that Christians are partakers in common of the same mind as God and Christ and of the blessings arising therefrom."

Augustine and Calvin also draw in v. 7: "fellowship one with another," i. e., God with us and we with Him (*Exp. Greek Test.*). But for our present purposes we take v. 7 as referring rather to the communion of saints—the fellowship of our fellow saints with us and we with them. In the final analysis, of course, the

one idea implies the other. They are inseparable. Fellowship with our brethren in the faith is a consequence and evidence of fellowship with God through faith. (Cp. *ibid.*)

John sets forth the essence of the Christmas Gospel in the first part of the text (1 John 1:1-3 a, up to the words ". . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you").

John speaks, on the basis of personal experience, of his own living association with "the Word of life." We therefore can say, as in the Gospel for today, "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true" (John 21:24).

His voice, however, is not only the voice of experience, but also, and above all, the voice of faith—Christian, saving faith, through which John himself was in the most intimate fellowship with God. The Christmas Gospel had done its effective work in his heart. For besides offering fellowship with God, it creates the very faith itself by which the bond of this fellowship is actually established and calls forth the response of our love to God.

Sin, which separates man from God, is removed, forgiven (vv. 7b-10). Heaven's door is open, "for where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation."

He opens us again the door
Of Paradise today;

The angel guards the gate no more.

To God our thanks we pay. (*L.H.*, 105:8)

This is the highest blessing of fellowship with God: His heaven is ours! "These [things] are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through His name" (John 20:31). There is no greater joy for anyone than to have heaven itself as his very own. In the presence of God there is "fullness of joy," and at His right hand there are "pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11). Our Savior Himself said: "These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11). John is the only one of the Evangelists who recorded these words. And in the text he makes them his own when he says: "These things write we unto you that your joy may be full" (v. 4).

Fellowship with God! Full and free salvation! No greater blessing of God's love than this! And by His grace and mercy it is also ours through faith in Christ Jesus.

Chief of sinners though I be,
 Jesus shed His blood for me,
 Died that I might live on high,
 Lived that I might never die.
 As the branch is to the vine,
 I am His, and He is mine. (L.H., 342:1)

II

"That ye also may have fellowship with us," 1 John 1:3

"There comes to mind the touching legend which relates that the Apostle John once demanded of a presbyter information concerning a certain young man whom the Apostle had committed to the presbyter's care. The presbyter related sorrowfully that, alas, the young man had fallen away from Christ and was now living in a mountain fastness far away as a much-feared highwayman. Instantly the holy Apostle was astir with solicitude for this erring soul. Despite discomfort and danger he sought out the young man, and when he had found him, he fell at the feet of the youth and would not rise until the backslider had given heed to his entreaties and returned to the fold. 'That attitude,' says a commentator, 'was worthy of the friend who had lain on Jesus' bosom, who drank in the Master's spirit.'" (C.T.M., April, 1937, p. 251.)

John's heart, warmed by the gift of God's love in Jesus Christ, the Savior, reached out in love toward others. He wanted them to have a part and share with him in the blessed fellowship which he himself had found. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that ye also may have fellowship with us" (v. 3).

Christian faith is not static. It is active. "Faith worketh" (Gal. 5:6). It does what it can to see itself multiplied in the hearts of men everywhere. And it worketh "by love" (Gal. 5:6). You give gifts to those whom you love — as a rule, perhaps, the largest and best gifts to those whom you love most. Christian love encircles the world, and there is no better gift of love that you can give anyone anywhere than to show him his Savior, that he also may have fellowship with you in the communion of saints through faith in Christ Jesus. Christmas, therefore, should be for us a tremendous

festival of missions, spurring us on to reach out as never before to enlarge the reaches of the fellowship of faith and love.

"Love one another." How faithfully the Apostle keeps in loving remembrance the very words of the Savior! Jesus had said: "This is My commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12). And toward the end of the Letter from which our text is taken (1 John 4:11) John echoes that admonition to mutual love: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

Jerome tells us: "When the holy Evangelist John had lived to extreme old age in Ephesus, he could be carried only with difficulty by the hands of the disciples. And as he was not able to pronounce more words, he was accustomed to say at every assembly, 'Little children, love one another.' At length the disciples and brethren who were present became tired of hearing always the same thing and said: 'Master, why do you always say this?' Thereupon John gave an answer worthy of himself: 'Because this is the commandment of the Lord, and if it is observed, then it is enough.'"

Our fellowship in faith and love with all the saints should find expression also in a life of sanctification. Paul writes to the Ephesians: "Now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8). All "children of light" are members of the same family; they are related, in fellowship with one another, in the "household of God" (Eph. 2:19), for "God is Light" (1 John 1:5). "Children of Light" and "children of God" are one and the same thing. And the bond of faith which so makes all believers brothers and sisters in the Lord is stronger than any mere blood relationship and draws us closer together than any other fellowship.

With all God's saints on earth, then, let us walk together in this blessed fellowship of faith and love, in His ways, as children of light, until at last, by His grace, we shall live as saints forever in the light of everlasting life.

A COLLECT FOR THE DAY

O almighty God, by whose love John, the fisherman, was made the beloved disciple and Apostle of love, we beseech Thee of Thy mercy to grant us a rich measure of the blessings of Thy saving love, that we may grow in faith toward Thee and in fervent love

toward one another and finally obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Pitcairn, Pa.

LUTHER POBLOT

Outlines on the Hannover Epistles

(See issue of September, 1953, p. 688, for listing of the entire series)

NEW YEAR'S DAY

1 TIM. 6:13-19

A happy New Year! What a contrast between this greeting from the lips of a materialistic worldling and that of a Christian. The believer wishes others true happiness in Christ. "Fading is the worldling's pleasure, All his boasted pomp and show. Solid joys and lasting treasure None but Zion's children know." Our text serves to illustrate this truth.

TWO SOLEMN CHARGES AT THE BEGINNING OF A NEW YEAR

I

Keep This Commandment

A. To whom this charge is given

To Timothy and all who like him have heeded the exhortation, vv. 11, 12.

B. The nature of this charge

1. This commandment is not merely the Law. *Entole* and *logos* are apparently synonyms in the New Testament (John 14:21, 23 ff.). The word for "keep" is used in direct connection with the doctrine proclaimed by Christ (Matt. 28:20). The whole doctrine of salvation is meant.

2. Faithfully preserve this doctrine like a precious treasure pure and undefiled. Preserve it intact as laid down in God's Word.

C. The solemnity of the charge

1. "I charge thee" is a fervent, cordial admonition, a solemn directive, bordering on a command.

2. In the sight of God, who gives to all things life and preserves and strengthens it (physical and spiritual), and in the sight

of Jesus Christ, who by word and subsequent suffering and death testified before Pontius Pilate and declared as true what Christians confess.

3. Until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. At His coming He shall call us to account. Only they shall stand who have held fast that which they had. His coming is certain, the time uncertain. What an incentive loyally to preserve the message of salvation!

D. Application

1. The charge applies to all men of God, preachers and members. Faithfully keep the message of God's Word for your salvation and for the salvation of others.

2. As you keep it, always realize whose you are and whom you serve.

a. You belong to Christ, who testified to the truth of Holy Scripture and sealed His testimony by His death on Calvary for the salvation of men.

b. You are God's, who brings about the appearing of Jesus Christ, the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who is not a temporary Ruler with limited power, with fleeting prosperity, but one who is essentially blessed, the only One who has immortality in Himself. Preserve faithfully the treasure of Christian doctrine in joyous obedience to Him who towers over all, of whose kingdom there is no end, and whose glorious majesty cannot adequately be described in human language.

II

Take the Right Attitude Toward Riches

A. The nature of this charge.

This is not an unrelated charge, but it is an admonition to the believer holding fast the Word of truth to show his faith in action.

B. The addressees.

It is addressed to them that are rich. Vv. 9, 10 warned against the desire to be rich, now they are admonished who are rich by God's bounty.

1. Negative admonition.

a. Not to be high-minded, despising others less fortunate. What hast thou that thou hast not received?

b. Not to trust or hope in uncertain riches. How short-lived is prosperity! The rich fool.

2. Positive admonition.

a. Trust in the living God, who giveth richly of all things to enjoy. Hence admonition may apply to everyone.

b. Be rich in good works by sharing with others, by supporting in proportion to our income church and charity.

c. V. 19. Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come. Points out the blessings which the rich and others may expect from the right attitude toward wealth and its right use. Such right use constitutes a capital investment, bearing rich interest in blessings here and in the gracious reward of faith in eternity. Matt. 5:7; 25; Luke 16:9.

C. These two charges are appropriate admonitions on New Year's Day.

Time is fleeting. Kingdoms rise and fall. Man and his works pass away. Everything is insecure. Everywhere we behold fear and trepidation. One thing only is certain: Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away (1 Peter 1:24, 25). Cling to the Word of salvation, believe it with all your heart, live your Christianity. Do it faithfully, confidently, looking hopefully into the future as servants of the King who rules over everything, whose reign abides, who while all flesh is mortal, alone has immortality; who while all is darkness and gloom, dwells in ineffable light; who while men are weak and sinful, is the One concerning whom we say now and forever: "to whom be honor and power everlasting," by faith in whom we "lay hold on eternal life."

St. Louis, Mo.

PAUL KOENIG

SUNDAY AFTER NEW YEAR

1 JOHN 3:1, 2

Today is the third day of a new year. We wished one another a "Happy New Year!" Whether it will be a happy year will depend on our attitude. As Christians we must expect tribulation (Acts 14:22). In the Epistle for this Sunday (1 Peter 4:12-19) Peter tells the early Christians to be happy in the afflictions they

suffer for Christ. The Gospel (Matt. 2:13-23) shows us that early in His life on earth Jesus met with trouble. In view of such a life for us, this text of the Hannover pericopes for this Sunday after New Year is most encouraging.

WHAT SHALL WE DO WHEN TROUBLE COMES?

I

Place the Love of God over Against the Hate of the World

A. "What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!"

1. The Father chose us as His children from all eternity (Eph. 1:3-5; Rom. 8:28-30).
2. He made it possible for us to be His children by the gift of His Son (John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 4:4, 5).
3. He adopted us as His dear children in Christ Jesus ("We should be called the sons of God") (John 1:12; Rev. 21:7; Matt. 5:9; Rom. 9:26).
4. It is all God's work, not ours (John 15:16).

B. "Therefore the world knoweth us not."

1. They that are God's children are not recognized by the world (Col. 3:3; John 15:19; 1 John 2:15, 16; 1 John 4:5 f.).
2. The world does not know the Father (John 17:25; 15:21) nor Jesus as the Son of the Father and our Savior (John 15:18, 20).

C. Thus the hatred of the World, rather than distress us, should make us even more confident of the fact that we are the children of God (1 John 5:4, 5; 1 Peter 2:20; 1 Peter 3:14).

D. *Illustrations.*

The Greek word for "what manner of" originally meant "of what country." Thus we could translate "What unearthly love" or "How other-worldly this love of the Father!" . . . An Englishman tries to explain to an African that water can be hard and solid (ice), but the latter refused to believe it because it is foreign to his experience. Even so the world refuses to believe the love of the Father. (Hofacker.) . . . When Ziegenbalg translated this text, his Malabar assistant thought it too presumptuous to say "sons of God" and suggested "God wants to permit us to kiss His feet" as a substitute.

II

Rejoice in Our Present Dignity and Future Destiny

A. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God."

1. Our relation is firmly established (Rom. 8:14; Is. 56:5; Gal. 3:26; Rom. 8:15, 16).
2. Men cannot tell our sonship by our outward appearance.
Text: "doth not yet appear." (Rom. 8:24; 1 Cor. 2:9.)

B. "We shall be like Him."

1. We shall be like Him in holiness and perfection (1 Cor. 15:49; 2 Peter 1:4; Rom. 8:29).
2. We shall be like Him in triumph and glory (2 Tim. 2:12; Is. 66:22; John 17:24; Ps. 16:11; Luke 23:43; Phil. 3:21; Col. 3:4).

C. "We shall see Him as He is."

1. God's promise is sure that we shall see Him (Job 19:26; Ps. 17:15; Matt. 5:8).
2. Mysteries of sorrow and suffering and trouble will be solved (1 Cor. 13:12; Rom. 8:28; Num. 12:8).
3. We shall see Him as Conqueror of all enemies (Ps. 110:1; Matt. 22:44; Heb. 10:12, 13; Eph. 1:20-23).

D. *Illustrations.*

We are like uncut diamonds. All the beauty is inherent by regeneration, but it is still hidden. . . . Chrysostom: "Those that despise and deride us do not know who we are, citizens of heaven, heirs of an eternal fatherland, comrades of the angels, but they will see it in the Day of Judgment."

Conclusion: Hymn 192:5.

Milwaukee, Wis.

WALTER W. STUENKEL

THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

COL. 1:19-21

"Epiphany" signifies the appearance or revelation of Christ to the Gentiles (refer to the Gospel for the day). Each Christian experiences a similar Epiphany of Christ in his own heart. May the message of this text clarify and sharpen our Epiphany vision of the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE REVELATION OF THE GOD-MAN

I

The Glory of His Position

A. The great Christological section of this Epistle was needed because of the danger of heretical operations in Colosse. Cp. Ephesians 1 and Hebrews 1.

B. The true revelation of Christ is needed today in the face of false religions and philosophies that take His glory away from Him.

C. Marvelous titles and works are ascribed to Christ in the context: "Image of the invisible God," "the First-born of every creature"; "all things were created by Him"; "He is before all things"; "By Him all things consist"; He is the "Head of the Church," "the Beginning, the First-born from the dead"; He has "Pre-eminence over all things."

D. V. 19, "All fullness dwells in Him." The Deity dwells in all of Christ, including His human nature. The fullness of the Deity cannot be divided from His human nature. Where Christ is, there is all of Him. We cannot separate His two natures (Col. 2:9).

E. He is the God-Man, personally uniting the divine and human natures. Some of His titles reach before His incarnation, others after it. He is not bound by time. His divine attributes are communicated to His human nature forever. More wonderful than human language can picture!

F. No one, not even the Father or the Holy Ghost, holds a position quite like Christ's. He is the God-Man. He is everything the Scriptures say He is, in spite of our inability to comprehend it.

II

The Effects of His Work

A. He reconciled all things to Himself.

1. He has done it by making peace through the blood of the cross.
2. V. 20 is difficult to understand. Things in heaven are part of "all things." Do they need reconciliation? Not all objects of the God-Man's reconciling act are affected the same way,

but all are affected. Evil angels were eliminated. Unbelieving men were eliminated. Believing men were rescued. The physical creatures of the world wait for the Lord (Rom. 8:19). Even good angels have a new peace. All creation is involved. Each group is affected according to its nature and condition.

3. Soon heaven and earth will be one kingdom of eternal peace. Evil angels and unbelieving men will be eliminated. That is the reconciliation accomplished by the blood of the cross.
- B. This reconciliation has a personal effect on each of us.
1. We were enemies.
 2. We did wicked works.
 3. Jesus Christ changed this situation and brought us into peace with God by His bloody, physical death.
 4. Jesus not only saved all, but saved you and me.

No religion can compare with Christianity. No religion, except the Christian, has Christ. May the Christ who appeared to Eastern sages in Bethlehem, who appeared to Christians at Colosse in the writing of this letter, who has appeared unto millions in every age, appear to you and abide with you. Amen.

Baltimore, Md.

GEORGE H. SOMMERMEYER

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

HEB. 3:1-14

Real Epiphany text. Contains revelation of glory of Christ. Continuation of theme of Hebrews as set forth in chapters 1, 2. Text emphasizes faithfulness to Jesus. Hence well summarized under theme

HOLD FIRM TO THE END YOUR FIRST CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST

I

Consider What You Have in Christ

Treasure you now have emphasized by a comparison between Moses and Christ. Moses doubtlessly the greatest character and the most renowned Prophet of the Old Testament era. Especially favored by God from earliest youth to dying day. Privileged of

God to be present at Christ's transfiguration. Text accords him attribute of faithfulness (v. 5). But withal only a servant in the house. Together with patriarchs looked with longing eyes to greater Prophet than he to come in far distant future.

This greater Prophet Jesus, Apostle and High Priest of our confession (v. 1). By and through Him holy brethren, namely, through confession of Him as Christ of God. Counted worthy of much more glory than Moses. He the Son (v. 6); accorded honor of worship (1:6); begotten of the Father (1:5); crowned with glory and honor (2:7); He Lord over all, blessed forever (2:8). Through the Gospel effectively calls men to Himself, by His Cross draws men to Himself. And this Jesus is the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. Hence admonition to hold firm to the end your first confidence in Christ.

Jesus Sum and Substance of our preaching, praise God, even today. Messenger of God to reconcile us unto God. High Priest, who with Himself as the Sacrifice is the Propitiation for our sins. Hence our beautiful Savior. Not to seek other saviors, but hold firm to our first confidence in Him. So learned in Luther's explanation of Second Article. This Magna Charta of our salvation, freedom from unholy three. Left us an example of faithfulness to follow. Serve Him and so continue to our end and share with Christ the rest of the children of God.

II

Therefore Watch Lest You Lose What You Have

Danger of losing the Christ ever present. Warning note added from Israel's past (vv. 7-11). Did not enter into rest because of unbelief.

Same heart in your breast and mine as was in Israel (v. 12). Constantly on alert against this heart of ours. Will lose Christ unless hold firm our first confidence in Christ.

Alas, so much delinquency in church membership all about us! Appalling and alarming. Epiphany season pointing to Lententide opportune for reclaiming delinquents. Way pointed out in text (v. 13). Indeed, are our brothers' keepers. Reach out and touch lives of friends who have forgotten Baptismal vow. Urge them, exhort them, to return. Thus constantly aware of our treasure,

let us guard against losing it and at same time exhort others to faithfulness.

How tremendously important! Surely the hope and prayer of each and every one of us to share with Christ the rest. Therefore watch and pray. Today, as we hear His voice, listen. Then by His grace and mercy also share with Him. So help us God.

Duluth, Minn.

WALTER H. BOUMAN

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

GAL. 1:6-16

"Epiphany" means that Christ has appeared to men as God's Son and Savior. All who experience the Epiphany of Christ, from the Magi until today, have seen a Light which leads to heaven. Christ comes through the Gospel, which forgives our sins and changes the course of our lives. What a precious heritage!

Having received the saving Gospel, we Christians are confronted by two fundamental questions during the Epiphany season: Are we going to preserve the Gospel or allow it to be perverted? Are we going to keep this Gospel for ourselves or give it to others also?

For Paul the Gospel was sacred; he would allow no one to change it, but it was also functional. It was not a gift selfishly to possess and enjoy. It was for all people. He defended the Gospel against error not only that he might preserve the truth itself but also that he might give it to the Gentiles. This must ever be our aim as well.

OUR EPIPHANY OBLIGATION: THE TRUE GOSPEL FOR THE WORLD!

I

Epiphany Places the Obligation Upon Us to Defend the Gospel Against All Error

- A. We have the example of Paul's defense of the Gospel.
 1. Brief description of the Galatian churches.
 2. The Gospel of grace Paul preached to the Galatians (v. 16 a).
 3. The Judaizers and their heretical "other gospel."

4. The tragic consequences Paul could foresee: divided churches, lost souls, etc.
 5. Therefore the great Apostle uses every argument at his disposal to defend the Gospel.
 - a. He is extremely alarmed and excited. Note that he begins his admonition immediately (v. 6).
 - b. He treats the heresy with complete scorn (v. 7).
 - c. He received his Gospel directly from Christ (v. 12).
 - d. His past zeal for Judaism and his present loyalty to Christ show that only the true Gospel could have changed him.
 - e. He denounces any other "gospel," even though angels preach it (vv. 8, 9).
- B. We, too, must defend the Gospel at all costs.
1. Pastors often are astonished how quickly apostasy takes place among God's people (examples from the Scriptures; local situation).
 2. It is generally to just such "other gospel" that people turn—the Gospel is made Law (modern heresies).
 3. The eternal results for us and our children: not only those who preach but also those who hear and believe are anathema.
 4. Our love for truth and human souls will allow no compromise with error (example: Luther and the Zwickau prophets).

(NOTE: By his treatment of this text the preacher will show his people that he understands the nature and purpose of apologetics and polemics. Certainly the pulpit of the true Gospel should not become a mere sound board for pet peeves, carping in terms of generalities, and profitless ax grinding. Polemical preaching should be specific, purposeful, evangelical.)

Transition: We who have received the Gospel of grace defend it against all those who would pervert the Gospel. But can we be satisfied with having the precious Gospel just for ourselves and our children? No. Our love compels us to give the pure Gospel to all people. This, too, is our Epiphany obligation.

II

Epiphany Obligates Us to Spread the Pure Gospel Throughout the World (V. 16)

- A. This is the functional aspect of Epiphany (missions!)
1. The Epiphany of the Magi (Matthew 2) and of the shepherds (Luke 2). Cp. Luke 4:14-24.

2. The Epiphany of the disciples at Pentecost.
 3. Christ also appeared to Paul directly, but today He comes through Word and Sacrament (Rom. 10:17; Rom. 1:16).
 4. Paul says he was separated from his mother's womb for this purpose (v. 16). Cp. 1 Tim. 1:12-16; Rom. 1:13-16.
 5. Indeed, we see the obligation of Epiphany throughout the Scriptures (Prot-evangel, Noah, Abraham, Isaiah, Jesus, the Apostles).
 6. We especially should do mission work; we have the true Gospel. Many are spreading the "other gospel."
- B. We have vast opportunities for spreading the Gospel.
1. Personal evangelism in the local parish and community (the preacher may stress this point according to local needs and methods of parish planning).
 2. Mission work by proxy in the foreign fields (here the pastor has opportunity to relate the congregation to ministerial training, on the one hand, and to some of the heroic episodes from the modern mission fields, on the other. Our work in New Guinea, Hong Kong, Formosa, Nigeria, the Lutheran Hour in Japan, TV's "*This Is the Life*," etc., offers good illustrations).

What tremendous implications for our Church in the second century in America! The first century consisted mainly in consolidation; now we must march forward with the banner of Christ into all the world as Paul did in his day. Some of our Christians act as though we did not have the true Gospel. We must redeem the time. These are the latter days. The Lord is not just turning over the hourglass; He is tearing sheets from the calendar. There must be a compelling urgency in our lives and preaching. Illustration: A statue in a bombed European church remained intact except for the hands. The pastor insisted that it be left in that condition, saying, "We are the Lord's hands." Baxter: "I preach each sermon as my last, the last sermon of a dying man to a dying people in a dying world."

Springfield, Ill.

LORMAN M. PETERSEN

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

1 TIM. 6:1-5

Epiphany is the season of the church year which emphasizes the appearance of Christ as the Savior of the Gentiles. Jesus shows Himself to be the Redeemer of all. The Introits of the Sundays after Epiphany are very general. Through them all runs the strain of glorifying God through a joyful response to God's majesty as God reveals it. The collect for this third Sunday asks God to stretch forth "the right hand of His Majesty" to help our mortal weaknesses. This help is needed because our lives befog the revelation of God. Our failings are not sermons which show God; but rather they show up our shortcomings in showing forth God in our lives. God wants to see Himself in our lives; He wants a perpetual Epiphany—showing forth—of Himself into the world through us. We like to buy packages with transparent covers in order to see the contents. Our life should be so transparent that everyone can see Jesus Christ in us as an eternal appearing. This true godliness we can learn and practice only by holding fast the Word of God, humbly bowing to "the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the doctrine which is according to godliness."

LET US DEMONSTRATE THE GODLINESS OF CHRIST
TO THE WORLD

I

True Godliness Comes from Christ

A. Christ lived to show godliness to men (Col. 2:9; 3:13; Matt. 11:29; 16:24; John 13:15; Rom. 15:5; 2 Cor. 10:1; Phil. 2:5; Heb. 3:1; 12:2; 1 Peter 2:21).

B. Christ died to make us godly (2 Cor. 5:15; 1 Peter 3:18; Heb. 2:9). The power of God to make us His sons by adoption and passages speaking of glorifying the Father through His disciples are also very fitting here.

II

True Godliness Comes from Christ to Us

A. V. 3. Christ's Word brings us His godliness (Matt. 7:24, 26; Luke 6:47; John 12:48; 17:14, 17).

B. Vv. 4, 5. But we have many blocks to prevent understanding of His Word. Pride, pedantic word wrangling, hair splitting, envy, quarrels, greed—all these tend to confuse real meaning of the Scriptures. Phillips has an interesting translation of these two verses:

His mind is a morbid jumble of disputation and argument, things which lead to nothing but jealousy, quarreling, insults and malicious innuendoes—continual wrangling, in fact, among men of warped minds who have lost their real hold on the truth but hope to make some profit out of the Christian religion.

C. But a right understanding is necessary for true godliness (1 Tim. 4:1-16).

III

True Godliness Comes from Christ Through Us into the World

A. It shows itself by a lack of strife. The emphasis of many passages to love one another and to grow in unity is appropriate. The text of v.5 advises us to avoid people who cause strife because of a lack of godliness.

B. It shows itself by good service (vv. 1, 2). The example of God-fearing slaves serving pagan and Christian masters should demonstrate God-pleasing service (1 Tim. 5:3; 5:17; 6:1; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 6:5-10; Col. 3:22—4:1; Acts 20:35; Titus 2:7; 1 Tim. 4:12; 2 Thess. 3:9).

Conclusion: Let us hold fast to the Words of Christ that He may be shown forth in the world through us.

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THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

1 COR. 4:9-20

We are Christians, for we confess with our mouths the Lord Jesus Christ and believe in our hearts that God hath raised Him from the dead. But because we are what we are, very human, living in a world that is not concerned about Christ, engrossed in affairs and pursuits that can be followed as well, if not better, without faith as with faith, we daily need to have a Timothy come to us from a Paul to remind us of and admonish anew toward

OUR WAYS IN CHRIST

I

*As We Are Christian, These Ways Are Marked Out for Us
by God Himself in the Gospel*

A. Timothy was only to remind the Corinthians of these ways; therefore they were something which these professing Christians already knew (v. 17).

B. What they knew as Christians could have been nothing else but the Gospel, the means of giving them birth so that they would be in Christ Jesus, so that they would be Christian (v. 15).

C. These are the ways which St. Paul taught everywhere in each of the churches (v. 17). The one thing commonly taught in anything that is the Church is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the doctrine of God that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

NOTE: "Our ways in Christ" can here signify nothing else but the way in which we come to God, faith in Christ Jesus. Paul's teaching and practices are always in union with Christ, none of them in any way wandering from Christ. Paul's reminder is the strongest possible reminder to us that the Gospel produces the conduct; men believe in Christ before they live Christian lives.

II

As We Are Christian, These Ways Do Not Consist in Mere Talk

A. The Corinthians clearly show that it is possible to boast even in connection with Christianity (vv. 10-12, Paul is evidently giving expression to what these people thought of themselves).

B. Any such is only Christianity so-called because it manifests a remaining in ourselves and not a being in the ways in Christ; any such pretentious, overrated opinion of self is altogether out of harmony with the conclusions which God pronounces and makes evident through the Gospel.

C. As long as we abide by our own estimates, we are still in man's kingdom and not in the kingdom of God.

NOTE: Paul here condemns as mere talk everything self-produced and self-glorifying. It isn't Christian because it has nothing of "Ways in Christ"; it is the reverse of the Christian *solis Deo gloria*; it is a lack of humility which rejects salvation in Christ because it refuses to be what God judges and therefore cannot be made what God would.

III

*As We Are Christian, These Ways Reveal the Power of God
in Us and Through Us*

A. Who would willingly choose ways like these when they produce what is so manifestly contrary to our desires, the very opposite of our human best. (Vv. 9-13 show what these ways brought to Paul and the other Apostles; there is always something of the same in every age where people are truly in the ways that are in Christ; this is the reverse of what the Corinthians judged of themselves and hoped to achieve.)

B. They are manifestly ways in Christ. (Parts of vv. 9-13 sound like a description of the life of Christ Himself and remind us that the real disciple truly is not above his master nor the servant above his lord; they show us the Christian as he lets this mind be in him which was also in Christ Jesus.)

C. They certify faith because they show citizenship in the kingdom of God. (Perhaps here v. 20 could be fully developed; this is faith, not merely talk about faith, that the power of God may be made manifest in us; it cannot be I myself, but Christ dwelling in me; I would quit and be overcome; as I persist and God is glorified, it can be nothing else than henceforth living in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.)

NOTE: Imitators of Paul live by grace, because Paul lived by grace. Any boasting, factionalism, arrogance, self-evaluation, is a denial of grace because it is still self-assertiveness and not God-glorifying. We please God as we are born in Christ Jesus through the Gospel, and we do what pleases God as we do all for Jesus' sake. As we are Christian, these are our ways in Christ.

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