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Homiletics: Outlines on the Nitsch Epistles

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HOMILETICS

Outlines of the Nitsch Epistles

ROGATE

1 TIM. 2:1-6

(Special purpose: The wave of American religiosity has produced strange prayers and prayers in strange places. The attitude of our people toward prayer is bound to be influenced. Our text provides us with a wonderful opportunity for supplying our members with some of God's ideas on prayer.)

Our church-related meetings open and close with prayer. Prayers are offered at civic and school functions. We find prayer cards in restaurants. Newspaper items, magazine articles, and TV dramas include references to prayer. Even in casual conversations we hear people speak of "the power of prayer." Yet, with all our "praying," we often do not pray as we should. Many of our prayers are limited in concern and lacking in thanksgiving. Our text emphasizes the importance of an expanded prayer life and suggests the theme

The Global Scope of the Christian's Prayer Life

I. *The Christian's prayer life examined*

- A. Too many of our prayers are "give me" prayers. "Lord, give me a new car." "Lord, give me a new dress." "Lord, give me good grades in school." "Lord, give me more money." All too often we are most concerned about the comforts of this life and the accumulation of material blessings and benefits.
- B. Too many of our prayers are limited in scope and vision. When we do manage to pray for spiritual blessings, we find that all too often our prayer horizons have not extended beyond the members of our immediate families, our relatives, and a few of our fellow Christians.
- C. Too many of our prayers are thankless prayers. We take God's blessings—particularly His spiritual blessings—for granted. "God will be there when I need Him." We underestimate the value of a "direct line" to God's throne room. Few people know the President's private phone number. As Christians, however, we can talk to God directly by "dialing J-E-S-U-S C-H-R-I-S-T."

II. *God shows the way*

- A. God is concerned about all men. God has provided salvation for all men. God "will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." God's concern, expressed in the Mediator Jesus Christ, knows no limit based on rank, social position, or racial characteristics. God's concern is geared to the spiritual needs of all mankind.
- B. Christ teaches us how to pray. He who said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you" (Gospel for the day, John 16:23), Himself led a life of prayer. Christ prayed for the strength that He needed—according to His human nature—to fulfill His heavenly Father's will; then He permitted sinful men to mock Him, abuse Him, and crucify Him that God's plan of salvation for mankind might be fulfilled. On the cross Christ prayed, "Father, forgive them . . ."; then He gave His life to accomplish this forgiveness when He cried, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Christ prayed for the establishment of the church (John 17); then He, together with the Father, sent the Holy Spirit.

III. *Our prayer sights raised*

- A. Our own spiritual needs should move us to pray. We need the assurance that we are at peace with God through Christ. We need God's power of life and love that we on our part may live at peace with our fellow men.
- B. Our neighbor's spiritual needs should move us to pray. All men—and that includes the leaders of our government, the leaders of all nations, as well as the leaders in our state and local governments—need to have, in Christ Jesus, the peace that passes all understanding. All men need God's power of life and love. Our concern for all men is to reflect Christ's concern for us and for all men.
- C. We are to remember to give thanks. Even if we were the most destitute of men and still knew of God's concern for us in Christ, we should have the best possible reason for giving thanks. God has given us the means of grace, which convey to us the message of His love in His Savior and Mediator, the gift of the Holy Spirit, who works through the means of grace, as well as the "direct line" of prayer. "Oh, give thanks unto the Lord!"

We have been abundantly blessed, especially in the area of the spiritual. We have been united to God through the working of His life in us by the Holy Spirit. Through our Mediator and Savior Jesus Christ we have direct access to God in prayer. Our own and our fellow men's needs for peace with God and man should move us to an expanded prayer life which reflects God's global concern for mankind. The continual outpouring of God's gracious gifts should move us to prayers of thanksgiving and lives of "thanksgiving."

Swissvale, Pa.

ARTHUR F. GRAUDIN

ASCENSION

COL. 3:1-4

(Purpose of the sermon: To remind Christians that Christ's ascension, an historical event of 20 centuries ago, has meaning for them where they are today.)

Duties pile up, and for father one head, two hands, two feet, hardly seem enough. Harried mother says, "If only I could be in two places at the same time!" In one way this is a desperate and unrealized wish. In another way it is an actual and necessary Christian procedure. In the light of Christ's ascension the Christian's life may be described as walking with

One Foot in Heaven

I. *Christ is there—and here* (v. 1b)

Summarize Good Friday, Easter, the 40 days. The ascension (Acts 1). The emphasis is on change of status, not of place. He fills all in all, He knows all, and He rules over all things. Yet He is also here. "Lo, I am with you," etc.

II. *The Christian is here—and there*

A. I am a Christian. I was not always one. I was dead to Christ. Now I am alive, I am "risen with Christ" (v. 1). I am risen from the grave and death of sin. In conversion I have been made a partaker of the blessings of His resurrection. Col. 2:12 is excellent: "Ye are complete in Him . . . buried with Him in Baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God." Rom. 6:3: "baptized into His death." Christ is "our Life." (V. 4)

B. I am here. I am "on the earth" (v. 1). In some ways I resemble the unbeliever—I eat, sleep, love, cry, laugh, work, play.

C. But I live as one who is there. I belong to the heavenlies. From that point in time which marks my union with Christ through faith my situation is reversed. Negatively, it is a death. Once dead to Christ, I am now dead to the world. "Ye are dead" (v.3). I renounce the world and its sinful pleasures. Vv.5-9 provide a list of sins. Positively, it is a resurrection. Once alive to sin, I am now alive to God. In my daily walk I rise with my risen Savior, I live according to His will. I "seek those things which are above" (v.1). "Above"—faith, like the disciples, gazes up into heaven. My affection, my mind, is set on, is intent on, things above (v.2)—such things as the love of the Bible, Christian worship, the sacraments. (Both "seek" and "set" are imperatives) Rom.6:11 covers both sides: "Dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God," etc. Verily, I walk with one foot in heaven.

A certain obscurity marks my new life; it is a hidden one (v.3). It will not always be so. Christ, my spiritual and eternal Life (v.4), will appear (Acts 1:11). When He does, to raise the dead and judge the world, then I who am *in* Christ shall appear *with* Him and share His glory (v.4). I who now walk with one foot in heaven shall hereafter walk with both feet in heaven. Introit for the day: "Halleluia! Halleluia! Oh, clap your hands, all ye people! Shout unto God with the voice of triumph."

Quincy, Ill.

E. J. OTTO

EXAUDI

2 TIM. 2:8-13

Like a precious perfume the name of Jesus is diffused through all the Bible. The name of Jesus is the one important name in the Bible, for He is our only Savior. When the Flood came, there was only one place of safety—in the ark. When the famine came, one man was responsible for gathering food—his name was Joseph. When the angel of death struck down the first-born in Egypt, there was only one way to escape—by sprinkling the lintel and side posts of the door with the blood of the lamb. When you think about salvation, you have to think about one person—that person is Jesus, "in whom we have redemption through His blood." "Neither is there salvation in any other" (Acts 4:12). Of this one Person the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, and what he wrote, in the fear of God, we shall hear this morning. This is his message.

"Remember Jesus Christ!"

I. "Remember Jesus Christ!" This is God's command

- A. "Remember Jesus Christ" for your sake. "Because I remember Him and preach His Gospel, I am suffering and wearing fetters like a criminal" (RSV). He is your Savior. He is with you always (Matt. 28:20). Keep Him with you. Study His Word. Live with Him. Love Him. Obey Him. Trust in Him alone, and you can say with the apostle Paul, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me." "Remember Jesus" when you are tempted. Satan comes to tempt you often. He may come in the form of a friend, in lust, in doubt, in greed, or in hate. When Satan comes, you need Jesus. In the heat of every battle of temptation, He is with you. "Remember Jesus Christ" as your Savior.
- B. "Remember Jesus Christ" for the sake of the elect. The apostle Paul preached the Gospel. He preached the Gospel even when he was in chains, when he was suffering as a prisoner. Though he was bound and in prison, he knew the Gospel would not be chained. God's Word would have free course. God's message of love would be heard. You have the Gospel. You have the Word of God. That Word is the only voice speaking from the timelessness of eternity. That Word tells everything men need to know for this life and the life to come. Men have attacked and despised it. Men have laid it aside in a dark corner of their homes and their lives. Men have forgotten it. Only a few have loved it, read it, and used it as "a lamp unto their feet and a light unto their path." The apostle Paul knew the power of the Word. He knew the Gospel was the power of God unto salvation. He knew that Gospel would change men's lives and change their eternal destination. So he was ready to endure anything for the sake of the elect. God would have us remember Jesus Christ and speak to others of what Jesus means to us, even if we suffer as the result, for the sake of the elect. Remember Him, and speak for Him. This is God's command.

II. "Remember Jesus Christ!" This is God's warning

- A. Don't deny Him. "If we deny" (v. 12b). Many turned away. Cf. 1:15; Demas; Peter (Luke 22:56 ff.); Judas (Luke 22:3 ff.). If we deny Him, He will deny us (Matt. 7:23;

10:33; 25:12). "Remember Jesus Christ!" There is no other way to heaven. (John 14:6)

- B. Don't be faithless. He says, "Be not afraid, only believe." Only unbelief damns. If we believe not, He will carry out His threats of punishment and damnation. He cannot deny Himself. He cannot go back on what He has threatened He will do. This is a solemn warning.

III. *"Remember Jesus Christ!" Through Him God gives you beautiful promises*

- A. Satisfying promises. What God promises in the Gospel satisfies our souls (cf. *Lutheran Annual*, 1959, p. 46). "Remember Jesus Christ" of the seed of David. He was the Promised One, the Messiah. Of Him the prophets spoke. Through Him redemption was wrought. To Him belongs all honor, praise, and glory. "Remember Jesus Christ," risen from the dead. He died in a horrible, shameful way. He died by crucifixion. He died despised and rejected — a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. But He endured it all for us. He rose from the dead. He defeated the forces of evil and darkness. He destroyed the devil. He won the battle for us. His promises of forgiveness, peace, mercy, life, and salvation, are beautiful, satisfying promises.
- B. Eternal promises. "Remember Jesus Christ!" He keeps His promises forever. He will keep us forever. "If we be dead" (v. 11). Daily, we are to fight against the old Adam. Daily, by contrition and repentance, we should seek to destroy, to drown, our sinful nature, and let the new man come forth. If we remember Jesus Christ as our Savior and turn to Him for help and for strength, we shall live. "I am the Resurrection and the Life" (John 11:25, 26). "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." If we show a steadfast patience, He will elevate us to the honor and dignity of being coregents with Him, even here on earth. He has made us kings and priests here (Rev. 1:6; 5:10). He will give us the powers of eternal kings and rulers there. We shall reign with Him for all eternity. Like the apostle Paul (Rom. 8:18) for us, the glory will far overshadow the suffering we endure here. His beautiful promises lead to eternal bliss and glory. "Remember Jesus Christ!"

"Remember Jesus Christ" as your Friend, your Savior, your God, your everything. You do not know what tomorrow will bring, but

this you know: "It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the Judgment." Your road of life will end in eternity. What will follow? What then? Will it be hell or heaven, Satan or God, darkness or light? That depends on just one thing. That one thing is faith. If you are faithful to Jesus Christ at the end of life's journey, then you shall have His blessings forevermore. If you have forgotten Him, turned away from Him, become faithless, then there is nothing — nothing but despair, misery, hopeless torment, hell. "Remember Jesus Christ!" Remember Him today as your Lord and your God. Remember Him always, and He will bless you always. God grant it for His sake.

Omaha, Nebr.

ELMER E. MUELLER

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST

EPH. 2:19-22

The introduction may relate the story of Pentecost from Acts 2. It will acquaint the uninformed with the significance of Pentecost and will introduce all to the main thought of the text.

The Holy Ghost the Builder of the Church

By way of clarification, remind the hearers that the church is the gathering of God's people that is pictured in our text as the building of "an holy temple in the Lord."

Incidentally, whether you translate v.22 "in the Spirit," "through the Spirit," or "by the Spirit," it definitely makes the Holy Ghost the Master Builder, through whom the whole project is carried out.

Let us, then, first have a look at

I. The foundation upon which the Holy Ghost builds the church
(v. 20)

In studying the make-up of the foundation on which the real temple of God is being built, we follow the lead of the text and dig down from the top. Thus we come (1) to that part of the foundation which was last laid, (2) to what lies beneath it, and (3) to the cornerstone which unites the whole. Thus, digging down from the top, we come first to the Word of the apostles.

- A. "*The foundation of the apostles*" — the teachings and truths laid down by the apostles and writers of the New Testament. See in it the soundness of New Testament Scripture. But digging deeper, we find beneath it the Old Testament.
- B. "*The foundation of . . . prophets,*" the writings and teachings

of the Old Testament. Note the make-up of the foundation. Upon the footings of Old Testament truths, prophecies, and promises, is placed the foundation work of New Testament revelation and fulfillment. And the stone that binds it into a solid whole and gives it such perfect unity is Jesus.

- C. *"Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Cornerstone."* Whether we study the Old or the New Testament writings, the great truth concerning Jesus Christ is the very heart and core of it all. Whether we think of the growth of the church in the time of the Old or the New Dispensation, the great Master Builder, the Holy Spirit, has always built on the same footings and has always anchored the hearts of God's people in the one hope of life, Jesus Christ. Make the most of pointing out the futility of building on any other. (1 Cor. 3:10)

II. *The manner and method of the Holy Spirit's building operations*

- A. Think of it in the light of 1 Peter 2:5, where God's people are pictured as "lively stones," built up into a spiritual house, and you get the picture of a stonemason, picking up the rough stones as he finds them and then, by chipping and cutting, fashioning them until they are fit for the foundation upon which he is building. Even so the Holy Ghost cannot use people for the building of the "holy temple" as He finds them in the rough — spiritually blind (Eph. 2:1), marred by the outgrowths of sin and evil (Rom. 8:7). But through His converting work of regeneration He makes of them "lively stones," fit to lay on the foundation that is laid. And the thing that makes them fit for the building is the God-given design that runs through the whole structure from the footings and foundations up through the temple tower. Through His masterful workmanship (Eph. 2:10), He fuses into each "lively stone" a hope and faith in Jesus Christ, "in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." (V. 21)
- B. What a vivid picture of the true, genuine church, the real people of God! Here, among all the activities of the visible church people and church organizations, we may see some live by this code or by that principle; we may know them as belonging to one or another religious denomination. But, in itself, none of that determines whether they are really "fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God." The thing that

sets people apart for God is faith and trust in the saving work of Jesus Christ, "the chief Cornerstone," upon whom the whole structure rests and "in whom they are all framed together."

Corvallis, Oreg.

A. W. SCHELP

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY TRINITY

1 COR. 2:1-12

There is a vital difference between knowing about someone and actually knowing him. This is particularly true if knowing someone means that he is able to do things for you. (Illustration: Knowing a congressman well or just knowing about him.) The more he can do for you, the more important the difference becomes.

What God can mean to a human being and what He can do for a human being is literally without limits. Therefore the difference between knowing about Him and knowing Him is the difference between life and death.

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is a thing that most of us have learned and accepted. The big difference comes between viewing it as that which tells us about God or that by which we come to know God. Our text tells us that the Holy Spirit reveals God to us as the Trinity so that we can know Him. Therefore—

We Should Receive the Witness of the Holy Spirit and Come to Know
God as the Trinity Acting to Redeem Us

I. *God—the Trinity acting to redeem us*

- A. God the Originator of the plan.—God reveals Himself to us by showing Himself in action, following a plan that involves us. He pictures Himself first as Father of the plan. We refer to "fathers" of plans and movements, such as Luther or Lenin. The plan is the redemption of men from the death of sin. (V. 7)

But, the Father of the plan is also the Father of an everlasting Son. He is so much the Father to this Son that all other fathers are only weak copies of Him. This enters into the plan, for it involves the sacrifice of this beloved Son.

- B. God the Agent of the plan.—The carrying out of the plan depends on the Son, for the plan is that the Son shall become a human being and willingly suffer death as such. There is no human being capable of the work. Only the Son of God can enter into the agony involved and lift the load of guilt and sin.

Only the Lord of Glory, if He is crucified, can defeat death (v. 8). Thus you see, to know that there is a Son of God is more than just having a fact to tuck away. It is to know Jesus Christ and Him crucified, the One who carried out the Father's plan of love for you. (V. 2)

- C. God the Applier of the plan.—The Father originates the plan. The Son carries it out. One thing remains: the great act of love has to be brought to and focused upon individual human beings. It is too much for fallen man to grasp alone. It is contrary to human "wisdom." Man by nature is wired to receive only human wave lengths. He receives only the wisdom of man. But the message, the Word, by which the wise plan of God is broadcast is the wave length of the Spirit of God (vv. 10, 11). It remains for the Spirit of God to reach into the human soul and "rewire" it to make it able to receive the wisdom of God, that is, His plan of salvation. Thus, to know the Holy Spirit means to have felt the jolt of His power as you find yourself able to "receive" the wise plan as including you.

II. *We should receive the witness of the Spirit and come to know God the Trinity*

- A. The witness of the Spirit is proclaimed.—Note that the words used to describe the witness of the Spirit denote proclamation (vv. 4, 6, "speak," "proclaim," "word," etc.). God the Spirit is at work in the proclamation of the plan. He shows the Father and the Son working it out. When we talk "Christ and Him crucified" to someone else, that's the Spirit doing His part. When someone talks Jesus Christ as having died for you, that's the Spirit "sending" to you. When someone tells you what this plan can and does mean for your life and its details, that's the Spirit carrying through the plan to its fulfillment. That's really preaching the Trinity!
- B. Receive His witness.—What the Spirit says to you about God as Trinity acting for you, bringing you the forgiveness of sins and real life—listen to it! This is the power and wisdom of God flowing into your life. It is the eternal wisdom of God, the mystery of God's love for you. It is your personal introduction to God as the God of love and forgiveness. It is what your faith must be built on. It is that upon which you can stake your life for good and all.

Avoid at all costs thinking about the "doctrine of the Trinity" as a mathematical description of a rather bizarre and removed Being.

Think of your Father, who is that because of a love that let Him give the Son of His own heart into death for you. Think of the Son as the obedient One, who has taken away all the guilt and shame of your disobedience by His willing death. Think of the Spirit as the Friend who patiently brought all this love into your life. Say in your heart, "I worship this Mystery of love, I adore this God who is the Trinity for me!"

South Weymouth, Mass.

KENNETH MAHLER

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN TRINITY

ROMANS 8:1-11

Yesterday we celebrated Decoration Day. This day was originally designed to mark the graves of those who fell in the War of the States, which was fought, at least in part, to eradicate the curse of slavery from our land. Americans are extraordinarily concerned with freedom. They talk about it. They write about it. They fight for it. Every war our country has fought was a war for "freedom"; the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 (freedom from England's tyranny); the war with Spain (Cuba and the Philippines); World War I ("to make the world safe for democracy"); World War II (the four freedoms); the police action in Korea (freedom for South Korea and opposition to Communism). But there is a greater freedom than political freedom which we have enjoyed through the blessing of God for almost two centuries. That freedom is the one spoken of in our text

Spiritual Freedom for God's People

I. *This is freedom from condemnation*

A. Man's condemnation is inevitable without God's intervention.

1. Sin and its evil result, death, show that men have lost this freedom. Since sin is everywhere prevalent and death is universal, it is obvious that all men have sinned.
2. The Law is unable to correct this, not because of any imperfections in itself, but because of the weakness of the flesh.
3. For the same reason the Law cannot produce righteousness.

B. God "reached down from heaven" to free men.

1. Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh. His birth in Bethlehem and His life in Nazareth indicate that He was like other men except that He was without sin.

2. He fulfilled the requirements of the Law.
He lived as we could not.
3. He bore sin's condemnation (Isaiah 53).
He suffered as we could not.
4. He bestows His Spirit upon us through whom we are now able to keep the Law and walk in a manner well pleasing to God, though imperfectly.
5. The Spirit comes to us through Word and Sacrament.

C. The freedom God gives enables us

1. To resist Satan.
2. To overcome the world.
3. To prevail against our sinful flesh.

II. *Freed for service*

- A. The Law should serve as a rule. Here are presented both the responsibilities we have toward God and toward man. The shackles have been removed from hands and feet, and thus we are enabled to use these hands and feet for the glory of God and the welfare of man. Example: the drunkard delivered from his baneful appetites can now be concerned for other similar slaves. Alcoholics Anonymous. The woman freed from a sordid life can now use her energy to free others.
- B. The Spirit of God directs us. This is in keeping with the Word through which God expresses His will. Against enthusiasts His leading is evident in all manner of specific circumstances. The promises of the Paraclete.
- C. Strength for these tasks again comes to us through the Word of God and His Sacraments, wherein are expressed God's love for us and His will for us.

III. *Freed for hope*

- A. The indwelling Spirit gives us joy. This derived from the realization that we belong to God, that we are graven upon the palm of His hand, that all things must work together for the good of us who love Him. This joy never departs even when we bear burdens, endure difficulties, and are subject to troubles.
- B. The resurrection of Christ emphasizes the fact that we serve a living Christ and that He is with us where two or three are gathered together in His name.
- C. Ours is also the assurance that we shall forever live with Him.

What a powerful incentive to lead a sanctified life! Hymn 423:5, 6.
San Francisco, Calif.

ARTHUR C. NITZ