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Homiletics: Outlines on the Nitsch Epistles

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HOMILETICS

Outlines on Nitsch Epistle Selections

NEW YEAR'S DAY

ROM. 8:24-30

Hope is a blessing from God. Without hope life is like a ship without a rudder. Hope gives purpose and direction.

At the beginning of a new year most people have hope. However the hope of many lacks foundation, because it rests upon the wisdom and the power of man. That is not true of a Christian's hope. The Christian's hope is sure, because it rests upon God's Word.

It is well that we remember this especially at this season of the year. Therefore let us brush all else aside and give undivided attention to

Our Confident Hope at the Beginning of a New Year

I. Confident, because we are sure of the Spirit's intercession for us (vv. 26-27)

A. In spite of all wisdom and learning, in spite of all scientific discoveries and advances, man is helpless. By himself man cannot solve many of the problems of life. By himself man cannot solve any of the problems of death. At no time of the year do we realize this more than at the beginning of a new year.

As Christians we possess the privilege and the power of prayer. Wondrous is this privilege. Great is this power. However, sometimes we know not for what to pray, because we know not what is good for us. At other times we are surrounded by so many problems and troubles that we are utterly confused and bewildered.

B. How good it is to know that "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities," that "the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us . . . according to the will of God," and that "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit"!

This gives us confidence as we stand upon the threshold of a new year.

II. Confident, because we are sure that all things will work together for our good (v. 28)

A. We know not what the new year will bring to us, our country, and our world.

1. Will we and our loved ones experience gain or loss, health or sickness, happiness or sorrow, achievement or failure?
2. Will our country continue to ride the crest of prosperity, or will a recession and an inflation take their toll?
3. Will our world experience another year of cold war, or will the cold war become a hot war?

These are questions we ask because we do not know what the new year will bring us.

B. We do know, however, that whatever the year will bring us, under God's guidance and benediction, it will be good for us. What blessed, fortunate people we are!

This gives us confidence as we stand upon the threshold of a new year.

III. Confident, because we are sure of our salvation (vv. 28, 29)

A. The assurances God gives us in His Word for this life are important.

B. More important, however, are the assurances God gives us for the life which awaits us in heaven.

1. God predestinated us "to be conformed to the image of His Son."
2. God called us.
3. God justified us by leading us to stand in faith beneath the cross of Jesus.
4. God glorified us. Though we are still on earth, heaven belongs to us. No one can take heaven from us.

This assurance above all else gives us confidence as we stand at the threshold of a new year.

The "Happy New Year" we bid one another is much more than a pious wish. It is an expression of our confident hope at the beginning of the new year. Our "Happy New Year!" rests upon the promises of God's Word: the promise that in every difficulty the Spirit of God will pray for us; the promise that everything will happen for our good; the promise that heaven is our home. This gives us confidence.

SUNDAY AFTER NEW YEAR

1 JOHN 3:1-8

What is the meaning of life? Where do we come from? Where are we going? What shall we do in the short stretch between birth and death? These are vital questions that face us, especially at the beginning of another year. Paul Tillich may write an article "The Lost Dimension in Religion" and state that man has no answer to these questions because he has no depth. Yet the answer which he fails to supply, God's Word gives us today when it assures us of God's unfailing love. The Introit for the day reminds us that the Lord reigneth in our behalf. Here is depth and security.

The Divine Dimension—God's Love

I. *By His love we have been changed into the sons of God (v.1)*

A. By nature we were utterly against God. Spiritually blind (1 Cor. 2:14); spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1); enemies of God (Rom. 8:7). God might justly have turned away from us in abhorrence and anger. He might have said: "I wish you would be free from the hell of a guilty conscience and its eternal consequences. You have rebelled against Me, and you will have to find your own way out. There is one thing I might do to restore you. I could give My Son to bring you back. But that would cost too much. The price would be too great for Him and the pain too much for Me." But despite it all God loves us, and He went to great length to prove it.

B. The love of God in action in our behalf changed us into the sons of God. He spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all (Rom. 8:32). Jesus redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us (Gal. 3:13). He was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification (Rom. 4:25). The Holy Spirit made us alive through the Gospel (1 Cor. 4:15) and changed us into new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17). Now we are the sons of God. Not a future hope but a present reality (v.2 a). Like a ramshackle house which has been renovated, painted, and beautified, we sinful, run-down creatures were taken by God and changed into glorious sons of His by the power of His love.

II. *By this love, God will also transform us to be like Christ when eternity dawns*

A. God has a still greater heritage in store for us. Time passes swiftly. This may be your last year on earth, or the light of Judgment may break. Recently the Archbishop of Canterbury set off a furor.

When speaking of total destruction in a nuclear war, he said, "There is no evidence that the human race should last forever, and plenty in Scripture to the contrary." It was pounced upon by friend and foe alike. Let's not quibble. Christ will return. (V.2)

B. In our present state we still live behind the veil (v.2 b). While completely justified and forgiven through the merits of Christ, we still have our miseries, doubts, and fears, so that we do not enjoy our sonship with God yet in all its glory.

C. But when Christ appears we shall be restored to perfection. We shall be like Him (v.2). Vile bodies will be changed into glorified bodies as was the Savior's on resurrection morn (Phil. 3:21). We shall see God face to face (Job 19:26,27). Fullness of joy will be ours (Ps. 16:11). Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us to accomplish all this! Therefore we face the future with confidence and in the joyful expectation of Titus 2:13.

III. *By this love — and until that great moment — God gives us power over sin*

A. The devil tries to tempt us to sin and wrest us from the sonship of God. (V.8)

B. But Christ has destroyed the works of the devil (v.8 b). Bethlehem, Gethsemane, Calvary, the Resurrection, sitting on the throne where Jesus intercedes, rules, and overrules to bring us home to glory.

C. Abiding in Him, we will not live in sin (v.6). The acceptance of Christ and His Cross includes more than forgiveness. It is also a force prompting us to live a godly life. The redemption of God is something more than the erasing rubber at the end of a pencil. It is also the lead by which we write a Christian life on the sheet of our days. Faith results in the transfusion of the life of Christ into our veins and gives us power to live a life of love, faith, and courage. . . . Thereby we will be joyful witnesses to the world which knows Him not. (V.1)

This is the divine dimension which will be working in our behalf every minute of the new year. Received into the heart, the Gospel of God's love will continue to give depth and meaning to all events of our lives. It will continue to reveal to us our destiny as sons of God. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Therefore we pray Hymn 53:6.

Topeka, Kans.

ALBERT C. BURROUGHS

THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

COL. 1:24-29

(The text lends itself well to the general emphasis of the Epiphany of our Lord and can easily be related to the propers for the day. Both the Standard Epistle and Gospel can easily be woven into the structure of the sermon. V. 24 requires more concentrated exegetical study. It would be well to consult not only the original Greek but various commentators as well. In the outline I have used the verse only in a general way. I have tried to fit the theme into the general setting and spirit of the season. According to custom, the Christmas tree should be lighted for the last time. The secular new year lies before the church and is waiting to be possessed by the faithful for the Lord.)

Our days have been full of celebrations. First it was Christmas, then it was New Year, and now it is Epiphany. Christmas celebrated an event of the past, but Epiphany sets before us the ongoing Christmas celebration. Epiphany is the application of Christmas. Epiphany makes Christmas meaningful for the entire year. It would be well for us, in our thinking and planning, to count our days not as so many days *before* Christmas but rather *from* Christmas, realizing that with each passing day we have one day fewer to work for Him in His vineyard.

Well might we therefore have our Christmas tree blazing once more before us, and reminding us of this very fact. For Jesus is the Light of the world—not only of the Jewish Palestinian shepherds who were enveloped by His glory—but also of the Gentiles, who were afar off, down to this very day and hour.

And then we celebrated New Year, a secular celebration, to be sure, yet one that has meaning to the church. The days of the new year lie ahead of us. Have we formulated plans for the uncharted future?

Today's text takes all of these celebrations and fits them into a single unit. Our Epiphany text leaves little room for speculation what course, individually and collectively, the church of Jesus Christ must take today and tomorrow.

The Church's Mission in 1959

I. *The world is in darkness and needs Christ, the Light of the World*

A. Isaiah 60. The ancient prophet described the pathetic condition not only of the world in his day but of the world as it has been to this very hour.

B. In Romans 1 Paul gives a more graphic description of the Stygian darkness of the world without Christ.

C. Sometimes we forget that this deplorable picture of man hasn't changed. More unchurched people in the world today than a year ago.

Our synodical PTRs and the Share Christ plan have emphasized these statistics.

D. Local, national, and international conditions are grim reminders of the darkness which covers the earth. The world needs the true light.

II. *The church has Jesus Christ, the true Light of the world*

A. In the ancient world Jesus was hidden (v. 26 a). Ever since the day that the Magi knelt before Him and presented to Him their gifts, more and more that true Light which lighteth the world has been dispelling the darkness.

B. Jesus alone can cast out the darkness of sin and evil in this world, because He *is* the Light which came into this world. He wrestled with and overcame the forces of sin, death and hell, and Satan.

C. The church has this Light—has Jesus. "Christ in you" (v. 27). Gradual, "We have seen His star in the East and are come with gifts to worship the Lord."

D. The Holy Spirit has enlightened every member of the church with the light of the Gospel. With this light He has replaced the darkness of sin and death in our own lives. (V. 26 b)

III. *We are commissioned to spread this light*

A. To the church today as she thinks of her task in the new year the clarion cry goes out: "Arise, shine, O Jerusalem, for the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

B. God wants all to be saved and to come out of darkness to His marvelous light (v. 27). The church's mission is worldwide. "Present every man." (V. 28)

C. And God wants His church to be His instrument to bring this light to others. V. 25: "Is given to me for you."

D. To this task the Lord commissions us too. This must be the highest and ultimate goal of every redeemed child of God in 1959. Not necessarily earthly advancement, financial success, better standard of living, etc. My task, your task, our combined task as congregation and Synod, is to preach Christ (vv. 28, 29). This is our mission till He calls a halt to our labors.

IV. *It is not necessarily an easy mission that we face*

A. V. 24: Paul was in prison.

B. Our task today is not easy. We have tried to make it so. But that may be the reason why the church in 1958 has not "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6) as it did in Paul's day. We want to

do the work of the Lord from foam rubber lounging chairs. Whether it is raising Synod's budget of \$16,500,000 in 1959 or witnessing of Christ to the unconverted next door, it will and should take real work.

V. The church's mission in 1959 will not fail

A. As we face the future, there are not many things of which we can speak with positive knowledge.

B. This one thing we know: With Christ in us, the Hope of glory, we will not only preach Him to every man and teach men in all wisdom (v. 28), we will not only labor and strive toward this end (v. 29), but we shall experience that Christ will work in us mightily (v. 29 b). The elect will be gathered from Jew and Gentile. Kings will come to the light of His knowledge. "All they from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and incense; they shall show forth the praises of the Lord." (Gradual)

Here is your and my mission in 1959. Let us not become entangled with the affairs of this world. Let us work zealously while it is day. God made known the riches of His glory to the Wise Men from the East. He has brought us to this wisdom. To it let us bring others too. Introit: "Behold, the Lord, the Ruler, hath come, and the Kingdom and the power and the glory are in His hand. Give the King Thy judgments, O God, and Thy righteousness unto the King's Son. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost!"

Minneapolis, Minn.

FREDERICK E. GESKE

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

1 COR. 1:20-31

(The Gospel for the first Sunday after Epiphany is Luke 2:41-52 — "Jesus Among the Doctors." Jesus' urgent sense of mission, "I must be about My Father's business," is reflected in the handling of the theme and major parts of the outline submitted. In fact, not only is that thought *reflected* there, but the entire text has been approached with the theme of the Gospel of the day in mind: the Christian must be about the Father's business. Not only does the Gospel for the day call for that emphasis, but, in addition, the month of January calls for a missions and evangelism emphasis. The text at hand lends itself well to such use. In addition to all that, it contains rich Epiphany flavoring, manifesting the glory and the power of Christ.)

The year is new. You have made high resolves. Among your resolves: to achieve much for God, to invest more of your life in "the Father's business," to help with all your might to "turn the world upside down" (Acts 17:6) — with the Gospel. Such resolves shall meet with successful results.

Doing the Father's Work — with Power

I. *What you have to work with*

A. Something the worldly-wise call foolishness

1. You have the Christ of the lowly manger — of the ignoble cross — to work with. (Here refer to events of Christmas.) You have His simple Gospel to work with — "the foolishness of preaching." (V. 21)
2. To the worldly-wise this is powerless, ineffective. It is a stumbling block (v. 23); foolishness (v. 23); weakness (v. 27); base (v. 28); despicable (v. 28). But actually:

B. Something that is the culmination of wisdom and power

1. Indeed, what you have to work with is a low-born Christ — a crucified Christ (v. 23 a; 1 Cor. 2:2). But none other than the crucified Christ has power to save (v. 30), to bring rest to the troubled conscience, satisfaction to the distracted heart, peace to the sin-torn soul.
2. To "them which are called" this Christ and His simple Gospel is "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (v. 24). Christ by His coming and by His crucifixion manifests (a) the power of God's love (and not just the fact, but the greatness of that love); (b) the power of God over the powers of darkness (1 John 3:15; Col. 2:15; also cp. Heb. 2:14); (c) the power of God to redeem sinners (cp. Paul's conversion; the "host arrayed in white" (*L. H.*, hymn 656), presented before God without blemish: the power of God and the wisdom of God!). — This is what you have to work with (here give a one-sentence recapitulation).

II. *What work you can do with it*

A. With it your own life has been changed

1. By the foolishness of preaching your life is now "in Christ Jesus" (v. 30). You have been redeemed, enlightened, sanctified (v. 30).
2. Glory in it (v. 31), praise the Lord that without a sign, without something to dazzle (v. 22 — and here cp. Matt. 12:38; John 4:48; also cp. R. C. relics), you have by the foolish things of the world" and the "weak things of the world" been saved. (V. 27; cp. *LH*, Hymn 130:3, 4)

B. With it you can evangelize the world — "turn the world upside down"

1. The simple Gospel, requiring no debate, no logical argument, no "enticing words of man's wisdom" (v. 20; 1 Cor. 2:4), can save to the uttermost, for it is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16; Mark 16:16).—Therefore spread that Gospel of power. Personal testimony. Home missions. World missions.
2. God will use such "foolishness of preaching" to do His work mightily. Weak instrumentalities have been used by God in great power: Five smooth stones felled a giant (1 Sam. 17:40); five barley loaves fed a multitude (John 6:9); a tiny mustard seed becomes a shelter for birds (Matt. 13:31, 32).—God achieves the mightiest ends by the humblest means: chose unlearned disciples to conquer the world for Him. They triumphed over the marshaled might of Rome. A church boasting little wealth or influence, but possessing as its Founder a babe born in a stable and preaching as its mainstay of truth a peasant who was crucified, spread through heathen lands, destroying idolatries venerable in age and powerful in adherents.

These same successes are held out to you today as you go about the Father's work with power. A bruised reed in His hand is still mightier than a sword in others. For that reason mighty achievements for God are attainable as the church in this year of our Lord marches onward, "with the Cross of Jesus going on before."

Peoria, Ill.

THEODORE TEYLER

TRANSFIGURATION

ROM. 3:19-26

(This sermon is to show that the preaching of the great truth of righteousness by faith is the most effective way in which to enhance God's real glory on earth).

Who has ever seen the real glory of God? In Psalm 19 we declare: "The heavens declare the glory of God." Those Christians who know nature best find abundant testimony everywhere to underscore this great fact and truth. Adam and Eve in Paradise, in the perfection of their innocence, beheld and understood the real glory of God as no other human beings have ever again understood it. Abraham knew and tasted the glory of God in the intimacy of his communion with Him. Moses came so close to the glory of God that his countenance reflected what he had seen and experienced. Isaiah never forgot the revelation of God's glory in the splendor of the temple and counted

it a constant privilege to serve this glorious God. The shepherds at Bethlehem heard and saw the glory of God revealed in the mystery and power and grace of the miracle of the manger. We still long for contact with the fullness of that glory in God.

When we understand and appreciate it rightly, God's richest glory is manifested before our eyes in His acts of redemption and salvation. When we see these in their proper light and perspective, God's glory shines upon us in its full brightness and grace. The truth clearly taught in our text serves to highlight this fact for us again. We consider:

Why Righteousness by Faith Alone Can Glorify God

I. *Any other way is man made and only strives to glorify man (vv. 19-23)*

A. Man's way by his own effort shows absolutely no appreciation of the real nature of his true sinfulness (v. 19. God says: "Shut up!" to any mouth opened against His holiness and righteousness and contending that man's guilt is not universal and that such guilt is not a serious matter in the life of every human being. Man's way by his own effort shows that he has no true appreciation of the universal devastation which sin has wrought (vv. 22 c, 23). Sin has robbed man of the reflected glory of God as it was intended to show itself in man's life.

B. Man's way by his own effort shows no appreciation of his inherent weakness to meet the demands of the holy Law of God (vv. 19, 20). He has no conception of the nature of the perfection which is required. He has no appreciation of the absolute demands which the Law sets before him. He is not using the Law for the purpose for which it is designed. (V. 20)

C. Man's way by his own effort is altogether out of harmony with the basic objective of God in all things—God wants to be glorified. The simplest act and fact of creation illustrates this fundamental truth in the physical realm. It must be so in the moral and the spiritual realm.

II. *It is the only way in which God's sublime and supreme qualities can be glorified*

A. God's righteousness and holiness. To be preserved in their absolute perfection the righteousness and holiness which man presents unto Him must be perfect, complete, absolute. It can not be thus except through Christ by faith. (V. 26)

B. God's grace and loving-kindness, united with His benevolence

and initiative (vv. 24, 25). How could God ever justify the acceptance of any other righteousness than that which is made available in this manner?

III. *It is the only way in which God's work in Christ Jesus can be glorified*

A. His work of redemption (v. 24). Behind the perfect righteousness which is ours through faith stands a completed act by which deliverance has been effected. When the hopeless sinner, totally unrighteous of himself and by his own powers, acknowledges in faith: "Christ has done it all," then God's work in Christ is glorified.

B. His work of propitiation (v. 25). God provided Christ and His work to cover man's sin. Christ's sacrifice is designed to make it possible for God to say: "For Christ's sake all sinners are now righteous and acceptable before Me." God's work in Christ is glorified when by faith the sinner finds his perfect righteousness in Christ alone.

C. The effective remission of sins (v. 25). Only when once and for all the slate was wiped perfectly clean could God offer sinful men a righteousness which would avail before Him. When sin is forgiven, the sin is all gone. Righteousness then stands out before us as an attainable possession. God's work in Christ for the remission of sins is glorified when we preach justification by faith.

When this precious, changeless, satisfying, comforting truth — that the sinner is made perfectly righteous before God in Christ Jesus by faith, fully, freely, and absolutely — is proclaimed over and over again as God would have us do, are you always conscious of the fact that God is being glorified before your eyes? Do you thrill with high emotion at the mountaintop experience this affords to you? Are you grateful for this simple, marvelous, oft-repeated manner in which God makes His supreme glory known unto you? And do you realize that you are truly glorifying God yourself when you rejoice in the righteousness which is yours by faith?

St. Charles, Mo.

ERICH V. OELSCHLAEGER

SEPTUAGESIMA

ROM. 3:27-31

Revival of religion on campus today. Not the antagonism of 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. Our own student program quite successful. More religion taught in class form at our colleges.

Why, then, have Valparaiso? Today is beginning of pre-Lenten season and Valparaiso Sunday.

Return to religion on the campus is not to the Christian religion. It is rather a syncretistic type of religion that will please everyone, as the editor of *Christianity Today*, in his article "A Crisis in Education," May 12, 1958, indicates. Our text shows how wrong this kind of religion is and how much we need our Valparaiso to promote the true religion among the educated classes of our country.

Why a Christian College Must Be Founded on "Justification by Faith Alone"

I. *This alone is the beginning of wisdom* (vv. 27, 28)

A. The Church Controversy on "Faith Alone."—Luther translated "by faith alone," when the word "alone" is not in the original. This was attacked and ably defended. Ever since it is the slogan of the Reformation. It proves that there is a complete contrast between the principle of law and salvation by works and the principle of faith and salvation by grace. (Vv. 27, 28; Eph. 2:8, 9)

B. "Faith Alone"—the Beginning of Wisdom.—It takes God's wisdom, based on revelation, to understand this way of salvation, for it is not natural (1 Cor. 2:14). The world, with all its wisdom, exists only for this. Schools may teach religion, but without this they do not have the beginning of wisdom and real religion.

C. It is the Task of a Christian College to Establish and Clarify This Principle.—It will seek to make our heritage clear and help people to understand the struggle for "justification" today as they did in Paul's and Luther's day.

A college like Valparaiso will clarify this fundamental article of our Christian heritage and make it vital for today. Syncretistic religion will never do that, won't even try.

II. *This alone produces real unity* (vv. 29, 30)

A. A Unity of Sin and Grace.—Paul here, to prove we are saved by grace alone, stresses God is one. He does not want disunity. But the only natural unity is one of sin. Jew and Greek are one in sin. But this unity produces disunity among people. There is no real unity until God comes with justification by faith alone. Then the unity comes from God and not from men. Anything that comes from men is never a real unity, because all men are one in sin. But God's unity of faith alone makes even Jew and Greek one, in spite of deep-seated prejudices.

B. The False Unity of Syncretists.—In Philadelphia a chapel has been erected to honor three chaplains that went down on the

troop ship *Dorchester*. One was Jewish, another Protestant, a third Roman Catholic. They are supposed to be a symbol of real unity. But this is not the unity of our text, the unity based on God's unity. We need an institution like our Valparaiso to help us find a real unity.

III. *It alone produces real morality* (v. 31)

A. Justification by Faith Alone Does Not Destroy Morality.—Some claim that no academic superiority or better Christianity is found in students from Christian schools than in those from public schools. This is saying that justification by faith does not produce better morality. Many believe this because they think "faith alone" discourages good works, since it is a salvation without works. As a matter of fact those who do teach salvation by works actually encourage immorality. Just as Pharisaism did not produce good but evil, so every attempt to make people good according to the Law fails. It does not produce a real, inward good. It is not the "faith alone" doctrine that produces immoral works, but any religion of works, including today's syncretism.

B. Justification by Faith Alone Establishes the Law.—Paul makes it very emphatic that justification by faith alone establishes the Law. It does not destroy it. It fulfills it and sets it up. An article in *Lutheran Education* (February 1958) shows what role teachers should take in our teachers colleges and how true Christian education establishes the Law. Not only our teachers at our normal schools but our pastors and teachers in general are religious leaders. The more schools, like Valparaiso, we have teaching "faith alone," the higher civic morality we shall find.

Luther's statement that great universities are gates of hell unless they explain the Scriptures to the youth and explain this "faith alone" clearly and vitally. Our text supports Luther's position. That should make us more ready to support Valparaiso and our entire Christian educational system.

Denver, Colo.

WALTER LANG

(ED. NOTE: Shortly before this issue went to press, the announcement arrived that the observance of Valparaiso Sunday has been postponed to May 10, 1959.)