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# HOMILETICS

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## *Outlines on Hannover Epistles*

### THE LAST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

1 JOHN 5:14-21

Our liturgy directs that the Festival of Transfiguration be observed on the last Sunday in the Epiphany season. "Epiphany" means manifestation and reminds us of the glory of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, manifested during His public ministry. This glory manifested on Mount of Transfiguration before Peter, John, James (Gospel). The Epistle also speaks of the glory of God's only-begotten Son, of which the Apostles were eyewitnesses and which they reveal to us.

John wrote this Epistle to emphasize the importance of believing in the deity of Jesus Christ (ch. 5:11-13). Our text summarizes the thoughts expressed in the Epistle and clinches them with this climactic statement concerning Jesus Christ:

#### THIS IS THE TRUE GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE

##### I

#### *Who Brings Us into Fellowship with God (vv. 18-21)*

##### A. The nature of this fellowship.

1. The Son of God has come to reveal the Father to us (v. 20 a). No man knows God as He really is except the Son and him to whom the Son reveals Him (Matt. 11:27). Christ, who is with the Father from eternity (John 1:18), has told us what we need to know about God.

2. This work of Christ brings us into fellowship with God (v. 20 b). By telling us of the Father, He "hath given us an understanding," opened our spiritual eyes, given us spiritual knowledge. Now we "know Him that is true [the real God], and we are in Him that is true." By the work of Christ we are in fellowship with the Father (1:3, 6; 2:5; 3:24). By this spiritual union God dwells in us and we in Him (2 Cor. 6:16).

3. This fellowship is possible only in Christ. Text: "We are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." (NOTE: The second *en* phrase is not appositional to the first according to the original, as the comma and "even" in the King James Version indicate.) No man can be in the Father except in Christ (John 14:6). He who denies that Christ is God and the anointed Savior, the burden of this Epistle, has not the Father (2:23).

B. The results of this fellowship.

1. He who is in fellowship with God has eternal life. "This is the true God *and eternal life.*" Jesus Christ, the Life (1:2), the Source and Giver of Life, was manifested to us and gives us life. By faith in Him we have eternal life (John 3:16).

2. By this fellowship we can overcome sin (vv. 18, 19). Being born of God, we regenerate Christians no longer let sin dominate our thinking or direct our actions (3:9). Though we fall into sin because of the weakness of our flesh (Rom. 7:14-25), yet as regenerate Christians we do not sin deliberately. We are new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17), and endeavor to live more and more unto Him who died for us and rose again (2 Cor. 5:15). Being in God through faith in Him who was manifested to destroy the works of the devil (3:8), that wicked one, the devil, cannot touch us (v. 18 b.). Neither can the world, lying in wickedness, deceive us. Being in God, and God in us, we shall obtain the victory (Rom. 7:25).

## II

*Who Gives Us the Assurance of Answered Prayer* (vv. 14-17)

A. He hears and answers our prayers for ourselves (vv. 14-15).

1. He promises to hear every prayer spoken in accord with His will. The violinist giving a concert with organ accompaniment tunes his four strings to the hundreds of pipes. We must tune our will to His greater will (Matt. 26:39). Then we are following His example.

2. He promises not only to hear our petition (v. 14) but also to grant our requests (v. 15). He is not like an indifferent father who hears his children's pleas, but does nothing about them. He both hears and answers. Of course, at His own time (John 2:4) and in His own way (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

3. This is the confidence we have in Him because He is the true God, who is almighty and is able to do so. Because we have this confidence, we are sure of His love (3:20-24). If He loved us enough to die for us, His love will also grant our requests (Rom. 8:32).

B. He hears and answers our intercessory prayers (vv. 16, 17).

1. We love our brother. Being in fellowship with God, knowing of His love for us, knowing that He helps us to conquer sin, we also love our brother (3:14-18).

2. Therefore we pray for him when we see him becoming enmeshed in sin. "All unrighteousness is sin." Cp. 3:4. And all sin is dangerous. It separates from God (Is. 59:2) and plunges into eternal death (Rom. 6:23). Love to the brother will prompt us to pray for him. Cp. John 17:15. We are excused from this obligation only when it is manifest ("If any man *see* his brother sin, etc.") that our brother has closed his heart to the Gospel. The sin unto death is that sinning which closes the door to Christ and His cleansing blood (1:7); denies God (2:22); makes God a liar (1:10) (Lenski), and eventually leads to that hardened state of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which repudiates the very forgiveness Christ offers (Matt. 12:31; Heb. 6:4; Acts 7:51).

3. But there is a sin not unto death. While all sin is dangerous and we must guard against it (2:1), there is always the open door of confession and forgiveness (1:9; 2:1, 2). Requesting these for our brother, we know that He will give us life for such a sinning brother, i. e., forgiveness, peace with God, salvation. This will strengthen his damaged, declining faith, which he has not yet lost, but is in danger of losing. What a favor to our brother! And what joy for us!

Having such wonderful promises from Him who is the true God and Eternal Life, let us keep ourselves from idols (v. 21), from false ideas of Christ. Warn against modern denials of the deity of Christ. Let us strengthen our fellowship with Him through Word and Sacrament and reap the benefits of our communion with the very Son of God.

Riverside, Calif.

WM. GRAUMANN

## SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

1 THESS. 1:1-10

“So much to do and so little time” could well have been the thoughts of Paul and his two co-workers when they established the Thessalonian church (Acts 17:1-10). Paul preached three Sabbath days. Trouble and persecution followed. The missionaries left for Berea. The care of the churches was upon Paul daily (2 Cor. 11:28). Thinking about the Early Church, Paul expressed his gratitude to God for the grace manifested in this congregation. God had done much and in a short time. Whenever Paul thought about this church, he said,

## WE GIVE THANKS TO GOD

## I

*We Give Thanks to God for Your Faith*

Not for kindness or hospitality shown the missionaries, but for faith.

A. The Gospel came to you (v. 5.).

1. What the Gospel is: Christ died for you and rose again. How the Gospel came. Not *in word only* (v. 5). It came in words, human speech. But it passed beyond the word. It did not only touch the ear, but it came also *in power* (v. 5). There was boldness, sincerity, the strength of deep conviction on the part of the preachers. The Holy Ghost was with them. (Illustration: Famous actor remarked that the preacher read the 23d Psalm best because the preacher knew the Shepherd.) Paul spoke that which he knew; he spoke from the heart.

2. By whom it came. The Gospel came by Paul and his fellows. God used, and now uses, human channels for the Gospel. But it came also by the Holy Spirit behind Paul.

B. You received the Gospel in your heart (vv. 5, 6, 10).

1. You received the Gospel in spite of affliction (v. 6). These Christians were content to suffer for the sake of Christ (Acts 17: 5-10). Full force of affliction fell on this infant church. Not only the Gentiles but also the Jews afflicted them. “Sorrowing, yet always rejoicing.”

2. You received the Gospel in joy (v. 6). The Holy Spirit

gives joy. The world sees only the outside and not the joy of the heart in faith.

C. You are among the elect (v. 4). Election to eternal life. God first loved us and chose us by grace alone. What grounds for thanksgiving to God!

*Application.* We also are human channels for God's grace to man. Testify with power and conviction. Accept and keep the faith in spite of the mockery of the world and its persecution. Thank God for your election.

## II

### *We Give Thanks to God for the Evidence of Your Faith*

The Gospel assures us of heaven; but it has relevance also for this life.

A. You turned from idols to serve the living God (v. 9).

They had been "bowing down to wood and stone." The ties with idolatry were broken. The Thessalonians could see the top of snowy Olympus, but now they knew the stories of the gods were idle tales. Served the living God in whom they lived and moved and had their being. World must have been deeply impressed by this action.

B. You showed the three Christian graces; no one-sided character.

1. The work of faith (v. 3). Their faith was not dead. Faith always works (John 15:5; James 2:14, 26).

2. The labor of love (v. 3). Toil is not painful when prompted by love. (John 13:14 ff.) By this may also be meant the burdens in behalf of the sick, the needy, etc. (Matt. 25:35 ff.; 1 John 3:18). Sacrifices for the objects of our love.

3. The patience of hope (v. 3). Suggests endurance in spite of affliction. The object of our hope is the Savior. Hope sustained them. Hope for eternity (Rom. 8:18).

C. You became examples to all who believe (vv. 7, 8).

They were living epistles (2 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 11:4; Titus 2:7). They were real public relations experts for Christ. Not only the heavens declare the glory of God but also the Christians do so in their lives. People talked about them because of their works. They gave inspiration and stimulation to others, bore public testimony.

The din of this world renders many deaf to the Gospel. The loudest proclamation is the testimony of the Christian life.

D. You waited for the coming of the Lord (v. 10).

Christ's coming is sure (Matt. 26:64; Acts 1:11; Heb. 9:28). They were prepared at all times. Christ's coming again indicated the connection between His resurrection and our resurrection and deliverance from the wrath to come (John 14:19; 11:25, 26). They did not concern themselves with the question when Christ was coming, but with the fact that He was coming.

Let us show our faith through service to God, through the Christian graces, that others may see our faith. Let us be prepared for the coming of the Lord.

Buffalo, N. Y.

JOHN E. MEYER

## SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

2 COR. 1:23—2:17

If today I sell one line of goods, tomorrow another, the day after another, you might say I am a peddler, a huckster. I sell whatever sells best. Peddling isn't wrong or dishonorable. It is a part of our commercial life. In business it is possible, to be expected, at times even necessary, to change my line. But in religion it is unthinkable, reprehensible. In the religion of Christ it is disastrous.

It seemed that Pastor Paul was that kind of minister, a religious peddler toward the congregation at Corinth. But he says (v. 17):

I AM NOT A PEDDLER

I

*I Am Not a Peddler to You*

Some of you are thinking I have not done what a faithful pastor should do when there is trouble in the congregation. You suspected me to be another fly-by-night: here today, trouble comes, stay-away; he did not tend to business; he changed his line; he is a peddling, piddling pastor.

True, I did not come. Does not mean I did not care or not do anything. "I call God for a record" (v. 23). The reason: "To spare you I came not."

"To spare us," he says. Sounds like he is making himself out to be our religious boss. Yes, I know, that is what some of you have been thinking; and that is what my members still think of their pastor today — regard him as something of a religious dictator. If he is, he is a peddler.

I am not that kind of pastor. Let this be the relation of pastor and people, "Not that we have dominion [lord it over you] over your faith, but are helpers [co-workers] of your joy; for by faith ye stand" (v. 24). I work with you, not against you. I work to increase your happiness. Many think a pastor is only to make people sad; if he does not, he has the tinge of a peddler. You stand by faith, not by Pastor Paul.

I come not to pester, but to pastor. All right, call me a pestering pastor, but in a good sense. I have to, lest I be a peddler. I shall pester in such a way as to do you good, as a helper of your joy. In pastoral wisdom (v. 1), instead of coming in person, I came by letter (v. 4). How I wrote it, namely, 1 Corinthians — affliction, anguish, tears. A strong sermon, hard words, I exposed your sins. No doubt you are sometimes led to think that nothing delights a pastor so much as to scald his congregation with a good scolding. All week he winds himself up for the Sunday punch. Not so! "I wrote unto you with many tears, not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love" (v. 4). I am not a peddler.

I could have left you unattended, unadmonished. Then, indeed, I would have changed my line and been a peddler, not a pastor, to you.

Here expand problems of a pastor in being too severe or too lenient (items in vv. 2-5). Temptations in both directions. "Who is sufficient for these things?" (V. 16.) Easily misunderstood, even as Paul was. Mutual trust between pastor and people to be maintained (v. 17). I am not a peddler.

## II

### *Do Not Be Peddlers to One Another*

Vv. 5-11: One of your members took his father's wife, a terrible sin. You dealt with him, disciplined him. You did right. I commend you. Otherwise you would be a peddling congregation.



You put him out because you loved him. Now love him even more to get him back. Forgive him. This is the test for you (v. 9).

In the case of great sins, easy for members to be peddlers to one another. Sell one another out. Forgive with the mouth, not with the heart. Do not peddle one another's sins. They are the cheapest goods you can peddle. For others to handle my sins is bad business; for me to handle others' sins is good business. Indeed not! It is neither good nor is it business. It is the sign of the peddler. V. 11 is the warning as to whose business it is. Let us not be peddlers to one another. Illustrate.

### III

#### *Do Not Be Peddlers to Other Congregations*

You are not the only congregation in God's Church, my Corinthians. Every congregation is tempted to think so. While waiting in Troas, wonderful success (vv. 12, 13). I was more anxious for success among you. You were the more difficult.

### IV

#### *Do Not Be Peddlers to the Outside World*

My efforts in your behalf were successful. Therefore (v. 14) "Thanks be unto God. . . ." A peddling pastor and a peddling congregation would say: "All glory to the pastor, to the members, officers, etc." While pretending one line, which is God's glory, they peddle another—their own. They steal God's glory and palm it off as their own. This is the sort of peddling carried out individually and collectively. Illustrate.

No, this is God's parade (v. 14), who leads us in triumph. A familiar sight to you. Politically embarrassing, spiritually a privilege. Broken, defeated, humbled by God Himself. Nothing to peddle of our own virtues and works, nothing to show except the glory of Him who leads us in victory, Jesus Christ. This is good perfume, excellent incense (v. 15).

This morning I go to Communion. I parade my guilt and the glory of my Lord. The strength I have is the strength I have from Him. Lord, keep me from being a peddling, peddling Christian (v. 17).

Schaumburg, Ill.

F. A. HERTWIG, JR.

## QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

1 JOHN 4:7-15

One of the subjects most talked and written about in our day is the subject of love. And yet people know very little about love, in spite of all their speaking and writing on this subject, because they ignore God. No one can know love unless he first knows God, for "God is Love." Therefore in our consideration of

## THE GREAT WONDER OF LOVE

we shall first look to the great wonder of God's love and then to the great wonder of our love.

## I

*The Great Wonder of God's Love*

The Apostle John brings us face to face with the great wonder of God's love through this simple statement, "God is Love" (v. 8). Love is more than an attribute of God. It is the very essence of God. What a comfort for us to know this fact! Our knowledge that God is holy and just would drive us to despair if we did not also know that "God is Love."

The fact that "God is Love" is evident from His work of Creation.

John, however, points to a far higher and to a far holier proof of God's love than the proof found in Creation. He writes: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us" (v. 10).

There is no great wonder connected with our love for God. God is good to us. He blesses us. Truly, it would be very strange and very wicked if we did not love God.

But what have we ever done that God should love us? By nature we are not His friends; we are His enemies. We are not beautiful; we are covered with wounds and bruises and putrifying sores. We are not holy; we are guilty. We do not deserve His love; we deserve His wrath. And yet God loves us. Herein lies the great wonder of God's love.

Furthermore, God manifests the great wonder of His love in a most wonderful way. Listen! "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him . . . sent His Son to be the Propitiation for our sins" (vv. 9, 10). God sent His beloved Son to assume our guilt, to suffer our shame and punish-

ment, to die our death, so that we might go free. Would you give your son to bear the guilt, the shame, the punishment of a habitual criminal of the vilest sort so that he might go free? God did that for you and much more. Herein lies the wonder of God's love.

This is not all. Having sent His Son to be the Propitiation for our sins, God now "gives us of His Spirit" (v. 13) so that the benefit of this redemption may become our own. Truly, wonderful is God's love to us!

## II

### *The Great Wonder of Our Love*

Now, in view of God's love to us the Apostle John writes: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we . . . love one another" (vv. 7, 11).

We should expect John to write: "If God so loved us, we ought to love God." Certainly we ought to love God. It is well that we ask: How much do we love God? Where is the proof of our love to God? John reminds us that proof of our love to God is found in our love to one another (v. 12). Cp. 1 John 4:20.

Love for one another begins at home. Because God loves them, husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, love one another. Because God loves them, the members of a congregation love one another. Because God loves us, we love all our fellow men. Herein lies the great wonder of our love. Our love is a reflection of God's love for us. God's love for us is both our motivation and our strength in loving one another.

Furthermore, our love is a wonderful love because of the wonderful way it manifests itself. Prompted by love, we forgive one another, we pray for one another, we admonish one another. Certainly we are kind and helpful.

Finally, our love is a wonderful love because we, with God dwelling in our hearts, are willing to pay the cost of love. Even though others do not love us in return, we keep on loving them.

Because love is so popular a subject, let us speak about love. But as often as we speak about love, let us begin by telling the great wonder of God's love for us, and then let us continue by pointing out that the great wonder of our love for one another depends upon the measure in which God's love for us is reflected in our lives.